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THE VERMONT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TO THE
U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

PUBLIC HEARING

Held on Wednesday, November 5, 1997,
at the Franklin Conference Center,
Rutland, Vermont.

COMMISSION MEMBERS: Kimberly B. Cheney, Chairperson
Rabbi Noah Kitty
Ms. Pat Elmer
M. Jerome Diamond, Esq.
Ms. Karen F. Saudek
Philip H. Hoff, Esq.
Dr. Charles E. Johnson
Mr. John Tucker
Mr. Marc D. Pentino
Dr. Samuel B. Hand
Dr. Melanie Susan Gustafson

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1 (Commencing at approximately 1:24 p.m.)

2 MR. CHENEY: I'll call this to order.

3 Marc, the opening statement's been
4 circulated, so I'm not going to repeat it.
5 To the extent that I have a statutory
6 authority to inform people about our
7 purposes, it's in the opening statement.
8 Let me just say for those who have been kind
9 enough to come here, what we are seeking is
10 people to tell us what it's like for them in
11 relationship to what's happening in public
12 schools, and we want to have it straight
13 from the heart as far as you can give it to
14 us because our function here is really to
15 help the public understand what the
16 connections of this problem are untarnished
17 and straightforward so that we can make
18 effective recommendations to bring about
19 change.

20 We had a day of very moving testimony
21 about the prevalence of discrimination in
22 the public schools, and without trying to
23 summarize it, I'll just say that what we
24 heard is disturbing to all of us, although I
25 think there's people of goodwill, people

1 that really want to make some changes. So
2 we need to hear the problems, we need to
3 find goodwill with this kind of solution.
4 So with that -- and I do want to say
5 although people from Rutland have been asked
6 to testify, our concern is statewide. We're
7 not trying to single out any community or
8 expose any community with any particular
9 scrutiny, it's just that this is a larger
10 southern area. We hoped people could get
11 here from the southern part of the state.
12 So I will briefly just have the committee
13 introduce themselves so that you know who
14 you're talking with. Pat, could you do
15 that?

16 MS. ELMER: Sure. I'm Pat Elmer. I am
17 founder and director of Vermont Associates
18 for Training and Development. We design and
19 operate employment and training programs for
20 older workers.

21 MR. HOFF: I'm Phil Hoff. As I said
22 yesterday, if there's anybody here old
23 enough to remember, I was Governor during
24 the 60s. This whole area has been a matter
25 of major concern to me for I think most of

1 my life. I've been a member of this
2 Commission, incidentally, for I think close
3 25 years. A long time.

4 MS. SAUDEK: My name's Karen Saudek.
5 I'm currently director of human resources
6 for Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Vermont. I
7 have just finished a six-year term on the
8 state Board of Education, and through that
9 work and other ways I feel strongly it's
10 imperative we provide the best education for
11 all our kids in the State of Vermont. Until
12 we can really address the issues we're
13 talking about today and provide honor and
14 respect to kids of all ethnic backgrounds,
15 we will be unable to achieve that goal for
16 the finest education. This is a topic
17 that's very important to me.

18 MR. TUCKER: I'm John Tucker. I'm the
19 director of the Racial Justice and Equity
20 Project at the Peace and Justice Center in
21 Burlington. I'm also founder of the ALANA
22 Health Care organization and currently sit
23 on the steering committee to Champlain
24 Valley Initiative. And in this short stay
25 this time in Vermont going into my sixth

1 year doing the work that I do I've become
2 aware over a varying period of time how
3 widespread this problem has been through the
4 work that I do on a daily basis.

5 DR. HAND: My name is Sam Hand. I'm a
6 professor emeritus of history at the
7 University of Vermont. I guess we came here
8 in about 1961. I've been over the years
9 increasingly involved in the study of
10 Vermont itself, and I guess that's
11 sufficient.

12 MR. CHENEY: Okay.

13 RABBI KITTY: Noah Kitty, the Rabbi for
14 Brattleboro area Jewish community. I am the
15 chair of the Interfaith Alliance of Southern
16 Vermont and also on the board of the ALANA
17 community organization. It stands for
18 African Latino Native Americans.

19 MR. CHENEY: Okay. I think, Karen,
20 have you and Noah worked out who's going to
21 moderate this panel?

22 RABBI KITTY: No.

23 MR. CHENEY: Any volunteers?

24 MS. SAUDEK: I'd be happy too.

25 MR. PENTINO: I don't think they're

1 here.

2 MS. SAUDEK: Any of the panel members
3 here?

4 MR. PENTINO: They're not. We do have
5 people who would like to speak to us.

6 MR. CHENEY: Come on forward.

7 RABBI KITTY: We're now up to 3:15.

8 MS. McMASTER: I'll pass this around.
9 This is my credentials.

10 MR. PENTINO: Can you state your name
11 for us since we're transcribing if you wish?

12 MS. McMASTER: Marie Allen, A-l-l-e-n,
13 McMaster. I teach African history at
14 Castleton State College. I came to
15 Vermont --

16 MR. PENTINO: You can have a seat if
17 you'd like.

18 MS. McMASTER: -- in 1988 because I
19 thought it would be a good place to raise a
20 child. I didn't realize that I was making
21 the biggest mistake of my life. Within the
22 first day my child was already in danger.
23 This was when he walked up to get the mail,
24 he noticed that the next door neighbor's
25 post and holder for newspaper had fallen

1 into the road, and he was there, he was
2 eight years old trying to -- he said, mom, I
3 thought it could cause an accident. A man
4 in a truck reached over, opened the
5 right-hand door screaming at him jumping to
6 the conclusion that he was a vandal, that he
7 was not trying to repair the problem but had
8 caused a problem. The swinging door caused
9 my little boy to have to throw himself into
10 the ditch to keep from being hit.

11 The next day I took him to Castleton
12 Elementary School. The first time he walked
13 down the hall a child reached over and
14 knuckled his very soft, fluffy hair, and
15 that was the beginning, and it never
16 stopped. The Office of Civil Rights
17 enforcement of the Vermont Attorney General
18 has not enforced the law. As a matter of
19 fact, when I called and left a message
20 Friday wanting to know when this meeting was
21 and what the location was, I had a call
22 waiting for me yesterday saying they
23 couldn't tell me.

24 We can start in the third grade at
25 Castleton Elementary School when my son came

1 home and said after one day of school, they
2 won't keep their hands off me. I went to
3 the principal and I pointed out that the
4 psychologically sound way was to empower him
5 to allow him to raise his voice in the
6 hallway so that a teacher could hear him --
7 could overhear him saying so and so, get
8 your hands off me. They told me he would be
9 punished for raising his voice and that he
10 was to sneak when nobody was looking and
11 tell a teacher what had happened. I said,
12 I'm not going to have you turn my child into
13 an informer. So they instituted a Draconian
14 policy, any physical contact -- conduct --
15 contact meant losing group lunch privileges
16 for the remainder of the week.

17 MR. TUCKER: Could you repeat that
18 again?

19 MS. McMASTER: Any physical contact
20 between two students, the students were
21 equally responsible and they both lost their
22 lunch privileges for the rest of the week.
23 So of course who was first to be punished
24 because a little boy wrapped his legs around
25 my son's legs at lunch and one of the

1 children who had previously been turned into
2 an informer, this was her role for a
3 specific teacher, went and said that they
4 were making contact, so the two of them were
5 equally punished. Now why do we need a
6 policy on racism because kids are smart.

7 I finally took him out of Fair Haven
8 High School just shortly before his 15th
9 birthday. What was happening? Well, the
10 reason I had left him in I should say is
11 that he made me promise that first week in
12 Castleton Elementary that I would do nothing
13 to make it impossible for him to continue in
14 school, so my hands were pretty well tied.

15 Before going on to what precipitated my
16 withdrawing him, I might as well talk more
17 about Castleton Elementary. Within a few
18 weeks I -- I was going in regularly to see
19 what was happening in the schools, and at
20 lunch there were probably 150 second and
21 third graders, a very healthy atmosphere.
22 They were allowed to talk, so there was sort
23 of a gentle roar. All of a sudden the
24 teacher in charge of the lunchroom descended
25 on my child grabbing him and shaking him and

1 shrieking, you're the cause of all the
2 noise. Every kid in that school knew it was
3 illegal for her to lay hands on him so every
4 student was shown the rules don't apply.
5 You have a problem and you can work it out
6 on the dark kid, and that's exactly the
7 message that is coming down from the highest
8 quarters. I tend to keep coming into my
9 mind the scum rises to the top.

10 Now at Fair Haven High School there are
11 regulations. A student makes physical
12 contact with another student on the first
13 offense they ^{both} go to the principal's
14 office. On the second offense suspension.
15 On the third offense expulsion. Sounds
16 fair. All right. You have the dark kid,
17 we'll call him Student D for dark. Student
18 A grabs him. They both go to the
19 principal's office. A few days later
20 Student C grabs -- Student C grabs him,
21 Student C goes to the principal's office,
22 the dark student is suspended. The third
23 student grabs him, now it's getting -- it's
24 getting vicious. It's becoming one person
25 sticking a foot out and another pushing him,

1 so the contact comes when the kid grabs the
2 one with the foot out to keep from sprawling
3 and probably busting a knee. In other
4 words, it's not only emotionally exhausting
5 for these students, it becomes physically
6 dangerous. And I can tell you why. It's
7 the comfort level of the teachers, the
8 employees, the administrators in the school
9 system. If my son were retarded, they would
10 be very comfortable with him. They would be
11 very gently patronizing, but at Castleton
12 Elementary School it became apparent
13 probably within the first week that he was
14 the brightest kid in the school, and that's
15 what the problem is. So the abuse is
16 systematic, it's pervasive and it is to
17 lower his performance to the level of racist
18 comfort.

19 MR. TUCKER: Was he thrown out of Fair
20 Haven High School?

21 MS. McMASTER: No. I withdrew him
22 before that could happen.

23 MR. TUCKER: Where does he go to school
24 now?

25 MS. McMASTER: He started taking

1 classes before his 15th birthday at
2 Castleton State College, and he wanted to
3 have one normal year of high school. He
4 said, mom, I don't want to be 30 years old
5 and in a group and everybody's talking about
6 the good old days in high school and I
7 haven't ever had that experience, so he's in
8 a -- he's on the other side of the country
9 where by enforcing Civil Rights statutes the
10 entire atmosphere for minorities has been
11 changed.

12 MR. TUCKER: So he's not with you now?

13 MS. McMASTER: No. So I am deprived of
14 my reason for living, which means I don't
15 care what happens to me now. He's safe.
16 He's out of here. I can act up.

17 MR. TUCKER: How long's he been gone?

18 MS. McMASTER: He -- I took him out in
19 November of 1994 out of Fair Haven, and he
20 started his senior year in high school this
21 last September.

