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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDING

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

RULEVILLE COMMUNITY HOUSE  
RULEVILLE, MISSISSIPPI

JUNE 25, 1997  
6:00 P.M.

=====  
S. MILES AND ASSOCIATES  
1291 CREEKWOOD COVE  
LAWRENCEVILLE, GEORGIA  
(770) 513-0398

CCR  
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Meet.  
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APPEARANCES:

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Advisory Committee Members:

Dr. Jerry W. Ward, Jr., Chairperson

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

Mary Frances Berry, Commissioner

Melvin Jenkins, Regional Director

1 DR. WARD: Thank you. My name is Jerry Ward and  
2 I chair the Mississippi advisory committee to the U.S.  
3 Commission on Civil Rights.

4 I would like to welcome all of you to this  
5 follow up meeting we are having here in Ruleville to  
6 hearings that were conducted last summer in Cleveland.

7 We think it's very important that we do have  
8 follow up on our hearings, so that we can know indeed if  
9 we have had some impact on awakening conscienceness or no  
10 impact at all and what is the nature of change that might  
11 have taken place since we were last in this area, dealing  
12 with problem of burning of churches. Again that will be  
13 our focus.

14 Doctor Mary Frances Berry, who is Chair of the  
15 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, will be speaking to you  
16 briefly about that.

17 To my right is Mr. Melvin Jenkins who is the  
18 Director of the Central Regional Office for the U.S.  
19 Commission on Civil Rights in Kansas City, Kansas and he  
20 will probably have some very important things to say to  
21 us too. So without spending any further time on the  
22 matter of introduction, I would like to yield the floor  
23 to Dr. Berry.

24 COMMISSIONER BERRY: Thank you very much Dr.  
25 Ward, I just want to tell you how grateful we are to you,

1 for being chair of the State Advisory Committee and for  
2 organizing the meeting last year and this year and all  
3 the other work that you do. That's the first thing.

4           And the second thing I want to tell you is the  
5 reason why we're late and we're really sorry is we must  
6 have got lost because we saw you in Jackson. We got here  
7 as fast as we could. We drove from Jackson.

8           We had not planned to go to Jackson today. I  
9 had asked for a meeting with the Governor because Dr.  
10 Ward had been trying to get a meeting with the Governor  
11 for his State Advisory Committee since last October and  
12 had written to the Governor and had gotten no response  
13 from that, I understand, and had repeatedly asked for a  
14 meeting, and so I had Mr. Jenkins inform the Governor's  
15 office the other day that I was coming, and wanted to  
16 meet with the Governor with the SAC Chair to talk about  
17 race relations in Mississippi, and the Governor's office  
18 agreed the day before yesterday, I guess it was, so we  
19 had to change our scheduled to go to Jackson before we  
20 came here, and so we had to drive over there and then  
21 drive over here, and so that's why we're late, and so we  
22 apologize to everybody for being late, but happy we got  
23 here, and the meeting was well worth it.

24           There have been 14 church fires in Mississippi  
25 that were reported to the National Arson Church Fire Task

1 Force, and only four of them by last count -- let me make  
2 sure that that's right -- were solved. One, two, three,  
3 four, five, where there were arrests made, and not the  
4 ones here in Ruleville.

5 But last year Mr. Ingram, who is the State  
6 Commissioner of Public Safety, testified at the church  
7 fire forum and he said that it was likely that they would  
8 solve all of them, and he talked very optimistically at  
9 that time about solving them.

10 Today he told us that -- when I pointed out to  
11 him that they hadn't been solved, he said that he still  
12 was optimistic about getting solved, and that in at least  
13 two of the cases they know who did them, but they don't  
14 have enough evidence to indict the person. So that's an  
15 issue that is raise.

16 The other thing that we talked to the Governor  
17 about was race relations in general in Mississippi, and  
18 in the Delta in particular, because we were here -- the  
19 Civil Rights Commission was here in March and had a  
20 hearing in Greenville over on the Delta and all the  
21 education voting rights and other issues are here, higher  
22 education, K through 12 education, employment  
23 opportunity, and you name it, in the Mississippi Delta,  
24 and our staff is preparing a big report from that  
25 hearing, which is going to come out on the Mississippi

1 Delta sometime in the fall or the winter. There will be  
2 a big report with findings and recommendations.

3           So we asked the Governor a lot of questions.  
4 One, whether there was any dialogue on race going on in  
5 Mississippi, and what did he think about the idea of  
6 having local and state-wide conversations on race.

7           The Governor indicated that he didn't see  
8 anything wrong with that, although he didn't say that he  
9 was about to organize any.

10           The Governor -- the most specific thing that he  
11 did was I pointed out to him that Mississippi does not  
12 have a Human Rights Commission, and that was discussed  
13 last year at the church fire forums, and that there are  
14 only six states that do not have one, and pointed out to  
15 him that race issues are involved, but it's also an issue  
16 of sex discrimination, of disability discrimination.

17           I mean, why do people have to file charges in  
18 Atlanta? Atlanta is in Georgia -- if they live in  
19 Mississippi?

20           And so he said that he -- he promised me -- I  
21 made him promise -- I asked him to promise and he  
22 promised that he would consider doing so, and for the  
23 first time in Mississippi.

24           And I also got him to promise that he would  
25 have his education advisors look into the school

1 situation in Tunica, because I've had people complaining  
2 to me that with the take-over there, while they say  
3 they're working on corruption and all that, they aren't  
4 doing anything about improving the schools or anything  
5 about the quality of education.

6           And so I pointed out to him that I thought that  
7 when the state takes over, the state has the  
8 responsibility if it's going to take over something, to  
9 make sure that the kids are getting a better education,  
10 and we went back and forth on that one, and he said well,  
11 you know, the state has a general responsibility for the  
12 schools.

13           I said yeah, I know that, but I'm talking  
14 specifically when you take over something, you know, you  
15 took it over. That meant you made it your own, and so  
16 it's not that you have an indirect responsibility, and I  
17 pointed out to him that around the country we have people  
18 taking over black schools where a lot of black children  
19 go.

20           New Jersey they've got some. California, and  
21 in most cases they haven't done anything to improve the  
22 schools.

23           So he promised that he would have his education  
24 people take particular interest and report back to him on  
25 what they are going to improve the schools, and he agreed

1 with me that we could hold him accountable for that.

2           And at the end of the discussion, since Dr.  
3 Ward was over here in the Delta busy -- I asked the  
4 Governor and the Governor agreed that he would meet with  
5 the State Advisory Committee, your committee --

6           DR. WARD: Good.

7           COMMISSIONER BERRY: -- within six months for  
8 you to follow up on the items that he promised, to see  
9 how he's coming with the promises that he made.

10           And so what we want to do here tonight is to  
11 talk with you about -- and have you talk with us about  
12 whether race relations in this area have improved, about  
13 the same, worse, and what the issues are.

14           Is it schools? Is it jobs? Is it police? I  
15 mean, what's going on here and what is your perception,  
16 and what do you think about the fact that only five of  
17 the church fires have there been any arrests made, and  
18 here we are, this is what, a year later?

19           DR. WARD: Yes.

20           COMMISSIONER BERRY: And some of them it's two  
21 years later, and they still haven't found out or who did  
22 it. So we'd like to hear from you. That's what we're  
23 here for.

24           Mr. Jenkins, do you want to say anything?

25           MR. JENKINS: I just simply want to recognize



1 Dr. Beverly White, the Chair of the Arkansas Advisory  
2 Committee, who so graciously come to visit with us.

3 She works in Jackson and she's familiar with  
4 the Delta area and involved in economic development,  
5 human rights, and the whole ball game also.

6 And I would if we could just spend a minute to  
7 have her address a couple of issues on race relations, as  
8 she sees from here vantage point in the Delta.

9 DR. WARD: Dr. White.

10 DR. WHITE: When I speak about the Delta, I  
11 want you to be clear that it is not peculiar to the State  
12 of Mississippi. I work in three states, Arkansas,  
13 Mississippi, and Louisiana.

14 And I heard Chairperson Berry mention -- and I  
15 want you to know that the problems with education of  
16 African American children is not unique to Tunica. I  
17 spend many, many miles, many, many hours in the Delta of  
18 Mississippi, Arkansas and Louisiana.

19 And while each of the three states might  
20 classify under achievement of children in a different  
21 way, the issue is still that there is a great deal of  
22 disparity in achievement between African American and  
23 other students, and this is not atypical to the fact that  
24 there is anything innately inferior about the school  
25 system and equitable acquisition or sharing of resources.

1           It is still a fact in the Delta we have  
2 difficulty getting the necessary resources and some  
3 facilities. All you have to do is just ride around any  
4 of the towns in the Delta to look at the inadequacy of  
5 the facilities, inadequacy of the resources.

6           We are not only 50 years behind where other  
7 school systems, not only in the region but also in the  
8 nation.

9           We are particularly concerned also in the Delta  
10 of the three states as it relates to the potential impact  
11 of welfare reform. Many of -- there's been a lot of time  
12 spent in educating citizens, especially those who are  
13 going to be impacted, about welfare reform, but when we  
14 talk about women or men, they're required to go to work  
15 in the Delta, there are very serious issues of where will  
16 they work.

17           If there is a job available, there is a lack of  
18 a transportation system. There is inadequate child care  
19 in this area, so those problems continue to be present.

20           There are issues related to affordable housing.  
21 There's still the issues of adequate health care,  
22 especially as it impacts older people and our young  
23 people, but these are just a few of the issues that we  
24 relate to, and when you start looking at it, it is a  
25 matter of both class and race, but when you look at what

1 is the population of the Delta, you have African American  
2 people of all ages being disproportionately impacted, and  
3 many of the impacts are a result of inequitable policies  
4 and practices.

5 COMMISSIONER BERRY: You know, some people say,  
6 if I may, Dr. Ward --

7 DR. WARD: Of course.

8 COMMISSIONER BERRY: Some people say that the  
9 problems with the schools that I keep talking about, that  
10 Mississippi schools are no worse than they are anywhere  
11 else in the country, and that in fact Mississippi used to  
12 rank at the bottom. That's the response that some of the  
13 politicians give, and Mississippi now is high up in the  
14 rankings, is not on the very bottom any more, and that  
15 other school systems around the country have problems  
16 too, and that Mississippi used to be bad, but that now  
17 Mississippi is a whole lot better, and that therefore  
18 people ought to understand that it's just sort of  
19 pointing the finger at Mississippi, when you keep talking  
20 about how, you know, the problems that are here and that  
21 whatever is going on here, is just the same thing that's  
22 happening everywhere else, and that there's nothing  
23 particular about Mississippi that anybody should even be  
24 calling attention to.

25 Does anybody have any comments on that? Or do

1 you all agree with it? And when you address something,  
2 you need to state your name for purposes of the record.