22 MR. HOFF: Is this in a prep school
23 or --

24 MS. McMASTER: No. No. He's
25 staying -- living with a friend.

1 MR. HOFF: Outside the State of
2 Vermont?

3 MS. McMASTER: Way outside the State of
4 Vermont.

5 MR. HOFF: Question. Did he have any
6 friends?

7 MS. McMASTER: Yes. And this was
8 another situation that was very
9 disillusioning because he had hung with a
10 couple of boys from the fifth grade, and one
11 day he came home because they were older
12 than he was and they could drive and they
13 had gone to the mall and he realized they
14 were using him as a decoy because of course
15 if he went into a store, if there were five
16 salespeople in the store, they would all
17 keep their eyes on my son and the other boys
18 just walked off with the store, \$200 CD
19 players and things like that. And what he
20 realized was if they were caught, they would
21 give him up and say it was his.

22 MR. TUCKER: It was his idea?

23 MS. McMASTER: Yeah. So he quit
24 hanging with them.

25 MR. HOFF: Did he have any other

1 friends who were friends for friends sake?

2 MS. McMASTER: Well, he had thought
3 until this incident -- he was very popular
4 his first year at Fair Haven High School.
5 He was five feet tall, 107 pounds. Then he
6 went away for the summer, he grew six inches
7 and he gained about 30 pounds, his voice
8 dropped to a base baritone and he said,
9 mother, they called me normal. They could
10 patronize me. He was adorable, a great
11 dancer, a wonderful basketball player, but
12 apparently he was no threat, but also he had
13 done very, very well. And I had already had
14 to go in in his freshman year at Fair Haven
15 and I made the mistake of going to a
16 counselor and explaining that because the
17 verbal abuse was so pervasive, his way of
18 dealing with it was to take a day off now
19 and then. And I said, you really need to
20 tell his teachers that his absences are not
21 frivolous and explain that it is due to the
22 racial harassment, talk about naivete, and
23 you need to do some consciousness raising so
24 that teachers and administrators will be on
25 the lookout because he cannot, he will not

1 rat. I learned from one of the teachers
2 that what she did was go and tell his
3 teachers that he had psychological problems.

4 MR. CHENEY: Any questions? Were there
5 any other black kids in the school system?

6 MS. McMASTER: I think at Castleton
7 Elementary there was a child of mixed
8 ancestry, but there -- it wasn't as if there
9 could be any -- you know, a third grader and
10 a fifth grader don't hang out together, this
11 kind of thing. They don't eat in the
12 lunchroom, they don't play on the field at
13 the same time. And let me tell you though
14 the situation at Castleton Elementary
15 School. I was in Africa doing research
16 several years ago, and the man who replaced
17 me to teach African history at Castleton
18 State College was married -- is married to a
19 woman from Togo, and I was told later that
20 their little boy reminded people very much
21 of my son. Now my son came home after a
22 week at Castleton Elementary School and he
23 had really changed his identity because in
24 preschool in California he came home one day
25 saying, you know, mom, there's so much talk

1 about black and white, but he said, look at
2 me, I'm not black, and he said, I'm
3 certainly not pink like you. Would beige be
4 a good way to describe me? After a week at
5 Castleton he was black, and I think this was
6 extremely healthy. You're going to
7 brutalize me for being black, by God, I'm
8 going to be black. This little boy came
9 home before the end of the first week
10 screaming at his mother, now he was only
11 five or six, I'm not African, I'm not black;
12 I'm white, you're not my mother and I hate
13 you. One week at Castleton Elementary
14 School.

15 MR. CHENEY: Tell me, did you -- I know
16 you described this discipline policy that's
17 so obviously unfair that the victim gets the
18 same treatment as the perpetrator, but did
19 you try to pursue that with the authorities?

20 MS. McMASTER: Oh, again, remember my
21 son's injunction, don't you dare do anything
22 that makes it impossible for me to continue
23 in school. I spent part of every day week
24 after week with this principal, and when my
25 son was punished equally, I just came and

1 had -- they had to sit at opposite ends of
2 the gymnasium on opposite sides, the two
3 boys who engaged physically. So I just came
4 and had lunch with him every day and we had
5 a wonderful time. And then I got an ally in
6 the school counselor so that when my son
7 would come home in a rage because of
8 something that had happened, the school
9 counselor would go and check it out and
10 verify. We skipped the fourth grade. I
11 told the principal he could either do what
12 was sensible, look at my son's test scores,
13 look at his grades, watch him on the
14 athletic field -- he was born in February so
15 he could either be a young fifth grader or
16 an old fourth grader, and I said you can
17 take the easy way out and promote him or you
18 can put him in that room with the woman who
19 attacked him savagely and you're going to
20 have the biggest lawsuit on your hands.

21 Now this principal had a habit of
22 refusing to speak to me. I once sat for
23 half an hour after asking him a question, he
24 just sat there like this. And so I would
25 say, all right, you think about it and I'm

1 going to come back in X number of days and
2 you have to have an answer for me, and
3 that's what I did this time. And a week
4 later I got a call saying, well, he could
5 have a six-week trial in the fifth grade and
6 then never heard anything else about it.

7 MR. CHENEY: Are we talking -- what
8 year would this be?

9 MS. McMASTER: We came here in 1988.
10 He was in the third grade, so it would have
11 been the fall of '89 that he was promoted,
12 and this could be verified because the
13 counselor remembers it all. He will not
14 speak in public, but he will -- he will
15 verify everything I'm saying. I had told my
16 son, don't ever let them see you cry. You
17 come home and you can throw things. We had
18 futons, he'd come in and he'd beat the bend.
19 One day he came in and you could see he was
20 fused with rage, and when he had pounded a
21 bit -- it seemed that in phys ed there was a
22 game, the teacher threw the ball, and he was
23 supposed to throw it underhanded and he
24 threw it overhand at Gareth's head. So I
25 went to my next door neighbor who was the

1 counselor and he went and checked it out and
2 he said, you're absolutely right. And when
3 I asked him why he said, oh, well, Gareth's
4 so physically gifted I have to challenge
5 him. The other phys ed teacher had found
6 another way, and this would make him a
7 pariah because kids are very competitive.
8 It was a team sport, and whatever team my
9 son was on, if it was ahead, the teacher
10 would come in on the other side. So
11 whatever team my son was on was never
12 allowed to win, and this the counselor
13 verified also.

14 MR. CHENEY: Tell me, we've heard
15 testimony through others, kind of the
16 futility of making complaints, but some
17 people know the Human Rights Commission
18 exists, actually had some good results, but
19 did you try to complain to the Attorney
20 General or the --

21 MS. McMASTER: Again, my son made me
22 promise not to do any of this, and then he
23 just one day said, all right, mom, take me
24 out. There's nothing more for me. What had
25 happened, a student who has had severe

1 learning problems had been mainstreamed at
2 Fair Haven High School because he was a good
3 nose tackle, 6'3", 220 pounds at least, and
4 the aides did all his work so -- for
5 instance, he was the only sophomore boy on
6 the honor role. So he could spend full time
7 harassing my son, and when he told me what
8 had happened that day I said, how often does
9 this happen? My son looked at me as if I'm
10 crazy. He says, mother, this happens every
11 single day that I have been at school this
12 year.

13 What happens? Lunchtime, the kid comes
14 over, sits down, grabs what food he wants
15 off my kid's tray, throws garbage and then
16 says, dump it, slave. The last day the
17 assistant principal was sitting there
18 talking to the star football player while he
19 went through his little routine. You see,
20 he is not intelligent enough that he ever
21 gets bored with this. I'm not degrading
22 him, there's real corruption in the system.
23 The aides aren't supposed to do his work;
24 he's supposed to be working as hard as he
25 can, you see. He shouldn't have had all

1 this time. But when the assistant principal
2 was just sitting there bullshitting with the
3 guy while he went through his routine,
4 that's when my son said, it's over.

5 MR. CHENEY: Just out of curiosity, we
6 have two former Attorney Generals in the
7 room. When you called about this meeting,
8 do you know who it was you talked to?

9 MS. McMASTER: I hope the message is
10 still on my message phone.

11 MR. CHENEY: Did you call their Civil
12 Rights Division?

13 MS. McMASTER: Yes, I did.

14 MR. CHENEY: And you left a message
15 that you wanted to know where this meeting
16 is?

17 MS. McMASTER: Yes. That's right. And
18 I got a call -- I had a message --

19 MR. CHENEY: The Office of the Attorney
20 General Civil Rights Division had no idea
21 where this meeting was?

22 MS. McMASTER: Nor the time.

23 MR. CHENEY: Maybe we'll send the
24 incumbent Attorney General a message then.

25 MS. McMASTER: Well, you see, I have a

1 real problem with commissions and with law
2 enforcement in this state because Attorney
3 Generals have presided over law breaking.
4 It's against the law not to have a policy to
5 deal with racial attacks for exactly the
6 reason I said, and I am just charmed at the
7 idea that Governor Dean didn't say to his
8 then Attorney General Amestoy, look, go down
9 in a blaze. Enforce the laws, send
10 investigators into every school in Vermont.
11 You'll never be re-elected, but I'll promote
12 you to the Supreme Court. He didn't do
13 that, did he, but Amestoy is on the Supreme
14 Court, so you get rewarded for not enforcing
15 the laws in Vermont.

16 MR. CHENEY: Let me just, through you,
17 ask Mr. O'Connor to ask Mr. Sorrell why the
18 hell he doesn't know about this meeting.

19 RABBI KITTY: I have a question.

20 MS. McMASTER: Could I have my picture
21 back?

22 RABBI KITTY: Oh, I'm sorry.
23 Certainly.

24 MS. McMASTER: I miss him terribly.

25 (Discussion held off the record)

1 RABBI KITTY: Did your son -- was your
2 son ever assaulted on the way to or from
3 school, like were the crossing guards in on
4 it?

5 MS. McMASTER: The school bus stops at
6 our driveway, and regularly she would go by
7 and leave him. She could see him before she
8 made her turn back up in the driveway, but
9 if he weren't standing at the edge of the
10 road, she would -- she has to slow down to
11 second gear to make the turn off Route 30
12 onto Greg Road. Then she would speed up.
13 He had to be very careful on the school bus
14 because if somebody grabbed him there, he
15 could have been off the school bus. So he
16 would try, for instance, to sit alone.

17 MS. SAUDEK: Did your son participate
18 in school sports?

19 MS. McMASTER: Did you hear me say that
20 he skipped fourth grade and in the fifth
21 grade, although he was the smallest boy in
22 the school, the teacher's excuse for having
23 different rules was because he was such a
24 gifted athlete. But one of the things that
25 I -- that really surprised me, because as a

1 smart kid in the midwest quite a long time
2 ago I gained social acceptability because I
3 was a great athlete, and that's what I
4 thought would be his salvation. And I was
5 really stunned when I saw that coaches would
6 rather lose than play him.

7 I have one -- just a little glimpse.
8 My son spent some time in Africa with me,
9 and the boys there spent a lot of time
10 perfecting his soccer skills. Now he wasn't
11 the best soccer player on the ninth grade
12 team at Fair Haven, he was the second or
13 third best, and he was the field general.
14 He was really the only one who had learned
15 the art of the game, the placement of a
16 player on the field. And one of the young
17 men on the team was learning disabled and he
18 was -- he was problematic. And when my son
19 was on the field, he made sure this young
20 man covered a certain area of the field.
21 Now there were only three substitutes, and I
22 watched this young coach, probably a student
23 at Castleton, his face just showed he was
24 going through damnation, through torture
25 because he didn't know why, but he simply --

1 when it came time to substitute, he could
2 not leave the black kid in and he took him
3 out and, of course, the goal was scored
4 right where my son had kept this area
5 covered. And it was the fault of the poor
6 young guy who wasn't quite quick enough.
7 And I realized, my God, this young man
8 doesn't know why he couldn't honor my son by
9 saying he's one of the top eight or, you
10 know, ten players on the field. You had to
11 take him out. You had to degrade him even
12 if it meant losing the game. He's a superb
13 basketball player. From the time he was
14 five feet tall he was holding his own with
15 people six feet tall. By the time he was
16 5'6" he was playing really hard against
17 Castleton players who I think they won their
18 league championship at that time. So, yeah,
19 he's a very gifted athlete. So that was
20 held against him. It wasn't a plus.

21 MS. SAUDEK: Do you have experience
22 with interschool sports or was it just --

23 MS. McMASTER: No. The JV team and
24 freshman team, yes, in his school. One of
25 the things he noticed was how nice the

1 students at Burr & Burton were to him. This
2 was very unusual. And I have had my doubts
3 about bringing minority students into this
4 state to sort of save the souls of Vermont
5 students, but apparently exposure to a bunch
6 of young gifted black athletes perhaps
7 within a context where abuse of them wasn't
8 allowed had turned the entire Burr & Burton
9 basketball team into people who were
10 considerate.

11 MR. CHENEY: Anything else? Thank you
12 very much. Marc, could you just tell me
13 what the facts were about the invitation to
14 the Attorney General?

15 MR. PENTINO: Sure. A few months ago,
16 and even more recently than that, I spoke
17 with Seth Steinzor who was the head of that
18 Attorney General's Civil Rights Division.
19 He has moved on to a different division in
20 the Attorney General's Office and been -- a
21 new person has been appointed or hired, her
22 name is Lori Porter. I spoke with her and
23 her division chief, who the name escapes me,
24 male, and informed them both of this meeting
25 and of the meeting in Burlington. They also

1 received the press release. They also
2 received our agency materials, our
3 opening -- your opening statement, the
4 listing of the advisory committee members
5 also to contact me with further questions
6 and/or you, chairperson, so that they were
7 aware of this meeting. I expected
8 Ms. Porter last night to attend. I didn't
9 see her. I don't know if anyone else was
10 introduced to her, but she had mentioned she
11 was going to attend. She mentioned she
12 would not wish to make a presentation at
13 this time since she was so new in the
14 office.

15 MR. TUCKER: A lot of people called
16 that office and are told, you know, you can
17 do this but there's a big backlog. So
18 they're not very encouraging about taking
19 legitimate complaints and, in fact, a number
20 of us are looking for alternatives, and one
21 is to just take a class action suit out
22 against the state.

23 MS. McMASTER: May I say I think that's
24 the only thing that's going to work unless
25 we get this federal -- the United States

1 Attorney General to send federal
2 investigators in.

3 DR. HAND: They know of the existence
4 of this meeting?

5 MR. TUCKER: Right. But it goes past,
6 you know, what she says is just one of
7 numerous complaints that you will hear from
8 Afro-Americans and other groups who want to
9 use that office who are -- the first thing
10 out of their mouth is we have a big backlog,
11 I hope you recognize that. So that's
12 already setting up a climate of that we
13 don't want to hear this and we don't want to
14 respond. I mean, I think that we -- you
15 know, from stuff that we've heard for a day
16 and a quarter now, that we need to be aware
17 of the fact that, at least in my opinion, I
18 mean, I don't know how I could be a state
19 official or a person in office and not be
20 appalled, just not be appalled. And, you
21 know, Peter Clavelle came, the one elected
22 official, and Mike Obuchowski gave us a
23 letter giving us their support. I think
24 that that says everything for me.

25 MR. CHENEY: I think it's certainly

1 very germane to our fact findings.
2 Absolutely. I want to say to you,
3 Ms. McMaster, that we did hear commitments,
4 at least from a current member of the state
5 Board of Education, to seek funds for the
6 investigation -- additional staff so that
7 the state Department of Education could do a
8 better job, and they're recognizing they're
9 not doing as good a job as they could. We
10 also heard from the state Human Rights
11 Commission that they were short staffed and
12 would welcome our help to get them the
13 resources of getting them more help. We
14 haven't deliberated on that, but those are
15 issues we agree are to be taken. I really
16 thank you for mentioning that point because
17 it does highlight --

18 MS. McMASTER: Which point?

19 MR. CHENEY: Well, all of them, but
20 certainly the point of the inattentiveness
21 of state officials.

22 MS. McMASTER: I don't think it's
23 accidental.

24 MR. CHENEY: We weren't suggesting it
25 was.

1 MS. McMASTER: Could I say something
2 that I think is very sad? I think they're
3 selling the citizens of this state short.
4 What we have here is a conspiracy of
5 silence. I have a number of people who will
6 give you testimony if their names are never
7 published. One young lady, it is so
8 touching, in the -- the week before I took
9 my son out of Fair Haven, parents of three
10 other students came to me and said, you must
11 get him out, he's in physical danger now.
12 And one of these -- I only learned the
13 story, her daughter was 4'11" and 89 pounds,
14 had been in school with my son except when
15 we were in Africa from the fifth grade on.
16 This tiny little girl saw him pinned against
17 a corridor wall with five or six linebacker
18 types, they were frightening him. They had
19 him against the wall with his chest. Of
20 course, if he reached out to try to push his
21 way out, is he guilty of making contact.
22 Little Jen thought very quickly, what can I
23 do, and she very quickly walked over, took
24 his hand and said, Gareth, come with me.
25 And it was at that point when she came home

1 she was almost hysterical she said and that
2 her mother was one of the people that came
3 and said, you must get him out. This young
4 lady is now up at UVM and I can give you her
5 name, and I'm quite sure they will talk to
6 you.

7 MR. CHENEY: If you do anybody that
8 wants not to be public, Marc, you've given
9 her your name and phone number, if those
10 people want to contact Marc, their comments
11 and information will be part of the record
12 and we can do it anonymously and we will --
13 we will consider it.

14 DR. JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman, can we
15 recommend a class action suit or recommend
16 the federal Attorney General investigate or
17 is that something that has to come from the
18 public?

19 MR. CHENEY: We can make any
20 recommendations we think appropriate, I
21 guess.

22 MR. TUCKER: See, my concern, and I've
23 got to say and this will go along with
24 Charles, is that U.S. Attorneys where I've
25 come from are proactive people, not reactive

1 people and, you know, I don't see the U.S.
2 Attorney's Office for Region 2, I don't see
3 agencies for this -- that cover this as
4 being other than the Office of Civil Rights
5 for the Department of Education who was at
6 our meeting last night, two investigators
7 from that office, but I think that we live
8 in a state, as I shared with you last night,
9 where -- with the cross burning recently
10 where the state's attorney said that she had
11 to investigate it to find out if that was a
12 hate crime. Now, you know, I mean,
13 everybody in America knows what a hate crime
14 is about, a cross burning on an
15 Afro-American's lawn. I mean, you don't
16 have to be a rocket scientist to figure that
17 one out. You don't have to be a lawyer to
18 figure that one out.

19 MS. McMASTER: Denial ain't just a
20 river in Egypt.

21 MR. TUCKER: So I think that we're
22 running into a wall of denial, and that's
23 what I keep hearing over the last day or so.
24 This constant --

25 MS. McMASTER: So --

1 MR. TUCKER: Let us finish please.

2 MS. McMASTER: Sorry.

3 MR. TUCKER: This constant denial. And
4 I think that we need to address that in a
5 report, that we deal with this denial that
6 exists, this wall of silence. I mean, last
7 night we asked, I don't know who it is that
8 we asked, what would they do if they had
9 unlimited funds to attack these problems.
10 Remember that question? Certainly from the
11 highest down there has to be a commitment to
12 this problem, and we're out of step. I --
13 you know, I mean, as much as I like about
14 Vermont, around this question there is a
15 wall of resistance and denial about
16 children, and that I think more than
17 anything else just drives me crazy. I mean,
18 I understand me, 6'1" and 190 pounds, you
19 might want to try to take me on. I don't
20 understand people who take on three foot
21 children, and babies that are helpless and
22 children that are helpless and are at their
23 mercy and are mandated by law to protect
24 them. That's my concern. And I don't
25 understand officials that -- that don't take

1 that seriously.

2 MR. HOFF: Well, I can tell you why.

3 MR. TUCKER: Go ahead, Phil.

4 MR. HOFF: Well, let me just tell you a
5 story that most people in this room know
6 nothing about. Few would. Following the
7 death of Martin Luther King, as you may
8 recall, at least some of the people in this
9 room know there were riots all over this
10 country. President Johnson's response was
11 to appoint a special commission to take a
12 look at this --

13 MR. TUCKER: The Koerner.

14 MR. HOFF: -- called the Koerner
15 Commission. I happened to be at a midwinter
16 meeting of governors when we were given
17 advance copy of that report. On the way
18 home in the plane I had a chance -- I didn't
19 read it word for word, but I skimmed it. I
20 knew what it was saying, and it talked about
21 two worlds, one black, one white and
22 unequal. And it was a clarion call for the
23 country to do something. Now this is in the
24 60s.

25 When I got back I -- when I got in

1 toward Burlington I called my staff, the two
2 people who were with me, and I said, I want
3 you to bring leaders of every major
4 religious denomination together in
5 Burlington on I think it was the same week.
6 And they came, and out of that came what was
7 known as the Vermont New York Youth Project
8 which Sam is familiar with. It, frankly,
9 killed me politically, and I want to make
10 that point with you. And that's okay. I
11 don't mind paying that price. I paid it.
12 I'd willingly pay it again, but the project
13 insofar as the participants concerned, the
14 participants were half black, half white,
15 staffs were half black, half white. It was
16 an enormously successful thing, but the
17 reaction even though I -- we anticipated
18 there would be some racism, late and recent
19 reaction, it far exceeded anything --

20 MR. TUCKER: That you thought.

21 MR. HOFF: -- that I thought or even
22 dreamed of. And the lesson -- the pollsters
23 for the Republican party, who kind of
24 watched my activities with some interest,
25 Pollster Becker had said they'd never seen a

1 public figure go down in the popularity at
2 the polls as rapidly as I did as a result of
3 that particular thing.