3 MR. DONAHOE: I'm Mr. Edgar Donahoe, Board of  
4 Supervisors of Sunflower County.

5 I think, yes, we've got a long way to go. We  
6 are still behind some states, but we've come a long way,  
7 and we're working hard to go further. I think right now  
8 the thing that hurts our area more in, as she said, is  
9 unemployment.

10 We have three factories here in Ruleville.  
11 They're all garment factories. Washington and our  
12 legislatures has passed a bill for trade organizations  
13 with Mexico, by 50 percent -- 50 to 75 percent of the  
14 jobs out of these three plants went to Mexico.

15 They're shipping their stuff back in here,  
16 warehouses and shipping it back out.

17 COMMISSIONER BERRY: Is that NAFTA or something  
18 else?

19 MR. DONAHOE: Yes, ma'am.

20 COMMISSIONER BERRY: NAFTA.

21 MR. DONAHOE: Yes. And yet we appeal to the  
22 government, the Board of Supervisors of Sunflower County,  
23 appeal to the Governor to allow Sunflower County, because  
24 of this unemployment rate, to pass at least one year on  
25 the work requirement until we get more jobs, and this was

1 rejected by the Governor.

2 He took the whole state -- there's some things  
3 good in welfare reform, but there are many things bad,  
4 and our people in the Delta are suffering from it.  
5 Business is suffering from it.

6 But we have brought -- and when I say we, I  
7 mean the people here, my staff, everybody working  
8 together in Mississippi -- sure, there's still a lot of  
9 prejudice, but prejudice is many times on both sides.

10 But I think that if we could get industry,  
11 jobs, you know, we have an empowerment zone in part of  
12 Sunflower County. I've been a member on the Commission  
13 on this for two years. We haven't seen the first penny  
14 of empowerment zone in Sunflower County to date.

15 COMMISSIONER BERRY: Tell me why you think that  
16 is. This is very important stuff you're talking about.  
17 Why do you think that is, because many places empowerment  
18 zones are held out as the answer to the problem, that  
19 once you get one --

20 MR. DONAHOE: What I see from it, it's probably  
21 going to be a long time good thing, but right now it's a  
22 lot of money being handled by a lot of people, and it's  
23 not being passed down to people. We haven't seen the  
24 first penny in Sunflower County from it.

25 Right now it's possible we have an announcement

1 on new industry tomorrow that could be a result of the  
2 empowerment zone. It won't be here, but it will be in  
3 Sunflower County. A lot of jobs will be performed there.

4           So things are happening. It's going to be long  
5 range, but yes, I'm concerned about different things.  
6 But look, I've seen the schools. I was on the school  
7 board for 14 years now, I've been on the Board of  
8 Supervisors almost 16, and I've seen progress.

9           I know what the schools were 28 years ago, 29  
10 years ago, and I know where they are today. And I know  
11 the spirit of the schools and the spirit of the children  
12 and the people, team spirit. We're coming. We've got a  
13 long way to go, but from what I read in the newspaper,  
14 every state has got a long way to go.

15           But the main thing we need is jobs. If you  
16 give the people of Sunflower County, the people in  
17 Ruleville, Mississippi, jobs, you won't have to worry  
18 about anything else.

19           Sure, you've got a few out there that won't  
20 work, but the people that will work are going nowhere.  
21 They've got to go further. They're going to build better  
22 schools. They're going to build better churches.

23           Half of our black churches in Sunflower County,  
24 they are in some type of building program. The church  
25 out here in Dockery that burned, just moved into a church

1 next door, right here.

2           And you know, with open arms, and there are  
3 people that are determined that through God's will --  
4 community and their people.

5           The church out here that burned, which Jackie  
6 would have people from both of them here -- they bought a  
7 building over here behind the hospital and are renovating  
8 it. It's going to be a beautiful building.

9           But you give us jobs, we'll take care of the  
10 rest of it. Racism is going to take care of itself and  
11 all the people because God is against racism, and if a  
12 person loves himself, he can't hate his fellow man.

13           COMMISSIONER BERRY: Now, Mr. Donahoe, what do  
14 you think will happen if you don't get an extension on  
15 the welfare reform? You said you asked for it and they  
16 wouldn't --

17           MR. DONAHOE: Well, it's already been turned  
18 down.

19           COMMISSIONER BERRY: So what do you think is  
20 going to happen to the people?

21           MR. DONAHOE: A lot of mothers hurting. Now,  
22 we do have programs here that are trying to get people a  
23 GED, but look, I know I can tell you two young ladies  
24 here, about 24, 25 years old, fine ladies that have been  
25 graduated from college two years and haven't been able to

1 find a five dollar an hour job. If they do it, they've  
2 got to go to Jackson or they've got to go to Memphis.  
3 They can't find it here.

4 That's what we've got to have. Sure, education  
5 is part of it and bringing out people up. I mean, job  
6 training is part of it, but the main thing is the job  
7 being available. If it's available, we'll do the job.

8 I think there are many companies, Modern one of  
9 the biggest lawn mower manufacturers in the world, about  
10 1100 and something people working, and you know, that was  
11 one of their questions when they came down here from up  
12 north 36 years ago, are we going to be able to get  
13 skilled people.

14 That's no problem. They've got skilled people,  
15 and there's a lot of people that apply that they can't  
16 use.

17 DR. WARD: Reverend Brown, would you want to  
18 make some statements? Probably as you see things as a  
19 follow up to the discussions we had last July.

20 COMMISSIONER BERRY: Or any comments you would  
21 like to make. Your church is being rebuilt, is that --

22 REVEREND BROWN: We're rebuilding it -- the  
23 building that burned, we've already did some renovations  
24 to it. Then we took the liberty of purchasing more  
25 property, which is within the city limits, and as Mr.



1 Donahoe stated, we are nearly to the point of completing  
2 that building. We'll be ready to move in probably within  
3 the next four weeks.

4           So the incident that took place really didn't  
5 hold us back and was really a tremendous blessing to us  
6 for the fact that it encouraged us and motivated us to go  
7 ahead and do what we had to do.

8           And many incidents leading up to that  
9 particular incident that maybe there were signs along the  
10 way indicating that it was time for us to move from that  
11 location to the present location, and so that is what we  
12 might describe, the straw that broke the camel's back, to  
13 go ahead and open our eyes to the fact that we needed to  
14 move from where we are now to where we will be next  
15 month.

16           COMMISSIONER BERRY: What's happened in the  
17 area where you are and where you were last year when you  
18 told us about what was going on there? I mean, your  
19 moving will solve your congregation's problems.

20           REVEREND BROWN: Yes, it will solve some of --  
21 well, I believe in general that we know, of course,  
22 you've spoken a lot about race and about a lot of other  
23 issues.

24           I was thinking in terms of basically we were  
25 going to focus in on the church fires and basically the

1 race relations. Of course, when we have racial problems  
2 and they have racial problems all over the country, and  
3 they are very noticeable here.

4           Since we last spoke last year, the incident  
5 which has taken place, such as the light which is outside  
6 of our church, that was being shot out, I think maybe has  
7 happened three or four times since then, since that  
8 particular occasion that you and I had spoken.

9           They have somewhat minimized but they haven't  
10 completely stopped. We still have some people rioting on  
11 the bridge, which is right down from my church. We made  
12 complaints about that -- very seldom, and we still have  
13 complaints that we make to the sheriff's department  
14 concerning those situations that take place out there,  
15 and the attitude has been somewhat sympathetic, but then  
16 if you really want to look at it and you want the honest  
17 to God truth, I think that is really in a sense still has  
18 kind of been brushed off. It hasn't taken the position  
19 that it needs to be taken, and I'm speaking as a pastor.  
20 I'm speaking as a leader of this community, that it  
21 hasn't gotten the attention that it should have gotten,  
22 not in this area.

23           COMMISSIONER BERRY: And also people -- you  
24 don't have to stand up when you talk. You can just sit  
25 down. You're just talking to each other. You don't have

1 to be -- sit down when you talk.

2 We've just having this conversation here. We  
3 aren't having speech -- anybody can talk who wants to. I  
4 just keep talking because I feel like it.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He's a minister. He --

6 COMMISSIONER BERRY: Well, maybe ministers like  
7 to stand up when they talk, but you know, Reverend Brown,  
8 when talking to you last year, listening to you last  
9 year, has stuck in my mind all year long.

10 This whole thing has stuck in my mind all year  
11 long, and bothered me. I know there's a problem of jobs  
12 here. We heard about that last year, and I'm really sad  
13 that the empowerment zone hasn't turned out to be all it  
14 was cracked up to be either.

15 Most things simply don't seem to turn out to be  
16 what you think is going to happen, but I'm really  
17 concerned that one, we don't know who burned your church  
18 yet.

19 And two, you moving.

20 Three, there are incidents that still happen  
21 and we still don't know who's doing it. And yet last  
22 year we were told that, you know, law enforcement was  
23 going to see to it that prompt responses and they were  
24 going to clear up all this.

25 I don't understand what the problem is. Once

1 somebody says something -- somebody over there said  
2 something. I heard a sound in the back -- I think it was  
3 Amen or something.

4           You can speak up. You can speak again if you  
5 want to. What did you just say about that? Speak on.

6           MS. SHIPP: My name is Daisy Shipp, and I work  
7 with the states -- and there's a lot of -- in Ruleville,  
8 Mississippi, and I know Mr. Donahoe. He helped me get my  
9 job where I am today, and I've been there almost 11  
10 years, but prejudice in Ruleville? Man, it will always  
11 be here.

12           As long as you don't step on their toes, you're  
13 cool. But say something that you're speaking up for  
14 yourself, you see how many going to like you then.  
15 They're going to say you're crazy, you're stupid. You  
16 don't know nothing. But speak up for yourself and see  
17 what happens.

18           COMMISSIONER BERRY: Well, why do you think  
19 Reverend Brown's church, one, that we haven't found out  
20 who did it, and --

21           MS. SHIPP: See, I'm not a member of that  
22 church so I can't speak on that. I mean, I could speak  
23 on that, but I have no idea. But about us moving over  
24 there, that ain't going to stop it. They're going to  
25 come right over there and burn it down.

1           It's taken all our money -- same thing's going  
2 to happen.

3           COMMISSIONER BERRY: Did you all get any money  
4 from the National Council of Churches or the HUD loan  
5 program to help you with this?

6           REVEREND BROWN: No, ma'am, we have never  
7 received any funds --

8           COMMISSIONER BERRY: Did you apply for any of  
9 these funds?

10          REVEREND BROWN: No, ma'am, we did not apply.

11          COMMISSIONER BERRY: We need to -- Melvin, you  
12 need to give him the information because you -- there's a  
13 fund that the National Council of Churches put together  
14 of money for the churches that were burned, and you're  
15 supplied to apply to that so they can give you some money  
16 so that the burden of that -- your congregation -- maybe  
17 Mr. Donahoe knows about it.