4 Now let me take it to the step which
5 you talked about. There is -- the clarion
6 call is still there. In fact, Sam and I
7 were talking on the way down and my opinion,
8 I think the situation is so serious it could
9 put this country under because it's a
10 denial, absolute denial of everything that
11 we at least pretend to stand for, but it's
12 very hard to get public officials to
13 respond. And the reason for it is clear.
14 The rewards -- there are no rewards at this
15 point in time. There's nothing but downside
16 if they really step forward and carry forth
17 the battle, and it's important to understand
18 that.

19 You know, the power of this body is to
20 make recommendations. We have no
21 enforcement powers. It's important that be
22 understood. The most we can do is make
23 recommendations to the U.S. Commission on
24 Civil Rights and they in turn can either
25 adopt our recommendations or not as they see

1 fit, and we've seen instances where they
2 have not adopted our recommendations. But
3 we're not an action committee, it's
4 important that be understood. But I think
5 trying to get a public response from public
6 officials as a result of this thing, it's
7 going to be very, very difficult, and I
8 think it's important that we understand
9 that. That's a long statement, but it has
10 to be said.

11 One other thing I'd like to say too,
12 and I talked to Sam about this. In the
13 1950s the black captain, I think it was of
14 the football team, maybe it was the
15 basketball team, whatever, brought his date
16 up for a party weekend at UVM, and she
17 couldn't -- he could not find a place for
18 her to stay. No motel or hotel would take
19 her. As a result of that, the religious
20 leaders of our Burlington community forum
21 formed a group, and I don't remember the
22 name of it although I became the president
23 of it, and they became kind of an action
24 committee. And it really -- it was very
25 helpful, no question about that, but they

1 were just beginning.

2 One of the things -- we had an incident
3 in which a black Air Force Lieutenant came
4 to the Burlington area, at that time the air
5 base around Burlington was active, and he
6 found a place to live with the help of a
7 real estate agent, but when the people in
8 that neighborhood or some of them found out
9 that this black couple was coming in, they
10 turned on the realtor and the realtor, to
11 his discredit, backed away.

12 Thereafter when such an incident
13 occurred we got in touch with the real
14 estate agents, we would send in a team. I
15 know that Rabbi Wall was involved, but it
16 would be a team of -- it might be three
17 members of the clergy and go into that
18 neighborhood first. And we won every single
19 time because we were able to mobilize the
20 positive forces in that area as opposed to
21 sitting back and let the negative forces
22 take over. I still dwell on that because I
23 really think there are positive forces in
24 the Vermont community, I know there are. I
25 know there are. And we need the role

1 models.

2 DR. JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman, may I ask a
3 question?

4 MR. CHENEY: Sure.

5 DR. JOHNSON: Taking up on that point
6 and also the point that was made earlier
7 regarding denial and a question of class
8 action suit or getting U.S. Attorney General
9 to respond. Is there some way that we can
10 be smart about suggesting something that
11 would be of benefit to all children but
12 would definitely benefit minority children
13 that would be hard to deny because it would
14 benefit all children? The whole notion of
15 celebrating the value, the respect that all
16 children need, all parents want their
17 children to be respected and valued, just to
18 be more perhaps -- explore what we can do
19 that relates to the problem of the young
20 athlete that relates to everybody really,
21 any student who has real talent because if
22 they could deny this student an opportunity
23 to play, the other students that for similar
24 funny reasons did not have an opportunity to
25 express their creative strength. I don't

1 know what the answer is, but if we just ask
2 ourselves, are there some recommendations we
3 can make that would sneak through the system
4 and help get some things rolling where the
5 positive forces can coalesce around.

6 The same thing is going on in England.
7 I heard on C-SPAN, by the way, one of the
8 black House of Representatives
9 parliamentarians saying that they found ways
10 to have coalitions of all groups around
11 central issues and they could get things
12 going. If you just get the blacks and
13 people -- a class action suit is harder to
14 organize.

15 MR. HOFF: I think there are.

16 MR. TUCKER: Charles, you know, this is
17 the first place that I've ever lived, and
18 I've been in combat -- those kind of sports
19 for a very long time coming from
20 Philadelphia where I participated and other
21 parts of the country where I played, these
22 are the first group of coaches that I heard
23 that wouldn't want to win. I mean, you
24 know, most coaches that I ever had would
25 sacrifice their mother to win. Their child

1 could be dying on their death bed and if
2 they're playing, they're not going to be
3 there.

4 DR. JOHNSON: It's an old story though.

5 MR. TUCKER: I'm talking about this
6 year, Charles, and I want you to hear this.
7 It's a true story. That happened in
8 Burlington just recently.

9 DR. JOHNSON: Look back.

10 MR. TUCKER: Four kids were told, I
11 don't like the way you live your lifestyle,
12 I don't like the way you dress. One went
13 and played in Boston, one went and played
14 for another local area high school. This
15 guy then finished runner up for the state
16 championship. He would have won the state
17 champion and the four surrounding states if
18 these four kids had played there. I'm
19 saying that this stuff is so engrained and I
20 think that -- Karen and I were having a
21 conversation earlier that she doesn't
22 understand that it's not about them winning.

23 DR. JOHNSON: But I think if we just
24 back up and say, okay, this is the reality,
25 there are coaches that want to lose even if

1 they have players that can win. It's
2 similar to the issue I mentioned the other
3 night with Salomon and the two mothers, and
4 the mother said, whose baby is this, and
5 I'll cut the baby in half, give you half,
6 give her half and the mother said, I would
7 rather see the baby dead than she get it.
8 That's the same thing. I'd rather lose than
9 have a minority on the team. I mean, it
10 goes on.

11 MR. TUCKER: More than two.

12 MR. CHENEY: Let me suggest -- let me
13 see if there are any witnesses. We can
14 deliberate later. I would like to get to
15 the witnesses. Would you like to speak?
16 We'd sure love to hear you.

17 MR. PENTINO: She's on the agenda.
18 Barbara Linton.

19 MS. LINTON: I don't think I need to
20 speak. She will probably say everything I'm
21 probably going to say.

22 MR. CHENEY: I'm sorry, your last name
23 is?

24 MS. LINTON: L-i-n-t-o-n.

25 MR. TUCKER: Linton. How are you

1 doing, Barbara?

2 MS. LINTON: I'm fine, thank you. I
3 came so you won't go home. You'll complain
4 about that. But anyway, I'll give you a
5 little bit about my family history. I'm an
6 interracial marriage. My husband is Polish
7 and Scottish. I have two children, Sheila
8 Marie, who is 19 and out of high school, and
9 I have a son, David Andrew, who is 22. My
10 daughter's attending college at this moment
11 and my son's completed two years and he's
12 taking two years off to work. And he'll be
13 going back to Southern Vermont College to
14 finish up his degree in criminal justice.
15 My son was born in Maine, but we've lived
16 here for more than -- in Vermont for more
17 than 20 years. And the only school district
18 that they've gone to was the one in
19 Brattleboro, Vermont, which is Windham
20 Southeast Supervisory Union.

21 The only thing that I can say about
22 living in Vermont, one of the reasons why I
23 suppose I moved here, but I -- I didn't move
24 here like a lot of people who move here
25 running from some place; I was coming to

1 somewhere. I had a religious affiliation in
2 work that I was doing in Maine and my
3 minister lived here, so when that was done
4 and completed after my son was two, we moved
5 here.

6 We had a religious community of about
7 ten people, and we -- the decision had to be
8 made whether we were going to go back or go
9 to different places or whether we just
10 wanted to make a go of it. In other words,
11 establish ourselves in the community and --
12 and make a living, make -- make -- just have
13 a life. And some of us decided to go into
14 different places and continue religious work
15 and some others of us, like myself and my
16 husband, we decided to make it and establish
17 ourselves in the community, which we have.
18 And we've been in Brattleboro since 1977.

19 One of the things that I like living --
20 about living in Vermont when I first moved
21 here was that people had a particular idea
22 about freedom and they had a particular idea
23 about social justice which is what I was
24 looking for and that is the ideal, but we
25 all know that trying to live with people --

1 other people other than ourselves at times
2 is a difficult thing to do. Specifically if
3 people have a tendency to want to deprive
4 you of your right to live and to pursue your
5 happiness and to -- and to -- and to have
6 the kinds of experiences, good and bad, that
7 have no strings attached to them. In other
8 words, they're action and not reaction.

9 And one of the sad things is since I
10 grew up in Boston and lived there most of my
11 life and was married there and before I
12 moved to Maine, I had my son there, one of
13 the things I was hoping was that I wouldn't
14 have to have another generation of black
15 children growing up with prejudice, with
16 bigotry always at their shoulder, always.
17 Going to school in Boston, since I was one
18 of the first children that was ever bussed
19 out of Roxbury into Brighton, I told my
20 children about this, and I told my children
21 about my grandmother, their
22 great-grandmother, and the hopes and dreams
23 that she had for me. And here it is there's
24 my grandmother, which would have been my
25 children's great-grandmother, my mother, me,

1 my children and now I have a granddaughter
2 who is three and she's not long for the
3 school system, another two years, okay? So
4 here we have five generations of black men
5 and women in my family who are facing
6 prejudice and for the most basic things,
7 simply to be able to walk down the street or
8 to go into a store without someone following
9 us because they think that something is
10 going to get stolen, either that or as
11 simple as being able to enjoy a function at
12 a school without some little kid coming up
13 to you and calling you Aunt Jamaima and
14 nigger on a daily basis.

15 Since my children are no longer in the
16 high school I can't speak what's happening
17 to the students of color that are there now,
18 and I can't speak to that because it's been
19 several years now since I've -- I've -- I've
20 had to go in and take a look at what's going
21 on. And since my prayers have been answered
22 and my children have survived and have gone
23 on with their lives, I felt good enough that
24 there are people there that are watching and
25 students are organized enough that things

1 can be reported.

2 The one thing that I wanted to let you
3 gentlemen and ladies know is that it is
4 extremely difficult to get people to come
5 and to testify. Nobody likes to put their
6 business in the street. It's not something
7 that -- and it doesn't have to do with the
8 color or race, but people don't want to put
9 their business in the street. Me, I don't
10 really care. If it's going to help one
11 black child in this state not to have to go
12 through what my children went through, I'm
13 going to do it. And so I'm going to talk to
14 you about what happened to my children in
15 the Windham Southeast Supervisory Union, and
16 what would you like to know?

17 RABBI KITTY: What public school did
18 they go to?

19 MS. LINTON: They went to Canal Street,
20 they went to Old Growth and they went to the
21 junior high, high school.

22 MR. CHENEY: What years are we talking?

23 MS. LINTON: '84, '85 until '96.

24 That's for both children.

25 MR. HOFF: Tell us some of the

1 incidents if you would.

2 MS. LINTON: Well, we've had -- oh,
3 God, there's so many. Yeah, I know. Yeah,
4 right, which ones do I pick? And which ones
5 are not important, which ones are?