18          MR. DONAHOE: Ms. Berry, they're very aware of  
19 that. Jackie can probably speak to it -- Congressman Ben  
20 Thompson held a conference here -- Secretary of Housing -  
21 - HUD was with him, and I think because their church had  
22 already been fixed back -- about the other church is the  
23 -- Jackie could probably speak to it. She's part of this  
24 church.

25          COMMISSIONER BERRY: Okay.

1 DR. WARD: Jackie Buckner.

2 MR. DONAHOE: Right.

3 MR. BUCKNER: I am Jackie Buckner, and I am a  
4 member of the New Mount Zion Church -- other members --  
5 well, to renovate our church, the one that got burned, we  
6 had church insurance, so that kind of helped us to get  
7 back and truly, we have not found -- did not receive any  
8 money from the NCAW. We just went to the bank to borrow  
9 what we need to renovate it and rebuild our new church.

10 We were getting ready to move. We were going  
11 to move regardless, you know. This burning did not send  
12 us away, because just a month or so after that, we were  
13 right back in. We never stopped having service. We used  
14 a neighboring church, you know, to continue our service.

15 And they say, you know, that he couldn't stop  
16 us from coming in to pray to God, but we have not  
17 received any monetary funds federally. We received a  
18 large amount from the Kenneth Copeland Ministry, and some  
19 other nice people and nice churches, nice organizations,  
20 out of the State of Mississippi.

21 We have not received anything community-wide --  
22 so everything we have done has been with our church ties  
23 and our offerings, our building fund, and the money that  
24 was borrowed from the bank to help renovate this  
25 building.

1           As Pastor Brown said, with God's help within  
2 four to six weeks we would be moving into that building,  
3 but it's just sad, and as we talked a year ago, or 14  
4 months ago, and we met with you all, our hearts were  
5 still with hurt and pain, but we have gone on. We have  
6 really moved on and we have -- we have done good.

7           Congregation is increasing, but saying it's  
8 going to be safe, you know, people right now, Reverend  
9 Brown said -- they still, they sit on the bridge. We  
10 could be having service, and they would be sitting down  
11 drinking and smoking and when we call -- and shooting --  
12 shooting off the bridge, interrupting service but we keep  
13 on praising Him and we get them on our phones and we are  
14 calling the sheriff's department, police department, or  
15 sheriff's department, because they're out in the County,  
16 and they'll come out.

17           I don't think they write any tickets, you know.  
18 They get them off for a little while, but when we leave  
19 service, they come right back, you know.

20           So that problem has not been solved. And the  
21 County knows it. The sheriff's department -- I'm a  
22 county employee and, you know, they're aware of it going  
23 on, but I don't think -- if they start fining these  
24 people, maybe, you know, they'll -- they don't write any  
25 tickets, you know, and --

1 MR. WARD: Is there -- probably you can answer  
2 this, is there no city ordinance -- first of all, I  
3 should ask, is the church within the city limits?

4 MS. BUCKNER: Our church is not.

5 MR. WARD: It's in the county, okay. So there  
6 is no law that protects your location against repeated  
7 incidents that could be called nuisances, such as  
8 disruption of church services.

9 If you have a hospital out there, I don't  
10 assume you allow people to shoot guns with patients in  
11 the hospital. But if it's a church, then maybe something  
12 else pertains -- and what I'm trying to figure out is if  
13 this is going to be whether you are there or move, a  
14 continuing problem, is it that the county feels it is  
15 impotent to do anything about this?

16 And perhaps you can address that.

17 MR. DONAHOE: The responsibility of the  
18 sheriff's department -- this is not -- this disruption on  
19 the bridge is not all race.

20 We had a young black man killed in the last  
21 couple of months. His father is also a county employee  
22 and a pastor here in town. And they were out shooting  
23 off the bridge, you know.

24 So when you go out there a lot of times you see  
25 black and white. It's a gathering place. It's not --



1 sometimes it may be racial but most of the times it's  
2 mixed.

3           It's in the County and the sheriff has been  
4 called out. Any person that wanted to swear out a  
5 complaint, he would be compelled to take it and arrest  
6 that person and bring them in, but to my knowledge nobody  
7 has charged anybody with anything but yes, the law  
8 enforcement does have a responsibility to make sure this  
9 -- and he knows that.

10           Our sheriff himself has just got over a liver  
11 transplant, and I hope he takes more interest in this and  
12 we'll see improvement.

13           COMMISSIONER BERRY: Mr. Donahoe, I'm sorry,  
14 but I just cannot believe this, because if I in my home  
15 town had a nuisance like this going on, and somebody  
16 shooting, unless your law permits people to shoot  
17 anything they want to anytime they feel like it and  
18 disrupt anything, and I don't know the answer to that --  
19 it would not be an appropriate answer for my local  
20 representative to tell me that the police chief is ill or  
21 that something is a problem.

22           I would say well, I don't care what happens, I  
23 don't want anybody out there shooting and I want you to  
24 do something about it.

25           Now, I know that these are complications, but

1 it's disturbing to come back here a year after we were  
2 here to have this fire take place, to have the continued  
3 incidents take place, and whether they're racially  
4 motivated or not, and you say some of them may be and  
5 some may not, whatever, sort them out, to have people say  
6 that it's still going on, and now they're moving, for  
7 whatever reason, and then some of them feel like the same  
8 thing is going to happen to them when they move.

9           There must be some kind of recourse that they  
10 have. I mean, to focus in on this individually --

11           MR. DONAHOE: You say you're not going to let  
12 your representative tell you -- but the sheriff is  
13 elected like I am. I can't give the sheriff orders.  
14 Sometimes I'd like to, but I can't.

15           He's elected just like I am, the same year I  
16 am. We provide a budget for the sheriff, and we hope and  
17 we think that we provide enough for protection of this  
18 county. Maybe we don't.

19           We are applying for more Cops grants to try to  
20 get more policemen and -- it's something that people --  
21 some day somebody will get mad enough, they're going to  
22 file some charges against somebody and somebody is going  
23 to jail.

24           It's sad that a young man has to die with a gun  
25 in his own hand on this bridge to make people wake up,

1 but that just happened, and you know, I hope that that  
2 had an effect even on the other young people that were  
3 taking part in it.

4 DR. WARD: About two months ago?

5 MR. DONAHOE: About two months ago, yes.

6 COMMISSIONER BERRY: Reverend Brown, has anyone  
7 filed complaint with the sheriff, asked the sheriff to  
8 identify anything or do you know, either of you, or who  
9 knows? Do you know?

10 DR. WARD: For the record, just identify  
11 yourself because it will go into the record.

12 MR. JOHNSON: Well, if the sheriff do come out  
13 there on the bridge, they won't say nothing to them  
14 anyway, because I know one night we were coming from  
15 church and one of the other law enforcements was out  
16 there with them drinking and stuff, you have high places  
17 -- they're not going to say nothing to you, so they're  
18 still not going to do nothing to you unless somebody put  
19 a sign out there or something say stop, you know, hanging  
20 on the bridge or something, because they been drinking,  
21 smoking and stuff.

22 DR. WARD: For my information, would you state  
23 your name, please, for us?

24 MR. JOHNSON: Talmage Johnson.

25 DR. WARD: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr.

1 Johnson. I just want some clarification and we're not  
2 going to try to beat this to death, but I need  
3 clarification.

4 Is the bridge a sanctioned place by custom for  
5 young people to meet and blow off steam? I mean, has the  
6 bridge been this kind of meeting place for teenagers, I  
7 would suppose, for over five or six years?

8 MS. BUCKNER: An isolated place?

9 DR. WARD: Mm-hmm.

10 MS. BUCKNER: I think it's an isolated place,  
11 no officers out there, no deputies out there. They used  
12 to -- and that's what -- I mean, it's not all teenagers.  
13 I'm 32. There's young men my age, people that we know,  
14 black and white. It's not -- they all hang there and  
15 they hang there together, but it's isolated and they know  
16 they can get drunk and high. They can do whatever they  
17 want to, you know, out there because they know nobody  
18 will come out there or they know they might check, and at  
19 one point they don't even check any more sometimes.

20 And I think if our sheriff's department fines  
21 these individuals, maybe that would stop it, because when  
22 we leave our church, we're going to sell it. Somebody  
23 else is going to go through the same thing we have gone  
24 through, and it's really sad, and I don't think they're  
25 being fined.

1           We call and say come out here. They're out  
2 here disturbing service, and there are students on the  
3 bridge. We've got signs, county sign. I'm a county  
4 employee, and they'll shoot them up. They'll tear them  
5 down, but they know it's wrong, you know, to do it, and  
6 we'll pass -- we was in service heavily one Sunday, am I  
7 right, Melvin? And they were shooting, nine millimeters.

8           I mean, booming sounds. We're in service. No  
9 respect for the church, and that's what burns my heart,  
10 because they don't -- if we're not there, that's okay,  
11 but respect does -- and we're in service. Our minister  
12 is up giving us the word of God.

13           That's my thing. Deputies come down. They run  
14 them off. Two hours later we come in from the service,  
15 they're right back, and I know they're not fining these  
16 people. I know -- we don't see anything in the paper  
17 that says they're being fined, and this is complaints we  
18 do all the time.

19           And like I say, I am a county employee and the  
20 sheriff's department is an employment of the county, but  
21 it's not anything being done.

22           COMMISSIONER BERRY: Last year there was a --  
23 we were told that the bridge was covered with graffiti  
24 that included a swastika and the letters KKK.

25           MR. BUCKNER: Our county employees went and

1 repainted them and --

2 COMMISSIONER BERRY: And it comes right back.

3 MR. DONAHOE: Jackie husband is the assistant  
4 road manager of the county and he's responsible to keep  
5 this bridge up, and they go bankrupt trying keep it  
6 painted, because they go and paint it right back.

7 It's against the law to shoot the bridge. it's  
8 against the law to shoot from a road in Mississippi, even  
9 in deer hunting -- you can't even shoot a deer from the  
10 road or a bridge, but the laws say, and they're correct,  
11 in order to charge that person, they've got to see them  
12 or have a witness see them, this person shot the road --  
13 they wouldn't sign the paper.

14 They say when they go out there, they don't  
15 find a gun or nothing. They see them coming, I guess a  
16 mile away, and they -- but game wardens can arrest them.  
17 Sheriff's deputies can arrest them. Anybody that knows  
18 they shot from the bridge, because it's against the law.

19 And what they're doing, they're shooting down  
20 in the water at snakes, but it's just a game for them.

21 DR. WARD: Ms. Shipp and then Ms. Jones.

22 MS. SHIPP: One Saturday night we was at  
23 services, and I promise you, the sheriff himself was down  
24 there shooting. It wasn't nobody out on the street, not  
25 that night, not that night, because when I got in my car

1 I know, and nobody else was on that bridge, so it ain't  
2 all the people even -- it's some underhand stuff too,  
3 plenty of it. Put that in the paper.