6 MR. TUCKER: They're all important,
7 Barbara.

8 MS. LINTON: They're all important.
9 Thank you. All right. I'll give you a good
10 one. Kindergarten -- see, I have two
11 children. My daughter's the younger, so my
12 son's experience was a little bit harder,
13 not to say that hers wasn't. Hers, being a
14 second child, I knew a little bit better
15 about how to protect her and how to be ahead
16 of -- in other words, be in the classroom
17 ahead of the teacher. Didn't always work,
18 but I think that her brother paved the way
19 for her, and I say that she didn't have as
20 hard a time, but she had a somewhat little
21 easier time because her brother was
22 spearheading everything.

23 My son has dyslexia, specifically
24 dysgraphia, and some reading problems. When
25 he was in first grade he had a teacher who

1 kept telling me that he was a behavioral
2 problem. Well, being a parent and knowing
3 that I didn't teach my children -- that's
4 one thing about living in Vermont, that's
5 one thing about having grandparents and
6 parents having hopes and dreams for you. I
7 didn't raise my children to be night and
8 day. When I was growing up in Boston you
9 acted one way in your community and one way
10 at home and one way only because you were
11 expected to be the role model. You were
12 expected to be the good black girl, the good
13 black boy who was going to be accepted by
14 the white community. I wanted to say I
15 didn't raise my children like that; I raised
16 them to be able to be themselves, to respect
17 themselves good or bad, however they felt
18 about anything. And as a family we sat down
19 and we said, okay, fine, if you get into
20 trouble for expressing yourself, we'll have
21 to deal with it. And that was the way I
22 raised my children so that they were always
23 themselves. I'm not saying that there
24 weren't times in which I felt that they
25 overexpressed themselves. And that was

1 something that they had to learn to do as
2 any children have to learn to do as they
3 start to grow older and become adults, they
4 have to learn how to curve their own
5 personal behavior, not necessarily the
6 reactionary behavior they might have from
7 somebody who's doing something either
8 physically, or mentally or otherwise.

9 And that was -- and there was a great
10 sorting out in my neighborhood and always a
11 great emotional spilling over there in the
12 household, the violence and the verbiage no
13 doubt followed my kids back to the house.
14 And believe me, it was very difficult at
15 times for my husband and I to be able to
16 deal with what was just them and what was --
17 and what was -- or what was really happening
18 to them that was spilling over into the
19 household that we had to deal with. Was it
20 sibling rivalry or was it because my son
21 experienced something bad that day and he
22 just, you know, couldn't deal with it. And
23 it was a constant vigil, believe me, a
24 constant vigil. We had -- we get back to
25 this teacher in the first grade, she kept

1 labeling him as disobedient, disruptive and
2 so on. So as a good parent, you know, I
3 looked at all the possibilities. Went to a
4 class, and this particular woman who was
5 talking about the problems that children
6 with disabilities have in Vermont,
7 particularly in the Windham Southeast
8 Supervisory Union, the classic symptoms were
9 child of -- with a disability.

10 So I went to this particular teacher
11 and said, listen, I took this class, I think
12 that since I am now aware that, yes, that
13 runs in my family now that I take a look at
14 my brother, and father and sister on certain
15 things that she does in relationship to her
16 own education. I said, I think it's
17 something that happens in the family so I
18 want my son tested. The first thing out of
19 her mouth was, well, I don't think that he
20 needs to be tested; he's just disruptive and
21 disobedient. And I said, it's not up to
22 you. She refused. At that time a teacher
23 had to sign some kind of a form. She
24 wouldn't sign it. I went around with that
25 woman for about two months, more than two

1 months actually, until I found out -- until
2 I had to go to the book, I had to pull out
3 the statutes. I went to the library, pulled
4 out the statutes and clearly it says that a
5 parent can fill out those forms and have a
6 child tested and have an IEP, Individual
7 Educational Plan, done. So I went to the
8 principal. He couldn't get her to sign it.
9 I went to the superintendent to instruct the
10 principal to instruct the teacher to have
11 her sign it, and that was the only way that
12 I did it, but it took months.

13 MR. CHENEY: Could I ask you a
14 question? To me there's this -- I'm not
15 quite sure how to get at it, but there's an
16 interaction that takes place that I've heard
17 from other witnesses that -- like your son,
18 said that he was disruptive or disobedient
19 and that somehow the kid then deserves what
20 he's getting from the other kids because
21 he's that kind of a kid and then the school
22 people tended to blame him rather than
23 seeing --

24 MS. LINTON: Oh, you --

25 MR. CHENEY: -- that maybe he's

1 disruptive or disobedient because of things
2 that are being done to him. Does that kind
3 of scenario -- do you see that kind of
4 scenario going on? Do you know what I mean?

5 MS. LINTON: I understand where you're
6 coming from. It's true, but you have to
7 understand something, it's not -- we're
8 talking about white adults, and I'm sorry to
9 put it that way, but we're talking about
10 white adults who specifically and I think
11 knowingly want to keep the status quo, and
12 the only way that they're going to be able
13 to do that, either through color lines, race
14 lines or economic lines is to separate our
15 people. And it's very easy to separate a
16 child of color because you can look right at
17 them.

18 MR. CHENEY: Let me tell you the basis
19 of my question. I talked with the chairman
20 of a school board last night and I said from
21 what I have heard if I saw a disturbance in
22 a school and I would presume it was racially
23 connected unless it was demonstrated clearly
24 otherwise if there was a person of color and
25 a white person, and her response was not at

1 all, I would presume that it was just kids
2 and then I would look for the racial
3 overtone. What would be your reaction to
4 such an approach?

5 MS. LINTON: The only thing I can say
6 is this. In general I think that white
7 people want us to go away. We are the
8 biggest mistake that they ever made. They
9 killed off all the ones who couldn't survive
10 and we are the toughest and the survivors,
11 and I think the Rabbi knows about that. And
12 so they want us to go away and ultimately
13 because we don't go away and because we are
14 strong and because we continue to have
15 generation after generation who demand
16 social justice, it's difficult for any
17 person because they take it so personally
18 that -- to say that somebody that they live
19 with, somebody that they eat lunch with,
20 play golf with, sleep with, somebody that
21 they go to the American Legion with,
22 somebody that they plan community projects
23 with would call nigger in their private
24 thoughts. Not only call nigger in their
25 private thoughts but also express that in

1 polite company. And it's as subtle as you
2 ever want it to be, and it is -- it is as
3 overt as you want it to be. And for someone
4 to say, yes, it may very well have been that
5 they were just children playing and having
6 difficulties together, but who isn't to say
7 that it isn't -- I don't think there's a
8 white person on the face of the earth -- I'm
9 sorry to say this, but that can judge what
10 it really truly is to be in black skin, or
11 to be in Hispanic skin, Chinese skin, or
12 whatever you want to say. It is a whole
13 other different experience, and I can tell
14 you that. I've been married to my husband
15 for over 20 years and he loves me to death
16 but, you know, there are times in which he
17 just acts like a white man and I tell him,
18 look, you know, this is where the line is.
19 And he doesn't even realize it because it
20 was the way he was raised. And it just --
21 it's just that way. And it's a learning
22 process. Nobody wants to admit that -- that
23 these kinds of experiences exist, but that
24 was one of the first experiences that my son
25 had was having -- through this -- we went

1 through a whole year. My son repeated the
2 first grade, which is what that particular
3 year was. We went around through a whole
4 year trying to get that IEP done, trying to
5 get a teacher to set up his class activities
6 inside the classroom and private
7 instruction, and this particular teacher
8 hated me from that day to this. She said
9 when I told her that I was going to be
10 sitting in on the class and I came in one
11 day and noticed that my son was -- that she
12 was yelling at him, I asked her what -- what
13 were you yelling at him about and so -- and
14 I said, well, please don't do that. I said,
15 he doesn't need to be yelled at. I said,
16 you can talk to him in a proper tone. She
17 swore to God that I was trying to do
18 something to her. The next day my sister --
19 because we used to have to walk our children
20 back and forth to school because they used
21 to get beat up, not on the way to school
22 because we took them to school but on the
23 way home, they used to walk home after
24 school. So between my husband and I and my
25 sister who lived with us, we used to walk

1 our children back and forth to school. One
2 day my sister went in to pick up my son
3 because he was late coming out of the
4 school, and apparently she -- one of the
5 students had said something to him and said
6 some racial epithet, and my sister
7 immediately jumped on it. And so she says,
8 well, you shouldn't be -- corrected the
9 child. She said, okay, we'll come here,
10 blah, blah, blah. My sister told her where
11 it was at in no uncertain terms. Suddenly I
12 get this phone call that tells me that my
13 sister's banned from the school because she
14 was violent. Great term.

15 MR. TUCKER: Does this sound familiar?

16 DR. HAND: Yeah. Was this a legal
17 order involved with this?

18 MS. LINTON: Well, not a legal trespass
19 order, no, but she was banned from the
20 school. She was told, don't come back.
21 Well -- and I said, well, that's
22 interesting. Rather than cause problems, my
23 sister stood outside, but I said, you know,
24 you don't have to play that game with my
25 husband and I. I said, well, do this. I'm

1 not saying that my sister didn't go to
2 functions because she did and rightfully so.
3 They had concerts and things like that, she
4 went, but it was just the fact that they
5 were so -- I can't -- I don't even know the
6 word to use. They were so indignant at the
7 fact that there would be a black aunt or
8 mother who would actually say to a white
9 child, don't do this. They were indignant.

10 MR. TUCKER: They didn't like being
11 questioned, right?

12 MS. LINTON: They didn't like being
13 questioned.

14 MR. TUCKER: They didn't like being
15 confronted and anybody who was black that
16 confronted them was what?

17 MS. LINTON: Violent.

18 MS. McMASTER: Aggressive.

19 MR. TUCKER: And a trouble maker.

20 MS. LINTON: I've been called
21 everything. I've been called an aggressive
22 woman, I've been called a bitch, and I like
23 being aggressive and I like being a bitch
24 so --

25 MR. CHENEY: I want to tell you a story

1 that happened to me.

2 MS. LINTON: Well, I don't want to
3 listen to your stories. I know you want to
4 talk to me, but I have -- I'm running on
5 small steam. I worked last night and I
6 drove up here, so I know you want to tell me
7 your story, but I want to get this stuff
8 down on paper.

9 MR. CHENEY: You go ahead.

10 MS. LINTON: Sorry. I don't mean to be
11 abusive, but I want to get this down before
12 I fade and die here.

13 So now we have one child in the school.
14 This is before my daughter went to school
15 because she's three years behind him. Now
16 we have one child being labeled, we have one
17 aunt banned from the school and we have an
18 aggressive mother, a domineering mother, a
19 trouble making mother. Every word you want
20 to use. A verbally abusive mother.
21 Anything you want to put down, somebody who
22 can't talk in the -- in norm -- well,
23 whatever. It doesn't matter. I'm pretty
24 sure this lady over here has already said
25 it. So then I said, okay, fine, if they

1 want to play that game, we're going to play
2 right along with them. That's okay, we're
3 going to do it. So every day I was up there
4 in my son's classroom making sure that woman
5 did her job, and so subsequently it got to
6 the point where she had to do her job. And
7 I said -- nobody was going to make her do
8 her job, so I said I'll sit here and see
9 that you do your job. And I got told that I
10 wanted special privileges for my children --
11 for my son, and when my daughter came along
12 special privileges. Never asked for it,
13 never got it but, nevertheless, people think
14 I got special privileges.

15 There were a lot of children in
16 Brattleboro who suffered in silence.
17 Parents suffered in silence, I know, because
18 they call me, Barbara, what do I do. I told
19 them stand up, have cahoonies, you've got to
20 get up there. You've got to tell your
21 children. You've just got to get out there
22 and stand up.

23 MR. TUCKER: When you say that, how
24 many people are we talking about
25 approximately?

1 MS. LINTON: Over the years?

2 MR. TUCKER: Yeah.

3 MS. LINTON: Fifty maybe.

4 MR. TUCKER: 50 people of color who had
5 children in school?

6 MS. LINTON: Parents, yeah.

7 MR. TUCKER: And who were being
8 harassed?

9 MS. LINTON: Yes. Over the years.
10 It's been 20 years now, but it's more now
11 than before because Brattleboro was -- is an
12 exploding population of children of color.

13 MR. TUCKER: Barbara, what do you hear?
14 I mean, come on, I know your two kids are
15 not in school, but what do you hear from
16 parents that you know that have children in
17 school? I know it's hearsay.

18 MS. LINTON: Children are -- children
19 are -- children come home sick. In other
20 words, they come home having to deal with
21 teachers who are -- okay, I'll give you a
22 good example. One of the last years that my
23 son and daughter, I think it was '94, the
24 indian -- Inuits came down to Brattleboro
25 because they were doing a swing through New

1 Hampshire, Massachusetts, Vermont to raise
2 money for -- because there was a dam being
3 built up in Quebec. And so my children were
4 on a panel of students who were hosting
5 those -- the guests and who were taking them
6 around to the different classrooms and
7 ultimately into the gym to have a talk about
8 what was happening -- a cultural talk about
9 what was happening in relationship to these
10 indigenous people. It turned into something
11 where my daughter and my son came home that
12 I didn't even believe. They expected these
13 people to have tepees, they expected them to
14 be dressed like in the movies, you know, war
15 whoops, the whole bit.

16 MR. TUCKER: Who expected this? Who
17 expected this?

18 MS. LINTON: These children. I mean,
19 these white children carried on with these
20 people so bad. In other words, they carried
21 on like these people should have been
22 dressed like in the movies, Native Americans
23 how they dressed them in the movies, with
24 war whoops, that kind of thing, where is
25 your tepee, da, da, da, da, da. And it got

1 so bad that these people left so, therefore,
2 all the children went back to their
3 classrooms, and not one teacher, not one
4 teacher because there were a group of --
5 there were a group of teachers and students
6 who stayed behind after the people left,
7 there was not one teacher, not one counselor
8 that came up and apologized to those people.
9 It was left up to the children of color and
10 left up to my daughter and my son who stood
11 up for those people in that gym. She says,
12 ma, it was one of the worst things that I
13 ever saw in my entire life.

14 MR. TUCKER: Okay. Now that happened
15 in '94?

16 MS. LINTON: Right.

17 MR. TUCKER: In your travels through
18 the community in '96 and '97, what have you
19 heard parents of color talking about that's
20 happening?

21 MS. LINTON: It's not any different.

22 MR. TUCKER: It's not any different.

23 MS. LINTON: It's not any different
24 really. People have gone underground a
25 little bit. Well, it's a little bit

1 different now because I have a court case in
2 effect. I have a court order in effect.

3 MR. TUCKER: No, but I'm not talking
4 about you now. I'm talking about is it on
5 the grapevine that there's still problems in
6 the Brattleboro school?

7 MS. LINTON: Yes. Yes. Most
8 definitely.

9 MR. TUCKER: And these parents don't
10 want to come forward because they would be
11 subjected to --

12 MS. LINTON: The question is what's --
13 the question is what is going to happen?
14 That is it. Out of all the 14 years that my
15 children were there I had a court case, and
16 it got settled in which the school district
17 had to because of an incident that happened
18 to my son when he was in the seventh grade
19 pay. There is -- in other words, there are
20 racial harassment policies and that sort of
21 thing in effect now. Whether or not they're
22 followed, that's a whole other different
23 story, but from what I understand they're
24 not. There are still incidents that are
25 happening to children that people try to

1 explain away as into something else, but
2 it's always race based. It always is.

3 MR. TUCKER: When you say explain away
4 to something else, what do you mean exactly?

5 MS. LINTON: Oh, those two kids were
6 fighting over there over -- you know how
7 kids are, they fight, but the only child
8 that gets taken away by the police is the
9 black child.

10 MR. TUCKER: These are fights that
11 occur around the school? So that's still
12 going on in Brattleboro.

13 MS. LINTON: Most definitely. The only
14 child that gets taken away is the black
15 child to court to face assault. I ought to
16 know because it happened to my son and they
17 had to pay for that. They didn't pay
18 enough, but they paid for it.

19 But what's so sad about it is, you see,
20 these teachers are still teaching and
21 they're still doing the same thing that they
22 did to my son and daughter. They're doing
23 it to other kids. I'll give you another
24 specific example. We'll leave the first
25 grade alone and we'll go to what grade is it

1 now? I think it was ninth grade. Ninth
2 grade. No, it was third -- okay, I'll give
3 you another example, third grade. I'll skip
4 up a couple of grades, third grade. I had a
5 teacher at Canal Street School, my son was
6 in third grade. Every day he would come
7 home, my son has very curly hair, sort of
8 like the Rabbi has. I don't know if you
9 have a perm in there --

10 RABBI KITTY: It grows this way.

11 MS. LINTON: Most beautiful hair I've
12 seen in my life. Because of the way black
13 men can wear your hair today, he's got it
14 long and curly.

15 MR. TUCKER: So what happened?

16 MS. LINTON: Now he came home every
17 day, he said, ma, cut my hair. It was
18 wintertime. I wasn't going to cut his hair.
19 He had a beautiful afro; I wasn't going to
20 cut it. Every day this child was in
21 distress. He came home; I'm not going to
22 cut your hair. Ma, you've got to cut my
23 hair. Then he finally went to his aunt and
24 said, auntie, cut my hair. I'm not going to
25 cut your hair. Finally my -- my sister and

1 I -- I went to my husband, I said, will you
2 talk to him, find out what the problem is.
3 So between the three of us we finally
4 figured out what the problem was. Every day
5 his teacher was telling him that he was
6 going to take a lawn mower to his head
7 unless he cut his -- unless he cut his hair.

8 MR. TUCKER: Wait a minute. Say that
9 again.

10 MS. LINTON: He was going to take a
11 lawn mower to his head. No, it gets better.

12 MR. TUCKER: No, I don't want to hear
13 anymore. I've got to go to the bathroom.

14 MS. LINTON: Okay. You can go to the
15 bathroom. It gets better. And so this poor
16 child was in such emotional distress. And
17 then he says, ma, the kids in the classroom
18 make fun of me all the time because the
19 teacher says that -- teacher says that and
20 then they repeat it. And I said, oh, that's
21 what the game is. Okay. Fine. So I called
22 the teacher up and I said to him, did you
23 say it? And then he told me, yeah, I said
24 it. And he said, but it was a joke. I
25 said, okay. I said how you joke with an

1 eight year old and tell him to destroy a
2 part of what his heritage is, which is his
3 hair, and how can you have those white boys
4 and girls making fun of him and laughing at
5 him in your classroom? And so we had a very
6 heated discussion, and subsequently he told
7 me since the principal was away that day
8 that I was not allowed in the school
9 anymore.

10 MS. SAUDEK: A teacher?

11 MS. LINTON: He was bold enough to say
12 it. So then I said to him, fine, don't -- I
13 said, fine. This was like a -- this was
14 like a Thursday. The principal was going --
15 this was like a Wednesday. The principal
16 was on some kind of a teaching trip or
17 whatever it was. He wasn't going to be back
18 until Friday. So this was Wednesday.
19 Thursday I called up a couple of friends of
20 mine and said, you think you going to ban my
21 child from school. And he says, well, you
22 think you going to do that to me, fine. So
23 we got up a couple of signs and we stood in
24 front of that school all day that day. I
25 had about 10, 15 people standing in front

1 talking about racism. And I said -- and I
2 had his name plastered all over those
3 placards, and I said -- so now the principal
4 comes back Friday morning, calls me up,
5 says, Mrs. Linton, how could you do that,
6 you're ruining a man's reputation. I
7 said, I don't really care about that man's
8 reputation; I care about my child's life and
9 the quality of my child's life. And so they
10 says, well, maybe we should have a
11 discussion. I said, we don't need a
12 discussion. You need to fire the mother
13 fucker. That's it. Fire him. No, we're
14 not going to fire him. I said, well, then
15 we'll picket again on Monday, and we did.
16 And so they had to have another hearing.
17 They had -- it was we'll sit down and we'll
18 have a discussion. Well, they had a
19 discussion, so he said to me that it was
20 just a joke.

21 I mean, whatever -- now see this man
22 that was my son's third grade teacher you
23 see lived in the community and my husband's
24 a runner, you know, runner. This man knew
25 my husband, ran in races with him, went back

1 and forth with him, knew all about my
2 children, knew all about my life, was in my
3 home eating my food. It wasn't like we were
4 strangers now, but this is what he did to my
5 child when he was in his own power, okay?
6 And my husband and -- my husband had a few
7 words to say to him about what he did white
8 man to white man but, you know, I told him
9 right up that his problem was that he was a
10 very dark Italian who used to cut his hair
11 off all the time, otherwise it would be just
12 like my son's and I told him so, and I told
13 him it was because he didn't want to be
14 thought of as black himself. He was
15 Sicilian. And I said, you're just as close
16 as -- you're just as close to being black as
17 my son is if not -- I said, you need to come
18 out yourself out of the closet, but you did
19 this to my son because you think you were
20 going to be able to take something off
21 yourself, that someone would be able to make
22 you feel -- that you would be more Arian.
23 You wanted to be able to do it.

24 Now I'm going to tell you my son is
25 going to be 23 in March. This man has never

1 apologized to my son for what he did to him.
2 Never apologized to him. When he met him
3 again after the third grade when he was dean
4 of students at the high school, he tried to
5 mess with my son then, but my son was like
6 17, 18, 19 and able to defend himself. He
7 couldn't say the same things to my son that
8 he was -- that he could say to him when he
9 was 8. And my son defended himself and
10 said, you know, you need to keep your mouth
11 closed. You can't do to me what you used to
12 do to me. It doesn't work. And so now --
13 and that was the end of that. We just made
14 sure that he didn't have anything to do with
15 my son, that he was not in any classes. As
16 dean of students he did have several
17 classes. Just made sure that he was not in
18 my son's way or had any decision power over
19 my son whatsoever.