4 MS. JONES: My comment is that regardless of  
5 whether it's blacks, whites, old or young, if people in  
6 church are so inhibited -- to me their civil rights are  
7 being violated because this has something to do with  
8 worship. The fact that you're feeling uncomfortable to  
9 worship freely, so it doesn't matter if it's an old  
10 person or a young person. Whoever is infringing upon the  
11 freedom from worship, it seems to me is in violation of  
12 the rights of the parishioners.

13 I don't understand why it wouldn't be possible  
14 to have a surveillance camera there for a period of time  
15 documenting response time, who is doing what, that kind  
16 of thing.

17 COMMISSIONER BERRY: So that intimidation,  
18 which interferes with religious freedom, is as much a  
19 civil rights violation as any other --

20 MS. JONES: I would think.

21 COMMISSIONER BERRY: And we are in the business  
22 of being concerned about religious discrimination as well  
23 as race and other kinds of discrimination too.

24 Well, we're going to have to -- don't you think  
25 we should look into this and see whether there is some

1 remedy? I don't know whether there's a civil remedy,  
2 whether you could file a suit and have the police  
3 department ordered -- the sheriff's department ordered to  
4 do something about this.

5 DR. WARD: I'm not sure. I think it does need  
6 to be pursued, because any person in the community of  
7 Ruleville or Sunflower County or anyplace in this state  
8 should feel free not to have to endure years of this kind  
9 of what I consider basically harassment, but I also see  
10 it as an extremely complex problem, and I don't want to  
11 be accused of being the outsider who came to the Delta to  
12 tell you what to do with your town.

13 But what I'm hearing, because this problem is  
14 so complicated, is that there has not been a proper  
15 discussion of it among all the people who live in  
16 Ruleville, not just some of the people, but all -- the  
17 community of Ruleville and I make this accusation -- I  
18 should be corrected if it is indeed an accusation -- but  
19 I'm not sensing that this community has had a sufficient  
20 conversation about it.

21 I can say the same thing about Jackson. It's  
22 not picking on Ruleville. I can say the same thing about  
23 other cities, Vicksburg, Tunica, in this state.

24 So my basic point is that many of these  
25 problems, which have histories of what is -- has been



1 allowed and what has not been allowed, who is involved, a  
2 complicity of police -- well, of law enforcement officers  
3 in practices that are disturbing.

4           These things cannot be solved by just simply  
5 having another lawsuit. I think the law is there and  
6 it's a very effective instrument. However, I think there  
7 have to be genuine examinations of the kind that neither  
8 this country nor this state has been willing to have, of  
9 local problems.

10           COMMISSIONER BERRY: Has anybody tried here in  
11 Ruleville or in the County since we were here the last  
12 time to try to bring together groups of people, black and  
13 white, to discuss race relations?

14           MS. SHIPP: Repeat that, ma'am.

15           COMMISSIONER BERRY: Has anyone, any public  
16 official, any church, any group of ministers, any  
17 business leaders, or whoever, tried since last time we  
18 were here in Mississippi last year to bring together  
19 black and white people in the community to discuss  
20 community issues or whatever we want to call it, race  
21 issues?

22           MS. SHIPP: No, ma'am.

23           COMMISSIONER BERRY: Jobs issues? Any kind of  
24 issues so that there can be an airing of views by people  
25 in the community?

1 MS. SHIPP: No, ma'am.

2 COMMISSIONER BERRY: So that people can discuss  
3 these things together? Has anybody tried to do that?  
4 Has that happened since we were here last year?

5 MS. SHIPP: No, ma'am.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, ma'am.

7 REVEREND BROWN: I don't think -- looking at  
8 it, it would be fruitless because not everyone feels or  
9 has experienced what we have felt. The church that was  
10 at Dockery and our church -- appears to be only two  
11 churches that have experienced this type -- this type  
12 dilemma, and knowing in the extreme way.

13 Most other churches within the community have  
14 experienced very minimal effects like what we have, and  
15 therefore the leaders of those churches, the pastors of  
16 those churches, have a very low interest in things -- and  
17 I wouldn't even go as far as try to contact them, because  
18 I know what the response would be automatically.

19 COMMISSIONER BERRY: You know what the response  
20 would -- you do? You know what the response --

21 REVEREND BROWN: I know what the response would  
22 be. The church that I pastor is a relatively small  
23 church and the church at Dockery is about the same size,  
24 but the other congregations, the leaders in those  
25 churches, the interest level in something like this is

1 very low because they have experienced very, very little  
2 effects.

3 I mean, these type things haven't really -- not  
4 the way that it happened to us, so their interest in it  
5 isn't that strong.

6 COMMISSIONER BERRY: And nobody in the white  
7 community has come forward to ask the white community to  
8 meet with the black community to discuss community issues  
9 or jobs issues or race issues, however you want to term  
10 it, to try to build a sense of community here, discuss  
11 these issues so that people can hear how each side feels  
12 about whatever is going on?

13 MS. SHIPP: Ma'am, the question you asked, the  
14 question you just asked -- that's not happening here in  
15 Ruleville, and I'm just being honest about it. It's just  
16 not happening.

17 And the good that you -- you think we get a  
18 chance at that? No, ma'am. We took a chance at asking  
19 jobs -- there's a lot of qualified black people. I've  
20 got a degree, and I'm not stupid, you know, but there's -  
21 - the question you asked, it's not happening, and nobody  
22 giving up -- (many people speaking at once from audience)  
23 --

24 COMMISSIONER BERRY: But this audience or this  
25 forum is entirely -- unless I'm looking and can't see

1 you, except for Mr. Donahoe, is entirely black, unless  
2 I'm --

3 MR. DONAHOE: There's one thing I'd like to  
4 say. I'm -- Jackson, because I don't have to go out to  
5 the bridge whenever I have to worship -- I see it on  
6 buildings all over the sides of buildings.

7 This problem don't only go on out there, it  
8 goes on up here, but Indianola has a lot more shooting  
9 and trouble than we do. It just kept at one side.

10 Greenville, Mississippi, hardly a week goes by  
11 that there's not another person killed or murdered by the  
12 -- one of their neighbors. I mean, this is going on  
13 everywhere.

14 The answer to this is prosperity. If a person  
15 hasn't go anything else to do, they're going to go out  
16 there, because they get a little recognition. But if  
17 they've got a car and a home that they're proud of and  
18 can stay home and mow their yard, they're not going to be  
19 out there.

20 You give us jobs, and 99 percent of that's  
21 going to be taken care of. Look, we've got --  
22 Mississippi and Mississippi Delta is a good place. We've  
23 got a lot, a lot of people that's returning here that  
24 went to Chicago years ago, because they couldn't make a  
25 living.

1           Now they're returning here, they want to make  
2 their home here. We've got a lot to offer. We've got a  
3 warmer climate than other places, but we need jobs and if  
4 a young person 25 to 35 years old hasn't got work to do  
5 and hasn't got something that he can call his own, he's  
6 going to look for things like that, and you can move it  
7 from there, and it's going to move over here.

8           And until we can get people some security to  
9 where they can have something and not be ashamed to ask a  
10 young lady to go to a movie with him or take her out to a  
11 hamburger because he hasn't got five dollars or twenty  
12 dollars or whatever it takes, you know, he's going to  
13 lower his self image, and he's going to go to things like  
14 that.

15           And whether it's the bridge or the street up  
16 here, where the whiskey stores are or what not, it's  
17 going to go on if you haven't got something for people to  
18 feel like that they're bettering themselves.

19           DR. WARD: Well, shouldn't this be the  
20 discussion in Ruleville? How do we get -- how does this  
21 total community economically empower itself?

22           I've heard you say -- and I've very touched by  
23 this -- give us jobs and we can have a better situation.  
24 Give us jobs, give us jobs.

25           You know, I'm kind of radical about some

1 things. Nobody is going to give you a job. Let me tell  
2 you that, nobody is going to give you a job.

3           When people wanted what was very precious to  
4 them thirty some years ago, which was called freedom,  
5 they marched. I don't know why it is that we are so slow  
6 that if we need jobs, that somebody should march on the  
7 Department of Labor and have a sit-in at the White House  
8 and say nobody works here until we do.

9           It would be a major embarrassment to the  
10 country, but if you are sincere about this being the  
11 salvation for your community, I don't advise you to be  
12 that radical, but you have to do something that lets the  
13 rest of the state and this nation know that you're not  
14 just sitting down saying I want a job to fall out of  
15 heaven, because it's not going to come.

16           I'm telling you that. Dr. White?

17           DR. WHITE: I just wanted to ask Dr. Ward what  
18 he was saying -- I want you to state where I work. I  
19 work for an organization which is based in Jackson, and  
20 as you mentioned earlier, we work in the three states,  
21 Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana.

22           We convene people from all over these three  
23 states to address issues of economic development, work  
24 force development, issues such as you've been discussing  
25 tonight, that affect families with children.

1           And what we hear coming from people like those  
2 of you who are gathered here today, we just left  
3 Greenville today, is that until we as a people, a  
4 community such as Ruleville, cannot change unless the  
5 people who live in that community are willing to come  
6 together across those traditional barriers of race, of  
7 class, of gender, and even geographical boundaries.

8           So what I hear Dr. Ward saying and what we are  
9 saying also, a job will not drop out of the sky. We know  
10 that historically when there's a disproportionate number  
11 of minority people, the factories, the plants are going  
12 to go someplace else.

13           So it's going to mean that people who will come  
14 together and begin to talk about and develop strategies  
15 for a media rating, those problems -- or getting rid of  
16 those problems that exist in that community.

17           And as long as people stay on one side of the  
18 track, and say ain't it awful, whether you are the  
19 affluent side of the track or you're the poor side of the  
20 track, nothing is going to change until the groups decide  
21 that they are going to come together, and that I think is  
22 the issue.

23           It has to do with church burnings. It has to  
24 do with economic development and jobs in the community.  
25 It has to do with the quality of housing, the quality of

1 the infrastructure in the community, and until the  
2 community can come together, these things won't change.

3           COMMISSIONER BERRY: How can you get the  
4 community to come together? I guess that's the question.  
5 We have -- I mean, everybody agrees that -- I assume  
6 everybody here agrees -- everybody was shaking their  
7 heads, nodding up and down, when Mr. Donahoe was talking  
8 about jobs. Everybody was going mm-hmm, so everybody was  
9 agreeing.

10           Everybody agrees with what you say, Dr. Ward,  
11 about economic development, and about community, but how  
12 do we get the whole community in Ruleville, in Sunflower  
13 County, in the Delta, in Mississippi, how do we get the  
14 community across race and class lines to come together to  
15 talk about economic development in the areas that need  
16 economic development, like this one?