20 MR. CHENEY: Question down here.

21 DR. JOHNSON: Question. You mentioned
22 that several parents ask you from time to
23 time, Barbara, what should I do. Is it
24 useful now to do something in a written
25 form, in some kind of form so that many

1 parents can have ideas about strategies of
2 what to do regarding teachers, parents, home
3 as interact -- your son was a spearhead and
4 he helped teach you for your daughter, but
5 there are many parents who are going into
6 this for the first time. How can we help
7 more parents be stronger faster in dealing
8 with the school?

9 MS. LINTON: The way I can -- the way I
10 can say this to you is that there's -- black
11 people don't need to die anymore. We don't
12 need to have hoses turned on us, we don't
13 need to have the dogs. We've got the law
14 now. It's passed already. So the question
15 is taking that law. And when the Founding
16 Fathers made the Constitution they didn't
17 really know how good they actually made it.
18 Take that law into every school district and
19 sit down with the superintendent and all the
20 principals in that school district. I mean,
21 command them to come to a meeting and then
22 invite parents. You can talk to them
23 separately and talk to parents separately if
24 you want to if the parents won't come, but
25 if you -- if you went to every school

1 district like you're doing here now, went to
2 every school district and said that we are
3 willing to take the complaints and we're
4 going to take them back to Washington and if
5 we have to have class action suit on behalf
6 of all the students of color in the State of
7 Vermont, we're going to do it. We're going
8 to do it. And that -- and I think that
9 people could -- because what happens is when
10 you start talking about money in the pocket,
11 that's what people feel, and it's always
12 been economic. And it's always been
13 economic in relationship to that. You take
14 away their money, they're going to be doing
15 what they need to do.

16 DR. JOHNSON: Okay. I accept that.
17 That's a big strategy and that's important.
18 Is there in addition to that something that
19 relates to what the parents can do as
20 strategies that we can help facilitate?

21 MS. LINTON: There's so much injustice
22 and there's so much grief and pain, and
23 there's no way to -- there's no -- I mean,
24 money in relationship too helps, but it
25 doesn't really help when you think about it

1 because children are being scarred every
2 day. And there's nothing that parents --
3 that you can do that would -- I mean, if you
4 stop it, yes, but there's really nothing
5 that can be done to help those parents in
6 that way. If we're talking about parents
7 being more politically active in their
8 school district, I think that parents are
9 because they're speaking up. It's not a
10 question of the fact that they don't know
11 how to do it or won't do it; it's a question
12 that it's of no use because people are
13 willing to in small towns of 12, 13, 14,000
14 people or less and most of the towns in the
15 state -- in the school districts in this
16 state people have a particular way that they
17 want to live, a particular way that they
18 think -- they think their neighbors want
19 them to govern or to conduct business
20 because they're not thinking about the fact
21 that there's a black child in the school
22 district today; they're thinking about
23 something that's going to happen 150 years
24 from now and the kind of power that's going
25 to be happening 150 years from now and who's

1 going to have that power.

2 If you can deprive a black child today,
3 that will be one less black child 150 years
4 from now if he stays in the State of
5 Vermont, if he stays in the State of
6 Vermont. If he stays after the treatment
7 that he's received. If he stays. 150 years
8 from now his progeny, great grandchildren,
9 will they be here to inherent selectmen's
10 jobs, management jobs, principal's jobs,
11 superintendent's jobs, that's what they're
12 thinking about. And so this is -- that's
13 what they're really thinking about.

14 MR. TUCKER: So you say they're doing
15 this to run blacks out of the state?

16 MS. LINTON: Most definitely.

17 MR. TUCKER: You think that?

18 MS. LINTON: I know that. I don't
19 think it; I know it.

20 MR. TUCKER: You're saying you --

21 MS. LINTON: There isn't one black
22 child --

23 MR. TUCKER: Barbara, let me finish.

24 MS. LINTON: Yeah.

25 MR. TUCKER: You're saying that you

1 think that underlying this is a conspiracy
2 to keep blacks out of this state?

3 MS. LINTON: Yes, most definitely.

4 MR. TUCKER: Okay. That's all -- I
5 mean, because I wasn't clear because of you
6 trying to be polite about what you had to
7 say. I've talked to you before and, you
8 know, be less polite.

9 DR. HAND: I have a -- this teacher who
10 became dean of students, I assume that the
11 dean of students is a step up on the
12 hierarchy of --

13 MS. LINTON: Oh, yeah. His reward.

14 DR. HAND: He was obviously selected
15 because of his sensitivity to student needs.
16 Was there any reaction to this on your part?
17 Why I -- I'm asking this question because a
18 little bit earlier you spoke about your
19 protest and how the principal was concerned
20 you were ruining this man's career, but it
21 seemed to have little impact, certainly no
22 negative impact on it. I wonder what the
23 reaction -- was there a reaction?

24 MS. LINTON: Because everybody explains
25 everything away. That's -- you know,

1 everybody explains everything away. He took
2 it the wrong way. An eight year old boy who
3 comes home hysterical because he thinks he's
4 going to lose what is his biological
5 heritage, his hair, he can't do anything
6 about that, he can't do anything about his
7 facial features, he can't do anything about
8 his skin color, he sure as hell can't do
9 anything about his hair. Oh, sure, he can
10 straighten it, but he can't really do
11 anything about it. That is his heritage,
12 that is who he is, and for somebody who was
13 not of -- well, I can't say Sicilian is not
14 of color because he is, who believes he's
15 not of color to say that he's going to
16 destroy that meant that he was trying to
17 destroy my son. That's what he was trying
18 to do.

19 DR. HAND: I'm not trying to deny that.
20 I'm interested in what the reaction was both
21 from the -- the systemic reaction.
22 Obviously the system promoted this man,
23 number one, and I'm interested in what your
24 reaction was.

25 MS. LINTON: I don't count. What I'm

1 saying to you is --

2 DR. HAND: I'm aware of that and that's
3 part of the problem, but I'm saying did you
4 have a reaction to this? You protested --

5 MS. LINTON: From the principal, yes.
6 That he thought that my action was
7 overboard.

8 MS. SAUDEK: Do you have any sense that
9 your protest might have enhanced this
10 person's career?

11 MR. TUCKER: That's better.

12 DR. HAND: Yes.

13 MR. TUCKER: He got promoted because
14 you did protest.

15 MS. LINTON: Well, this has been many
16 years down the line. My son is going to be
17 23. This happened when he was eight.

18 MR. TUCKER: No, but when he got
19 promoted did you say anything to the school
20 board about him being promoted?

21 MS. LINTON: No. Well, it wasn't that
22 I didn't say anything about him being
23 promoted. When he became dean of students,
24 you know, I mean, what happened was --

25 MR. TUCKER: Could --

1 MS. LINTON: The school district -- the
2 school district went from one principal to
3 three principals because they wanted to
4 divide the workload and they went to block
5 scheduling, and so ultimately they felt that
6 they needed to have three principals to deal
7 with three aspects of the school --

8 MR. TUCKER: No, but I'm saying when he
9 got promoted, Barbara, did you take any
10 action or anybody take any action to protest
11 his being promoted?

12 MS. LINTON: To being dean of students?

13 MR. TUCKER: Yeah.

14 MS. LINTON: No. The question -- let's
15 put it this way. I was dealing with so
16 much. By the time he was dean of students
17 my children were almost out of high school,
18 okay? We were embroiled in a bitter case
19 with the Human Rights Commission in
20 relationship to trying to settle
21 discrimination issues on racism to the
22 district. So his becoming dean of students
23 was not on my priority list other than the
24 fact of keeping him away from my children.

25 MR. TUCKER: Okay.

1 MS. LINTON: But, see, these people --
2 these people are there today. He's still
3 dean of students. He's still dean of
4 students.

5 MR. TUCKER: No, you've answered the
6 question though.

7 MR. CHENEY: I have a question here.

8 RABBI KITTY: I was just wondering when
9 you call around to your friends to protest
10 or even in the intervening years, was it
11 only black families that came to your aid or
12 did you find that you had more general
13 community support?

14 MS. LINTON: I have friends in the
15 community, I've been here 20 years. I've
16 been there 20 years. There are people who
17 will do things on the drop of a hat in the
18 community. Oh, you need a person to
19 protest, oh, sure, I'll go out and do that.
20 You need me to hold a sign, no problem.
21 They're not afraid to do it. There are a
22 lot of people who are afraid to do that. If
23 nobody stood with me, I did it. I've done
24 that on occasion. My sister and I -- I
25 think my sister and I, we used to sit with

1 placards at the selectmen's meetings, and we
2 used to sit with placards at school board
3 meetings and we used to stand in front of my
4 children's grade school and grammar school,
5 just my sister and I, with signs that talked
6 about stop racism. So if nobody stood with
7 us, we did it, and if we -- and if we've got
8 a friend who wasn't busy that particular
9 day, she or he stood with us along with
10 their kids. Some of them were
11 African-American and some of them weren't.

12 RABBI KITTY: My question was really
13 just to gather a sense of how -- how alone
14 or how supported you felt in the community
15 because there's a sense that parents of
16 black children are alone, that no matter
17 where you go you're stymied because no one
18 will support you in supporting the law.

19 MS. LINTON: Nobody. That's true.
20 You're right about that. It still exists
21 like that today. It's not any different.
22 It's not any different. It's really -- it's
23 not any different. So -- so now he's dean
24 of students.

25 I had a teacher who had my son, in fact

1 they were just complaining about him the
2 other day in the paper in fact. In our
3 little local newspaper there's a speakout
4 section. In other words, you can call up
5 anonymously and say anything about anybody
6 you want. I mean, they're not going to put
7 race and real hatred things in there. You
8 know, that's not for that, but it's to talk
9 about things -- it's to give a sense of
10 what's happening in the community for people
11 to talk about what they see around their
12 community, and for change and one thing and
13 another. They're not going to put anything
14 abusive in there.

15 Well, they were complaining about one
16 particular coach, and I knew about this man
17 years ago. He was -- he was my son's
18 physical education teacher. And he used to
19 say things on him. I remember one time he
20 was -- I think they were doing tennis and so
21 my son hit the ball and it went out. Now he
22 didn't hit it purposely, but the teacher
23 said, okay, I want you to go out there and
24 get -- now he didn't -- now the other kids
25 hit the ball, sometimes it went out,

1 sometimes it didn't. He didn't send anyone
2 else outside the gate to get balls, but he
3 told my son to get it. My son was old
4 enough to tell him if you want those balls,
5 you're going to have to go get them. So he
6 tried to say that my son was insubordinate.
7 So he tried to get him to run around the
8 field. You know, my son said, look, you
9 know, I'm not going to play that game. I'm
10 just not going to do it. And so he
11 ultimately sent him out to do --
12 insubordination, one thing and another. So
13 this kept happening. Every time he was in
14 gym he would say something to him, or he
15 would make a comment about how he wasn't
16 doing something or about the fact he didn't
17 have coordination. It was, you know, all
18 that sort of thing and, you know, I said to
19 my husband one day, I said to my husband, I
20 said -- and I said, you know, my son is a
21 young man, he's growing and he's six foot
22 now and he's a beautiful, strong -- he's got
23 my family's build. My husband's a very
24 skinny person. He's only -- he's 5'10", but
25 he's very thin. My son has my family build,

1 and I think that they take a look at him and
2 know that he's one strong black man, one
3 more, and they don't want to have that.
4 They want to destroy his life, to take the
5 essence, his sense of self-esteem, his --
6 the very essence of who he is, to destroy
7 that by -- by making him less than a person
8 in the eyes of his peers and in the eyes of
9 other adults regardless of what color they
10 may be. And so I just told him, I said,
11 lookit, we're going to have a meeting.