17           And economic development for everybody, and not  
18 just bringing in industry, that's one thing, but also  
19 strategies where people can become entrepreneurs in their  
20 own right, by having small amounts of money to set up  
21 businesses themselves, and to sell and buy from each  
22 other, and other strategies like that?

23           How do we do that? How do we get that to  
24 happen as a community enterprise?

25           MR. DONAHOE: Let me say again, I think that



1 you are getting the impression that we are sitting on our  
2 laurels waiting for somebody to fall out of the sky.  
3 That's not necessarily true.

4           The Chamber of Commerce here in the years -- up  
5 to -- couple years were very active. We sweated blood to  
6 get the two common interests -- we got state grants. We  
7 got county and city money, loans. We got those things.

8           We had over 800 jobs right across the railroad.  
9 Now there are less than 150, because legislation was  
10 passed to give it to Mexico.

11           All right. I think that's kind of discouraging  
12 the people in a way, but people have got to wake up. We  
13 have a Chamber of Commerce banquet every year, and it's  
14 advertised in all the rest of the stores and tickets for  
15 sale.

16           You generally have less than 30 people show up  
17 for it. We've got to -- like you say, we've got to quit  
18 complaining. We've got -- Sunflower County Economic  
19 Development Committee people serve from all over the  
20 county on that free of charge.

21           I served on the work force committee for two  
22 years and it got to where it was taking as much as 12, 13  
23 hours a month which, you know, with other duties that I  
24 had, I just didn't have time, but I still support that  
25 program.

1           It's not federal money -- most of it is money  
2 that's been donated by foundations and put here because  
3 people are residents here and -- it's a good program.

4           But I think that we've got to -- in the first  
5 place, as Daisy said a while ago, they -- we are they,  
6 you know. We've got to quit arguing and saying well,  
7 what can we do? What can you do to help me? What can I  
8 do to help you? We've got to help each other.

9           How that comes about? You know, I haven't got  
10 an answer. I've been trying for a long time, and I've  
11 failed, but we do have progress here. We've got -- Daisy  
12 said, she's got a big WIC warehouse here that wasn't here  
13 eight or nine years ago.

14           We've got a new welfare office, new health  
15 department that wasn't here. This was our little health  
16 department -- renovated and it was -- you know, it was  
17 falling down. After we got it -- we got away from the  
18 state and put county money into it -- social service in  
19 the back.

20           We have a big Sunflower store that doubled in  
21 size. We have a new black owned restaurant out on the  
22 highway which is doing great. You can go here and you  
23 can go into most any restaurant at lunch, you find black  
24 and whites in our restaurants here. You can find all  
25 demanding to buy hamburgers and french fries.

1           We are making progress. Sure, we're not  
2 satisfied and we wouldn't be human if we were, you know,  
3 but we're never going to be satisfied, because we want  
4 the best we can get, and we're going to get it.

5           But right now one thing is hurting as far as  
6 industry is the empowerment zone. If industry is  
7 planning in come here, it is not coming to Ruleville,  
8 Mississippi. They go where they're getting three dollars  
9 an hour exemption on every employee they hire for two  
10 years, get \$3,000 income tax off the top of their income  
11 tax.

12           That's where they're going and they're not  
13 coming, you know -- empowerment zone is good for some  
14 areas; it's hurt others.

15           But when there's a new factory down there,  
16 we're going to get our part of the jobs. We've got a lot  
17 of people here. Our people don't all here. If we didn't  
18 have Parchman up here, if we didn't have Modern then we  
19 would be hurting, but we are growing but we're still not  
20 satisfied and until we can put every man on the street  
21 that wants to work to work, we're not going to be  
22 satisfied. We're going to work for it.

23           MR. BUCKNER: Ms. Chair, I want to try and  
24 answer to the question about where do we start, I think  
25 it needs to start locally, with our Mayor and our Board

1 of Aldermen.

2 I feel that they need to -- they see the need  
3 for what we need in Ruleville. They see what we need and  
4 I think they need to get together and say well, look, we  
5 have a problem on this side of the tracks. As the -- we  
6 have a problem. They need to bring us together, and I  
7 think that's where we need to start. That's locally.

8 Then if we need to go to the county level, a  
9 lot of things county-wide that needs to be changed. We  
10 have a leadership Sunflower County going on right now.  
11 I'm a member of the Crossroads Program, and that program  
12 is where all the county schools can get together, all the  
13 schools in the county, all from Parchman on back.

14 We only have like four schools -- four  
15 districts -- three districts, but we're trying to get  
16 everybody together so, you know, that Ruleville one thing  
17 -- Drew is down beneath them, and Ruleville -- you know --  
18 --and I think our Mayor and our Board of Aldermen need to  
19 do what you say we need to do.

20 We need to get these people together. We need  
21 to come in. We need to talk about race relations in  
22 Ruleville, you know. Our board is mixed. We have a  
23 black Mayor. We have black and white alderman, and I  
24 have no problem with, you know, the way the board is set  
25 up because if you're in there and I see you're going to

1 do a good job, I'll vote for you, I'll support you. I'm  
2 not going to support you just because you're black, but  
3 if I see you can do the job, I'll support you, because I  
4 don't have that prejudice and discrimination in my heart.

5           Being a Christian you can't say that you have  
6 that. It's here in Ruleville, don't get me wrong, but I  
7 think it needs to start with the Mayor and Board of  
8 Aldermen. They need to look at this thing and say we've  
9 got a problem here, and we need to come together. We  
10 need a meeting of this -- we need to bring it to a  
11 meeting, you know, and we need to sit down and talk about  
12 it.

13           And that's where I feel we need to start. I'm  
14 hopeful.

15           MS. SHIPP: Okay, first of all, the Board is  
16 the one that's got the last say-so, not the Mayor,  
17 because I go to the Board meetings.

18           It's the five Board members that should present  
19 whatever needs to be done. They know what needs to be  
20 done sometimes, and sometimes they don't.

21           But to answer your question, ma'am, if you were  
22 in a three-bedroom house, a driving a nice, you ain't  
23 worried about nobody else, because you know, what you  
24 going to worry about somebody else for when you're doing  
25 okay?

1           It's a lot of people's doing okay. They ain't  
2 worried about the ones that's up under there. They're  
3 worried about them, and back to that. The Board, the  
4 five Board members is the ones that need to get together,  
5 because see, the Mayor ain't got no say-so. They're the  
6 ones who vote, and she only breaks the tie if one of the  
7 Board members are not there.

8           See, it's the Board that needs to determine  
9 what Ruleville needs and what they don't need.

10           COMMISSIONER BERRY: Last year another --

11           MS. SHIPP: You know, that's how that goes.

12           COMMISSIONER BERRY: Last year another thing  
13 that we were told here and in other rural towns where we  
14 visited on the church fires, was that blacks may have  
15 political -- hold political office, that is get elected,  
16 hold political office, so on, but that in the Delta and  
17 in other areas, little towns throughout the South, blacks  
18 do not have power, don't have economic power, and really  
19 don't have political power. They hold office, be  
20 elected, so on, but that they do not hold the power.

21           Do you think that's true or do you think that  
22 is just -- was that last year or --

23           MS. SHIPP: Repeat the question again. I don't

24 --

25           COMMISSIONER BERRY: Blacks maybe hold

1 political office, that is get elected to the Mayor's  
2 office or something, but in terms of the power to change  
3 the conditions of life of the black people who live in  
4 the community, economically, in terms of jobs or business  
5 opportunities, or what they get, but they don't really  
6 have the power to change that that much. Is that --

7 MS. SHIPP: They're just holding the positions  
8 now.

9 REVEREND BROWN: They have positions but they  
10 don't have power.

11 COMMISSIONER BERRY: They hold positions?

12 REVEREND BROWN: They hold positions but they  
13 don't have power. You see, when you look at politics in  
14 general, it is the economic structure that controls  
15 politics, and not position, because -- and when you look  
16 at the Board of Aldermen, it's those persons who are, as  
17 Sister Shipp said, those persons who are on that Board of  
18 Aldermen, if they are willing to do it, they have the  
19 three-bedroom house and the nice automobiles in their  
20 driveway, that they are not really concerned.

21 See, what basically what we have here is -- and  
22 you can look at this meeting and tell -- that you have  
23 really a lack of interest in this.

24 Now, there are some people who are concerned.  
25 Those of us who are members of my church and other

1 churches, who are here, and those of you who traveled  
2 from far away to come to be with us, but yet in the  
3 community in general we say we want jobs, we say we need  
4 jobs, we need money, but in our hearts we are not really  
5 exemplifying this, and because -- I mean, just as I say,  
6 I go to meetings.

7           I go to meetings at the other churches.  
8 They're not really demonstrating an interest in this, and  
9 the people that you get enough people together, the  
10 people -- if enough people are rounded together, they  
11 could move whatever opposition that is in their way.

12           I mean, we've shown that, seen that in the  
13 civil rights movement. Even with guns, when enough  
14 people have banded together, they were able to bulldoze  
15 the government positions that was standing in front of  
16 them.

17           So the thing is is that people do not have  
18 enough -- they are not -- the interest is not there.  
19 Those of us who are up, who care for the ones who are  
20 under us, but the ones who do not have, they should be  
21 here voicing their opinion, and Ruleville is not really a  
22 small town. There are a number of people who knew about  
23 this meeting, could have been here, could have voiced  
24 their opinion.

25           I mean, so you can call all the meetings you



1 want. I mean, even your Board meeting -- at the -- you  
2 can look at the number of people who come. I mean, so if  
3 the interest is not here, the interest is not here, and  
4 really when you talk about finances, whether you're  
5 financing any jobs, we need jobs. True enough.

6 But money do not change folks. Money do not  
7 change folks. See, people, if they have evil in their  
8 hearts, they're going to do evil when they get off work.

9 So the thing is -- the thing is is that we need  
10 jobs, true enough, but the interest is not strong enough  
11 to revolutionize this community, and provoke that kind of  
12 change.

13 DR. WARD: I don't want to mishear you, but  
14 please, I want something clarified. You said the  
15 interest is not strong enough and are you distributing  
16 that lack of interest across the board?

17 REVEREND BROWN: You talking about from a  
18 general vantage point?

19 DR. WARD: Mm-hmm.

20 REVEREND BROWN: The interest is not there. I  
21 mean, you may take 15 percent and that's -- and that may  
22 be as high as I would go, 15 percent of the people in  
23 this community and even in the community where I come  
24 from over in Bolivar County, who may just have an  
25 intensified interest and say look, who speaks like Mr.

1 Donahoe and Sister Shipp and Sister Buckner and say we  
2 really need jobs and we really would like to come  
3 together and collaborate on these issues and discuss  
4 them, and then go out and try to rectify some kind of  
5 change, but the other 85 percent, I mean, 85 percent,  
6 they are going to sit back and they're going to watch.

7           They may rally up at first but then when the  
8 pressure comes, they're going to beg back, and it's  
9 difficult to get people even to come to church, let alone  
10 come to meetings like this to air how they really feel,  
11 what they would really like to have for themselves and  
12 for their families. So --

13           COMMISSIONER BERRY: Is part of it an  
14 unwillingness to air how they feel? I mean, an  
15 unwillingness to come and stand up in public and talk  
16 about the issue?

17           REVEREND BROWN: The first step must be to get  
18 some kind of format to really force what's really inside  
19 of them. You need to get whatever is inside of them out  
20 and put it down on paper so that we can set goals and  
21 then -- then we go out as a unit, as a group, as you  
22 said, both black and white, to achieve those goals.

23           But getting people together to discuss them is  
24 one thing and then it becomes increasingly more difficult  
25 to get people together to do something about their

1 condition.

2 COMMISSIONER BERRY: Is it a lack of  
3 leadership?

4 REVEREND BROWN: Ma'am?

5 COMMISSIONER BERRY: Is it a lack of  
6 leadership?

7 REVEREND BROWN: Partly. I can put some of the  
8 blame on the leadership, because the majority of the  
9 pastors -- I know from this side -- I can speak for the  
10 pastors -- the majority of the pastors -- we've got some  
11 churches within this community, live out of town, and --

12 COMMISSIONER BERRY: I see.

13 REVEREND BROWN: I mean, they live out of town.  
14 I myself, I am over here approximately five to six days  
15 out of the week, and I live 20 miles away, but the other  
16 pastors, they live out of town and I mean, 20, 30 miles,  
17 and most of their congregations may just see them maybe  
18 once a week or maybe twice a month, I mean, for that  
19 matter.

20 And therefore, because of the pastor's lack of  
21 interest, the congregation -- I mean, their interest  
22 level is going to be low because the pastor's interest  
23 level is low with this kind of thing, because when you  
24 look in this room, how many pastors are here today that  
25 knew about the meeting? One.

1           COMMISSIONER BERRY: So that explains some of  
2 it then, doesn't it, perhaps leadership from the  
3 religious would be lacking if people aren't here, then  
4 you have the political leadership. There's a question  
5 about that.

6           What about leadership from the business  
7 community? We're talking about on the black side. On  
8 the white side, what about leadership from the church  
9 community or ministers? You said that they aren't  
10 interested really, if I head you correctly.

11           MS. SARDEN: I think they are unaware. I think  
12 a lot of -- we didn't have any notice. They are unaware  
13 of the meeting.

14           COMMISSIONER BERRY: I meant interested in  
15 trying to -- whether they come to this meeting or no, but  
16 I mean interested in trying to pull people together to  
17 talk about some of these issues.

18           MS. SARDEN: No interest -- there's no interest  
19 in this.

20           COMMISSIONER BERRY: Well, how do we get them  
21 to be interested? What has to happen?

22           MS. SHIPP: There are a lot of people do care  
23 but they're scared -- there's a problem with us, with the  
24 blacks -- a lot of people won't come out and talk and  
25 hear people, what they need and how they think.

1           But they're scared, because that's what we been  
2 taught all our life; to be scared, but I'm not one of  
3 them. I'm going to speak my piece, ma'am, and I don't  
4 care whose toes I step on.

5           You know, they're just scared.

6           DR. WARD: How is it that they suddenly got so  
7 scared when one of the bravest women in Mississippi came  
8 out of this community?

9           MS. SHIPP: Fannie Lou Hamer -- back to this.  
10 Okay. That's what I'm telling them, a few months ago  
11 there was time for voting. If this black lady got out  
12 and got feet and legs broken, some of them got killed,  
13 for us to have our rights to vote, why should we not come  
14 out here and vote for these people?

15           These people died for it, got their legs broke.  
16 Fannie Lou Hamer was one of them. Look at Dr. Martin  
17 Luther King. Look what happened to him. They don't want  
18 it. Some of them just don't want it and some of them's  
19 scared.

20           COMMISSIONER BERRY: What do you think Fannie  
21 Lou Hamer would do if a church got burned and people were  
22 sitting there shooting and carrying on?

23           MS. SHIPP: I know when that vote went on in  
24 May and June, I know she would have turned over, several  
25 times. And the way that voting went, I know that body

1 turned over. She turned over and she didn't turn over  
2 more than once. I turned over for her. I'm serious,  
3 ma'am. It's pitiful over --

4 COMMISSIONER BERRY: What did you say, Mr.  
5 Donahoe?

6 MR. DONAHOE: I said Fannie Hamer's daughter is  
7 one of the city clerks with us.

8 COMMISSIONER BERRY: See.

9 MS. SHIPP: Okay, that's -- infamous daughter -  
10 - yet she is -- she works at City Hall, but when it was  
11 time for the Board meeting, give that lady her maternity  
12 leave, you know what they wanted to give her? Two weeks.  
13 A dog needs more than two weeks to give -- I mean, what  
14 kind of -- what's that, two weeks for this lady she's  
15 having twins.

16 MR. DONAHOE: I don't know.

17 MS. SHIPP: Mr. Donahoe, they -- E. D. Williams  
18 was saying that give that lady two weeks and Shirley Neal  
19 was too, and I was there. I go to all -- when Ms. Nash  
20 got through speaking, there was one other Board member,  
21 they gave her six weeks and her vacation time, but  
22 somebody had to speak up.

23 You know, it's not right. You got to treat  
24 everybody -- so when I cut myself and Mr. Donahoe cut  
25 himself, our blood is red. It ain't black and green and

1 white, and when the Lord come and get you, he's going to  
2 be black, he's going to be black and white. All those  
3 men going up there with Reverend Brown, going down there  
4 -- and whatever you do, ma'am, it's coming back on you.  
5 Whoever you treat wrong, you're going to pay. You're  
6 going to pay.

7           And I know that, I had to learn it. It's right  
8 here in this Bible and the -- I know you're going to pay.  
9 But they've got to learn and they better get in this  
10 Bible. We better teach it to them -- break it on down.  
11 Break it down, break it all down -- He said break the it  
12 down so you can understand it.

13           But Mr. Donahoe don't have -- I've just got to  
14 give him this, and I'm going to say it again -- he has  
15 done his job, I ain't going to lie -- because ten years  
16 ago I know that man helped me got that job.

17           Then when I got pregnant with my daughter, I  
18 had an attitude. I ain't going to lie, but when you've  
19 overworked and underpaid, you're going to have an  
20 attitude. He stopped them people from messing with me.

21           So we do --

22           MR. DONAHOE: I don't get full credit --

23           MS. SHIPP: But he does his part and I ain't  
24 going to lie on Mr. Donahoe. He knows -- I speak for me.  
25 I know what he done for me. I can't speak for nobody

1 else.

2           COMMISSIONER BERRY: Mr. Donahoe is the only  
3 white man in Sunflower County at the meeting.

4           MS. SHIPP: And when you look up in church,  
5 that -- yes, he's put money on that table and not no  
6 little money.

7           When it's time --

8           COMMISSIONER BERRY: I assume he's your private  
9 representative; right?

10          MS. SHIPP: I'm just going to talk about him --  
11 and when people's passed away, like my husband, he was  
12 there for me a number of times. When my mother-in-law  
13 died, he was there, right there at my door, knocking on  
14 my door, coming on up in there, giving me what he wanted  
15 me to have.

16          He's good -- good with the people. Maybe we  
17 get some more like him, then Ruleville will be better.  
18 But you got to go in the bank -- I got money here in the  
19 Bank of Ruleville. We're not going in. Ain't no blacks  
20 in there. But all my money is there.

21          And when the voting was going on, and I spoke  
22 up and -- huh -- she put me in the paper right here.

23          Like I told them, I'm honored to vote -- I'm  
24 honored to do whatever I believe in, I'll die and go to  
25 hell for. If I believe it is right, I'll die and go to



1 heaven.

2           When you walk up to the bank. I'm walking in  
3 there with my check, everybody looks around, everybody  
4 looking at you, but no blacks working in there. Don't  
5 you think that's -- how do you think that feels?

6           All the black people spend their money right  
7 here in Ruleville. You know where the whites take their  
8 money, Cleveland and Greenville but there ain't no blacks  
9 in these stores and in these banks. It's pitiful. It's  
10 pitiful.

11           COMMISSIONER BERRY: Why is that? Why is that?

12           MS. SHIPP: Because you're the wrong color and  
13 the same color -- I'm the same color as you, ma'am.

14           COMMISSIONER BERRY: Would anybody else know --  
15 do these people agree with that, disagree with that, or  
16 what is the situation?

17           MR. JENKINS: There is a tremendous racial  
18 issue. I mean --

19           COMMISSIONER BERRY: Why is it? Yes --

20           MS. SHIPP: You go in there to get a loan, you  
21 ain't going to get no loan if you don't know nobody like  
22 Mr. Donahoe. And I ain't lying about it.

23           COMMISSIONER BERRY: Is it being qualified --

24           MS. SHIPP: He might not have no money in the  
25 bank, but he's well known, and if you don't know nobody,

1 you don't get nothing, but see the Lord has blessed me,  
2 and I thank him for it. When my husband died, I got  
3 blessed.

4           So I ain't got to go all -- River Road, all  
5 over the Bank of Ruleville, all over -- make all -- but  
6 it's the idea how they look.

7           DR. WARD: You wanted to make a comment,  
8 please? And identify yourself for the record. The lady  
9 in front of you wanted to make a comment.

10           MS. BARNES: My name is Mamie Barnes. I'm a  
11 member of too like Ms. Shipp of the church that burned on  
12 Dockery, Highway 8, and I'd just like to say like you  
13 said, the gentleman said in the middle, we need to take a  
14 stand, you know, just like you said, Fannie Lou Hamer,  
15 where she marched for what she thought was right. What  
16 was right -- what she marched for was right.

17           And she died in the process of it, you know,  
18 through beatings and what have you. She died because of  
19 those severe injuries to her, so like you said, we should  
20 -- each individual should take a stand, you know, because  
21 you know, anybody's job -- it's everybody's job.

22           But see, anybody thinks you could do it, but  
23 whose job is it? And just like Pastor Brown just said,  
24 okay, my parish is Reverend John H. Wheaton. I don't  
25 know, did he know about the meeting? You know, and then

1 some know about the meeting and they don't care.

2         We are a small membership church, just like  
3 Pastor Brown's church. All our members should be here,  
4 if they knew about it.

5         You know, on the phone we called certain ones  
6 to come to the meeting. The ones that think they're the  
7 leaders of the church, you know, you want to have someone  
8 just pay less and want to do everything.

9         So all of us should be here, but whose job is  
10 it? We need to take a stand, get together. You know,  
11 everyone needs to get together. We just need to come  
12 together.

13         Just like Ms. Shipp just said, that we're so  
14 comfortable to what we have and some -- I don't care.  
15 I'm not interested in it. But now, the members are  
16 singing this -- just to be honest, some of our members  
17 are saying that, and they're saying it in church. They  
18 said everything, they're not saying nothing.

19         Where you -- representation is everything. If  
20 you represent something, you know, you know, if you -- if  
21 you don't stand for something, you're going to fall for  
22 anything, if you don't stand for something.

23         So we need to take a stand, each individual.  
24 You know, that's passing the buck, you know, they're just  
25 passing the buck and we're putting it on -- we're saying

1 okay.

2           The sheriff's department -- every department  
3 has got a little some crookedness in it, you know, so  
4 like you say on the bridge is not just started -- my  
5 brothers used to hang out there on the bridge, and that's  
6 been like 20 years ago. It ain't just started.

7           And some of the ones in the sheriff's  
8 department, they hang out there. But they -- the same  
9 thing that the one guy said they just shoot -- every  
10 time, whatever, you know. There's some crookedness in  
11 the area, you know, everything. It's just crooked, you  
12 know.

13           But like I said, we need all to take a stand.  
14 If this gentleman -- if we had more like Donahoe, it  
15 would be okay. You know, I'm serious. He don't come to  
16 your church just to, you know, when the election day, but  
17 you can hear him coming. A lot of people come just to be  
18 elected, you know. They're going to send in those  
19 pictures.

20           We have so and so here, you know, but he don't  
21 come for that. He are -- I don't care what, black or  
22 white, you can be locked up in a car, can't get out,  
23 he'll be there free of charge.

24           See, I'm talking what I know. But whose job is  
25 it to do? It's everyone's job, but see anybody thinks

1 one person can do it. Well, she's going, she might not  
2 show up. Or he's going, he might not show up.

3 But it's all of our jobs, you know. Like I  
4 said, you all not going to follow your hands -- you got  
5 to take a stand on what you want, because they're not  
6 going to do anything. You don't sit back.

7 Well, just go ahead and do what you have to do,  
8 you know, improve your life, just go ahead, you know.

9 MR. JENKINS: You talked in terms of the bank  
10 not hiring minorities. You talked in terms of some of  
11 the stores in town not hiring blacks. Has anybody  
12 applied for those jobs or what has happened to those  
13 persons?

14 MS. SHIPP: Sir, people apply every day, and --  
15 I know for a fact, but they did hire a black woman there.

16 MR. JENKINS: You're talking at the bank?

17 MS. SHIPP: At the bank -- I remember one chick  
18 worked at the bank and she worked there for years --  
19 what's the chick's name -- Alexander lady -- she worked  
20 there probably years, but she moved and went to  
21 Cleveland, so she worked in Cleveland.

22 MR. JENKINS: If the community has recognized,  
23 the black community has recognized that you have a  
24 problem not getting blacks employed with the bank and at  
25 some of the stores in town, then what do you think the

1 black community must do now?

2 MS. SHIPP: See, what we got to do is get  
3 together start making these boycott -- but we're not  
4 going to get together because some of us is scared, some  
5 of them aren't going to speak up, I don't care what you  
6 do to them.

7 But if we get together and boycott and let  
8 these stores and banks know that there's some blacks are  
9 qualified and that they should be in there, which they  
10 already know that -- maybe something will change then.

11 MS. JOHNSON: Then all the blacks --

12 MS. SHIPP: They think we're all stupid. They  
13 think we can't read and write. But we show them and we  
14 show them, we showed them on election day that we could  
15 stick together, then we --

16 COMMISSIONER BERRY: Were you going to say  
17 something, my brother?

18 MR. JOHNSON: If a black person do work in the  
19 bank, they're going to work in the back. Ain't no black  
20 -- come in through the back and leave out the back.  
21 That's the only way -- unless you're working down -- even  
22 when they don't work -- they always work at the back.

23 DR. WARD: You may have to find out a little  
24 bit about how people work in the front of the bank. And  
25 now, the enlightened bank in Jackson -- and I say it's

1 enlightened -- Deposit Guaranty, has young black people  
2 working in all departments back and front. Maybe you can  
3 talk to some of those people and find out how they got to  
4 be tellers and assistant vice presidents.

5 COMMISSIONER BERRY: Figure out how they got  
6 there.

7 MR. JOHNSON: They have better degrees than  
8 some of the people working in the bank, but why they  
9 still working in the -- why they can't work in the front  
10 with the money?

11 MS. SHIPP: They don't trust us -- they think  
12 your hand is sticky.

13 DR. WARD: I can't answer -- all I'm saying is  
14 let's inform ourselves, you know, you say that they won't  
15 -- what I hear, I would translate that into, they're  
16 going to be in the back because they're doing menial jobs  
17 or they're doing some kind of work, you know, but they're  
18 not going to be there handling money, probably for the  
19 reasons you -- and some others, reasons you say. But  
20 that can be changed.

21 You must always realize that situations are not  
22 fixed, nowhere, and I go back -- I'm old enough now to  
23 have lived through what changed Mississippi in part, to  
24 say that if people in Ruleville in 1967 had been scared,  
25 this place would be really unlivable.

1 MS. SHIPP: What did you say now?

2 DR. WARD: If people in Ruleville had been  
3 afraid in 1967, this community would be unlivable today.  
4 It is human to be afraid. I don't think -- I would be a  
5 first class liar to tell you not to have fear. It is  
6 human to be afraid.

7 People went through the entire civil rights  
8 movement afraid, paralyzed with fear, but the paralyses  
9 kept them moving.

10 You understand what I'm telling you? So I  
11 don't have any magic formulas. You -- those of you who  
12 were born here, who have lived here all of your lives,  
13 who are residents of Ruleville, have to become the  
14 instruments for change, and maybe in the ways you say,  
15 maybe in other ways, but it has to be done here, because  
16 you cannot sit or slip into the 21st Century with the  
17 same problems you have so that when we come back in the  
18 21st Century, you'll be telling us the bridge is still  
19 there, the bridge -- the graffiti is still on the bridge  
20 and they're still shooting the snakes and somebody else  
21 new got a church out there and they can't have service  
22 because they're being disturbed.

23 I don't want to hear that in 2001. I don't  
24 want to hear that in 2001.

25 COMMISSIONER BERRY: And there's nobody working



1 in the bank.

2 DR. WARD: Right.

3 COMMISSIONER BERRY: Or in the stores.

4 REVEREND BROWN: There's still a lack of  
5 interest. If you can take young men, who will go out  
6 onto a football field and risk having their legs and  
7 their arms and their necks being broken, for a piece of  
8 pigskin, and people are too afraid to get out and to  
9 rally for their own rights and for monies that they could  
10 earn to take care of their families and themselves.

11 I mean, and you see people risking their lives  
12 every day, people get shot in clubs, stabbed in clubs,  
13 but that doesn't stop them from going.

14 What I'm saying is is that people are  
15 interested in what they want to be interested in, and in  
16 this kind of thing, the interest is not hot enough, the  
17 intensity is not hot enough. I mean, the minds are not  
18 fixed to the point where -- I mean, where -- I mean,  
19 where they're ready to go all out and to get what they  
20 really want.

21 They risk their lives for what they want to  
22 risk their lives for. And I mean, people do it all the  
23 time. Going on with married folk, they take their  
24 chances, getting shot, killed, but the interest is -- the  
25 interest is not high enough in this thing, and then there

1 is a race problem, very racial, and what you have seen  
2 with our church and with other churches, is really  
3 indicative of the fact that there is a racial climate in  
4 this area, as well as for the entire state.

5           You cannot get over and beyond it. I mean, it  
6 is an issue. It is an issue. It may have buried some,  
7 but when you say buried, sometimes things -- dust can be  
8 there but you can just have a rug over it.

9           I mean, just because you see black and white  
10 working together doesn't mean that they love each other.  
11 I mean, they could be there just like the Jews were with  
12 the Samaritan. They could be there just for the  
13 financial portion of it, and then when you get outside  
14 the economic boundaries, then they basically have no  
15 association with one another.

16           DR. WARD: Let me ask a question about  
17 something in Ruleville that hasn't been mentioned. And  
18 it's one of my pet topics.

19           What's being taught in the schools in  
20 Ruleville? Now, I want to be clear -- I want you to  
21 understand me. I don't mean what courses. I assume that  
22 the curriculum as set by the State Department of  
23 Education and/or local school boards is what's being  
24 taught.

25           But tell me, what is being taught in the

1 schools in Ruleville? What are your children learning in  
2 the schools in Ruleville?

3 MR. JOHNSON: Personally -- I'm from Ruleville  
4 Senior High School. This last past school term the  
5 social studies teacher, Mr. Richardson, he every day  
6 passed -- he made inference on this test, history test.  
7 You know, the eleventh grade had to take.

8 So we didn't learn -- I love history. I didn't  
9 learn nothing. So time -- come time to take a test,  
10 nobody knows. So everybody failed this test. I think  
11 that's one of the reasons why Rulesville High School is  
12 on probation now, because of that test.

13 DR. WARD: This test you are talking about is  
14 the Mississippi Proficiency?

15 MR. JOHNSON: I don't know. But I see -- if we  
16 had a teacher that taught us where you could have passed  
17 that test.

18 MR. DONAHOE: Who is the social studies  
19 teacher?

20 MR. JOHNSON: Mr. Richardson.

21 MR. DONAHOE: Was he there?

22 MR. JOHNSON: I don't know.

23 COMMISSIONER BERRY: Now, you were taught  
24 nothing. You were basically taught nothing in that  
25 course? Is that basically what you're saying?

1 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, ma'am. I learned a little  
2 bit but not what I wanted to learn.

3 COMMISSIONER BERRY: Or what you needed to  
4 learn to pass the test?

5 MR. JOHNSON: What I needed to learn about the  
6 American History, I didn't learn it. I learned a few  
7 things.

8 DR. WARD: Well, I raise the question because  
9 you know Dr. Berry asked me where is the leadership  
10 coming from. And I've always assumed, rightly or  
11 wrongly, that leadership comes from younger generations  
12 of people, and obviously as well all had to do, young  
13 people today have to learn basics and something we didn't  
14 have to learn, that's computers, how to be computer  
15 literate, that kind of computer technology.

16 But it's something that we all have to learn if  
17 we are going to be effective in our adult lives, and in  
18 our schooling. Where is responsibility for social  
19 matters? I know the responsibility for spiritual matters  
20 is taught in your churches.

21 But where is the responsibility for social  
22 matters coming from if it doesn't come through the  
23 schools, where is it going to come from?

24 If he wants to learn American History, somebody  
25 in the school needs to learn history not as a narrative,

1 but as something that people in Ruleville helped to make.

2           When we write books about civil rights, we  
3 write about Ruleville. We write about people who lived  
4 here, and who did or did not do things. Can any high  
5 school graduate in the Ruleville school run this city?

6           MS. SHIPP: Pardon me?

7           DR. WARD: Can anyone who graduates from a high  
8 school in Ruleville run this city?

9           MS. SHIPP: Who --

10          DR. WARD: Do they know enough about what goes  
11 on in the municipality?

12          COMMISSIONER BERRY: Do they teach them about  
13 the process?

14          DR. WARD: Then you can make the case that you  
15 went through the school system and learned something, but  
16 I'm asking you is that going on now?

17          COMMISSIONER BERRY: Do they actually teach, if  
18 I may tag on, do they teach about Ruleville and what  
19 happened here?

20          MS. SHIPP: Ruleville --

21          COMMISSIONER BERRY: Do you know what the  
22 history is and your place in it and what happened here in  
23 this community and in this area?

24          MS. SHIPP: No --

25          COMMISSIONER BERRY: And how it all happened

1 and what happened and who did it and what came about and  
2 so on? Do they teach that?

3 MR. JOHNSON: I say the only chance that a high  
4 school student would learn about Ruleville in the ninth  
5 grade, when they take Mississippi history. That's the  
6 only time a student really learn about what happened in  
7 Ruleville. They would teach a little about it.

8 COMMISSIONER BERRY: But do they actually teach  
9 for those of you who went to school here, about --

10 MS. SHIPP: They don't --

11 COMMISSIONER BERRY: -- Ruleville and the civil  
12 rights movement?

13 MS. SHIPP: We -- ten years ago, we learned,  
14 because of all the stuff that's going on -- going on 16  
15 years ago -- and now they have -- teaching -- American  
16 teachers -- my daughter has an American teacher. Those  
17 teachers don't care. They don't want to know no way --  
18 they ain't got time -- if this -- in my daughter's room,  
19 Keith Small, and he went to Head Start, but my daughter  
20 didn't get no Head Start, because they told us we made  
21 too much money.

22 Then after my husband died, they still told me  
23 she couldn't go, and there wasn't any income coming in  
24 the house then, so it's nice -- going to Head Start. You  
25 got to get that Head Start. If you don't, you're going

1 to be late like my daughter is now, and that's what I  
2 think is affecting her now, because they wouldn't let her  
3 go to Head Start.

4           See, you got to get some basics like ABC, 123.  
5 I had to buy Hooked on Phonics for my daughter. You got  
6 to have the basics, and if you don't go to the Head  
7 Start, you're not going to get the basics, and then if  
8 you're slower than this child, then that means you fall  
9 behind, and they keep on going with this child, because  
10 he's smart.

11           They don't worry about the ones that can't  
12 catch on. See, everybody can't catch on like me or  
13 Reginald or -- and everybody is not smart.

14           COMMISSIONER BERRY: That lady over there wants  
15 to say something.

16           MS. BARNES: You know, nowadays you went to the  
17 school -- they don't have time to -- you know, because  
18 you can walk into a classroom, walk in the child's  
19 classroom, and you can see two or three teachers that  
20 have -- how can you teach my child -- something happened  
21 in the streets. You can't do that, so I have -- and I  
22 have a 13-year-old son. You cannot teach my child if  
23 you're not being taught yourself.

24           You've got to get in order to give to the kids  
25 in school. They're out there with the teacher -- the

1 kids can't teach on their own. You have to teach those  
2 kids, so now that's why a lot of students don't know  
3 nothing now. And you're going to punish -- skipping,  
4 sick days -- when we was going to school 16 years ago, we  
5 didn't know nothing about none of that.

6           You know, it seemed like every other week these  
7 kids are out of school. My son would come home and say  
8 Mamma, we don't have to go to school -- we got a sick day  
9 -- what is that for? Well, you ain't learning nothing  
10 out there. You know, that's what I don't understand.

11           But if they would have the teachers that we had  
12 when we was going to school, the school system would be a  
13 better school than what it is today.

14           See, this is where we -- they took this out of  
15 the schools. They took prayer out of schools. But you  
16 need prayer. You've got to get -- pray to that man --  
17 because he's the head of all our lives, but they took  
18 this out of schools and it should be back in schools.

19           COMMISSIONER BERRY: You're a student, right?

20           MR. JOHNSON: Yes, ma'am. This is my first --  
21 to me at Ruleville Central there was a whole lot of  
22 animosity among the teachers, because too many teachers  
23 at that school wanted to have too much power.

24           Like the Doctor said, she is teaching now --  
25 she says she's higher than everybody since she has more



1 degrees than everybody. She wants more things than other  
2 teachers, you know.

3 I don't like being in that kind of environment  
4 in the schools that many teachers have animosity against  
5 other teachers. They don't like other teachers.

6 Should -- act to help us -- you know, graduate.

7 COMMISSIONER BERRY: But in the ninth grade  
8 they teach Mississippi history?

9 MR. JOHNSON: That one time.

10 COMMISSIONER BERRY: And they -- when you were  
11 in the ninth grade, and you took Mississippi history,  
12 what did you learn about the civil rights movement in  
13 Ruleville?

14 MR. JOHNSON: When I was in the ninth grade I  
15 was Indianola.

16 COMMISSIONER BERRY: You didn't learn anything  
17 --

18 MR. JOHNSON: I wasn't there when I was in the  
19 ninth grade.

20 COMMISSIONER BERRY: Where were you?

21 MR. JOHNSON: Indianola.

22 COMMISSIONER BERRY: So you weren't in the --

23 MR. JOHNSON: No, ma'am.

24 COMMISSIONER BERRY: Did they teach you about  
25 the civil rights movement at Indianola?

1 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, ma'am, around Mississippi.

2 COMMISSIONER BERRY: They told you about Fannie  
3 Lou Hamer and they told you about Eunita Blackwell and  
4 they told you about all these people. Do you know who  
5 Eunita Blackwell is?

6 MR. JOHNSON: No.

7 COMMISSIONER BERRY: Do you know who Eunita  
8 Blackwell is?

9 MR. JOHNSON: No, ma'am.

10 MR. JENKINS: Did you know who Fannie Lou Hamer  
11 was?

12 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, ma'am, I knew who she was.

13 COMMISSIONER BERRY: Who was she?

14 MR. JOHNSON: She worked to get people the  
15 vote.

16 COMMISSIONER BERRY: So they taught that --

17 MR. JOHNSON: They taught --

18 COMMISSIONER BERRY: And how much did you get  
19 of that? How long -- the part on the civil rights  
20 movement?

21 MR. JOHNSON: Well, I learned more about that -  
22 - that class last a semester.

23 COMMISSIONER BERRY: You had a whole semester  
24 on the civil rights movement?

25 MR. JOHNSON: Just one semester about -- no,

1 ma'am. Just a semester about Mississippi history.

2 COMMISSIONER BERRY: Oh, Mississippi?

3 MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

4 COMMISSIONER BERRY: Okay, all right.

5 DR. WARD: I can't get --

6 MR. JOHNSON: They have -- like in February,  
7 like this -- they had a black history program for a week.  
8 That's the only time --

9 DR. WARD: If there are other people who have  
10 statements to make, please do, because we're pretty close  
11 to the time that we promised we would end, so if anyone  
12 who has not spoken or someone who has spoken would like  
13 to make some closing remarks or bring up a topic, I'd be  
14 very willing to hear that.

15 Yes, Mel.

16 MR. JENKINS: Couple statements I want to make  
17 to the general audience.

18 As the Regional Director for the Commission in  
19 this area, one of the things that I am often interested  
20 in is coming back to work with the local leadership and  
21 talking in terms of bringing persons together to sit down  
22 and talk about race relations in Ruleville.

23 We talk in terms of today with the Governor,  
24 for a Human Relations Commission. One of the things that  
25 I often think about when I think about the civil rights

1 movement back in the 60's and 70's, that we had local  
2 Human Rights Commissions and agencies bringing folk  
3 together to begin to develop a common goal.

4           Where do we want to take this community in the  
5 next two or three years in terms of race relations?

6           When I was here last year I think I talked to  
7 Mr. Donahoe about a Human Relations Commission and  
8 bringing persons together to sit down and begin to  
9 develop a program for all persons.

10           When you talk in terms of blacks not working in  
11 the local department stores and in the bank, what needs  
12 to be done? The persons and the leadership, not only  
13 from the political side, but from the ministers and  
14 community leaders, need to come together to begin to  
15 develop a dialogue on where do we want to go in the next  
16 couple of years.

17           I wanted to come back to try to meet with the  
18 global leaders, the ministers, and began that dialogue on  
19 racial issues in the Ruleville area, along with the State  
20 Advisory Committee -- maybe working through the State  
21 Advisory Committee and Dr. Ward and the ten members of  
22 his committee in trying to develop this dialogue.

23           COMMISSIONER BERRY: Well, I just want to say  
24 that we had hoped after last year -- I had hoped at least  
25 after last year with the church burnings and the

1 aftermath, that it would at least have stimulated some  
2 kind of dialogue across racial lines, that the community  
3 would black and white decide that it was time to either,  
4 even if they had a Human Relations Commission, that could  
5 exercise some leadership or put some kind of structure in  
6 place, and start having these discussions about schools  
7 and jobs and businesses and changing the racial climate  
8 and having community solidarity.

9           And I'm disappointed that that does not seem to  
10 have happened, and I, like Dr. Ward, would not like to  
11 come back here in the 21st Century and have people  
12 telling me about the same problems that I heard about  
13 without any kind of response.

14           Somebody has got to take leadership in this  
15 community, and I'm hoping now that the Advisory Committee  
16 with Mel Jenkins and working with the political  
17 leadership here, can in fact -- and the churches, that  
18 maybe they can be a catalyst to try to get something  
19 going here to try to address some of these issues.

20           And I want to thank the Chair of the State  
21 Advisory Committee, Dr. Ward, for -- and Mel Jenkins for  
22 organizing this and I've learned a great deal.

23           MR. JENKINS: Thank you.

24           COMMISSIONER BERRY: Thank you very much for  
25 coming over.

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(Proceedings concluded at 8:15 p.m.)

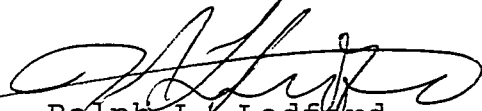
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STATE OF GEORGIA )  
COUNTY OF GWINNETT )

I hereby certify that the foregoing transcript is a true, correct, and complete record of the said proceedings; that I am not a relative, attorney, or counsel of any of the parties; am not a relative of attorney or counsel for any of the parties; nor am I financially interested in the action.

This, the 28th day of June, 1997.



Ralph L. Ledford