12 What happened was since my son was
13 insubordinate, he went to the principal and
14 wanted my son suspended. We had a big
15 rigamarole in the school district all the
16 time. I said, look, you can't suspend --
17 you can't tell my child to go home, send him
18 home without a hearing. Here's the book.
19 Look it up. Da, da, da, da, da. Let's go
20 for this, guys. We're going to follow the
21 letter of the law every time something
22 happens and I have to be here 100 times a
23 week. So here it was another meeting
24 sitting in with this teacher. And he's
25 sitting there as arrogant as some preppy

1 school boy talking about I didn't say that.
2 I didn't mean that. And all I wanted to do
3 was go up and slap him in the face and tell
4 him to grow up and to leave -- leave my son
5 alone.

6 Now what's so bad about this is -- and
7 maybe this is something that you -- I want
8 you to get these people. I'm sorry. That's
9 terrible for me to say, but they shouldn't
10 be teaching anymore. That's really true.
11 They should lose their jobs because it's
12 moral torpitude. It really and truly is.
13 They should lose their jobs. This
14 particular teacher that I'm talking about
15 who's still in school -- school today, the
16 counselor that my son -- that my son
17 reported all his feelings to in private --
18 he had a counselor that he used to go to,
19 any time something happened within the
20 school, he had a regular counseling session.
21 All he needed to do was get up and leave, go
22 talk to him, and he had a regular weekly
23 time in which he talked to the teacher --
24 talked to the counselor. And in his
25 counseling session he was talking about this

1 particular teacher. Well, I went to talk to
2 my son's counselor one day and he had to
3 admit that my son wasn't the only one. This
4 particular teacher liked to pick on children
5 who were overweight, children who were of
6 color, children who had handicaps,
7 disabilities. You name it, he was abusive.
8 And these children -- all these children
9 were coming to this particular counselor and
10 telling him. Now what I did was I said to
11 this counselor, you need to report this to
12 the principal and to the superintendent.
13 You're trying to put words in my mouth was
14 the first thing that he said to me. Now
15 this man -- this man, I'm not sure whether
16 he's still counseling or not, but I think he
17 is, I think he's counseling on the outside
18 of the school where his children come from
19 the school district to him. I don't think
20 he any longer has an office in the school
21 itself -- in the high school itself, but
22 between the two of them -- and I said, I
23 just wanted to slap these men in the face.
24 I just wanted to say, wake up. And I said,
25 do you realize what you're doing? This is a

1 conspiracy. You know what I mean? You're
2 telling me that you're hearing that these
3 children are being abused -- and that's what
4 it was, abuse. You're telling me that these
5 children are reporting to the school doctor
6 who was the pedia -- my child's pediatrician
7 was the school doctor. They're telling the
8 pediatrician -- their pediatrician, because
9 he was the main pediatrician in town,
10 they're telling you what's happening to
11 them, their parents are telling you, I'm
12 telling you, we're discussing all this and
13 this man is still teaching. Now what's so
14 bad about this now is this happened when my
15 son was in the ninth grade, he would have
16 been 13, 14, something like that. He might
17 have been 13. This man is still being
18 complained about in the newspaper as of a
19 month ago about his abuse of children, and
20 as of a month ago.

21 MR. TUCKER: So you're talking about
22 eight years ago this guy was being
23 complained to --

24 MS. LINTON: There were children before
25 him.

1 MR. TUCKER: I need to be specific,
2 Barbara. You're saying that eight years ago
3 he was being complained about by you?

4 MS. LINTON: Right.

5 MR. TUCKER: And others?

6 MS. LINTON: Yes.

7 MR. TUCKER: And eight years later he's
8 still being complained about in the
9 newspapers?

10 MS. LINTON: That's right.

11 MR. TUCKER: That's right.

12 MR. CHENEY: Are there any other
13 questions?

14 MR. DIAMOND: Ms. Linton, I just wanted
15 to ask a follow up to Rabbi Kitty's
16 question. You made a statement earlier that
17 the Brattleboro area is an exploding area
18 for children of color.

19 MS. LINTON: Right.

20 MR. DIAMOND: Based on what we heard
21 yesterday I'm going to assume that lots of
22 those children are being adopted by white
23 parents. Am I wrong? I mean, are there a
24 growing number of white parents that have
25 children of color in the Brattleboro area?

1 MS. LINTON: Why is it always assumed
2 that black -- black men and white women
3 don't get together and black women and white
4 men don't get together?

5 MR. DIAMOND: If you'd just answer my
6 question.

7 MS. LINTON: I did answer your
8 question.

9 MR. TUCKER: No, we heard last night,
10 Barbara, let me say this, that over 100
11 black children --

12 MS. LINTON: I answered his question.

13 MR. TUCKER: Over 100 black children a
14 year are being adopted into the -- by
15 families in this state. We heard this from
16 someone who works in the state adoption
17 agency, that 100 black --

18 MS. LINTON: Well, if it's happening,
19 it ain't happening in Brattleboro. Well, I
20 do know --

21 MR. DIAMOND: That was my question.

22 MS. LINTON: I do know probably three
23 families who have children who are adopted,
24 but for the most part it isn't -- but I
25 answered your question, okay? It's a whole

1 other different area. I answered your
2 question. Like Mr. Tucker said, you've got
3 to be more specific with me, all right,
4 because I'm going to give you a specific
5 answer. The answer is that for every -- for
6 every black child that's there, maybe --
7 maybe this much of a percentage are children
8 who are coming into adopted families, but
9 for the most part these are not Fresh Air
10 kids, these aren't kids from crack homes.
11 No, these are children made the same way I
12 made my children, okay?

13 MR. CHENEY: Any other questions?

14 MS. LINTON: That's what I'm talking
15 about. We have -- we have -- do you
16 understand where I'm coming from?

17 MR. DIAMOND: I do. The follow-up
18 question was going to be whether or not you
19 perceived white parents who had children of
20 color, whether they were treated the same
21 way you were treated or whether they in your
22 judgment had any more success in dealing
23 with --

24 MS. LINTON: I don't think so.

25 MR. DIAMOND: -- school administrative

1 structure.

2 MS. LINTON: I don't think so. I think
3 people are just as bold to white women and
4 white men who have children of color because
5 they have children of color. I don't think
6 it -- I think that -- I think as a black
7 woman I may be treated somewhat a little bit
8 differently than maybe they might approach
9 it but, see, we're not talking about --
10 we're not talking about, you know, the
11 plantation here. We're not talking about
12 men and women who are going to be perceived
13 as delegate individuals and high --
14 perceived as high in society and, therefore,
15 you know, oh, it's so nice of you to take in
16 this child. No, that's not it. You know
17 what I mean? These parents are middle
18 income, low income. They're all ages and
19 it's not -- they're not perceived that way.
20 They're perceived as parents of black
21 children. They're not perceived as on that
22 level of society that the rest of -- of --
23 of the community may be. No. They're
24 perceived as parents of black children and
25 children of color.

1 MR. CHENEY: I think Ms. Saudek has a
2 question.

3 MS. SAUDEK: From news stories I've
4 seen and things I've heard I've had the
5 sense that black kids in this state have
6 even more difficulties when they participate
7 in interscholastic sports, that -- things
8 that don't perhaps take place at home do
9 take place on the road. Did your kids
10 participate in interscholastic sports?

11 MS. LINTON: All the time. Football,
12 baseball, basketball, soccer, track,
13 everything. There might have been some
14 incidents but, see, what happens is their
15 teammates usually took care of it. I can't
16 address -- see, every -- you have to
17 understand too that when you have
18 communities -- I don't know where you live,
19 in the middle, upper part of the state.

20 MS. McMASTER: I live in Castleton.

21 MS. LINTON: Oh, you live in the upper
22 part of the state. Okay. I can't address
23 what's happening in other parts of the state
24 where there might be more isolation of
25 students of color. In other words, one

1 every other grade or something like that
2 where there's really isolation. But for --
3 for a long time my son and daughter were
4 integrated in the school system in
5 Brattleboro for a very long time until they
6 reached junior high and high school -- until
7 they reached junior high and high school,
8 and then there were more students of color.

9 MR. TUCKER: Did they have problems
10 when they played sports?

11 MS. LINTON: There may very well have
12 been some incidents, but they were dealt
13 with very quickly because we -- I -- they
14 had good coaches.

15 MS. SAUDEK: Thank you.

16 MS. LINTON: They had very good coaches
17 and their teammates were supportive.

18 MR. TUCKER: Thank you.

19 MR. CHENEY: Any other questions?
20 Thank you very much.

21 MS. LINTON: Well, I'm not done yet. I
22 mean, unless you've got somebody who needs
23 to testify.

24 MR. CHENEY: Well, let's take a break.
25 Let's take a short break here.

1 (Recess taken)

2 MR. CHENEY: Why don't we go back on
3 the record. Is there something specific you
4 wanted to say?

5 MS. LINTON: Well, not to leave my
6 daughter out. Just because she's a second
7 child, not to forget her experiences. I'll
8 give you a couple. Oh, goodness, I can't
9 remember. Let me see -- hold on one sec. I
10 did have the Human Rights Commission fax me
11 down part of the -- part of the record that
12 they did and all the experiences that my
13 children had. Some of the pages did not fax
14 out, that's what happened, and I'm looking
15 through them here, but a couple of the
16 incidents that I will tell you about is
17 this. My daughter, I think it was either
18 seventh or eighth grade -- and I know that
19 it's here, but I don't think that it really
20 makes any difference what grade it was, but
21 they had what they call class presidents.
22 And they were having elections and that sort
23 of thing and so everybody would write out
24 something, give a speech before the class
25 and then, you know, students would vote on

1 it. And they had the right to make up
2 flyers, to post their positions on -- in
3 school and that sort of thing. My daughter
4 did that, but then when she came back -- she
5 did that. You know what I mean, she made
6 out her position statement, did that. Then
7 all of a sudden she came and none of her
8 posters were up. Everyone else's posters
9 were up; not hers.

10 So then she went to the teacher and
11 said, well, what's going on? So this
12 happened for a couple days in a row until
13 she caught a kid doing it, taking them down.
14 And he very frankly said to her when she
15 said why are you doing that, and she got
16 into it with him. And he says, well, you're
17 not going to get elected; niggers don't get
18 elected anyway. That was his statement.
19 Well, to say the least I had a very long
20 discussion with her teacher about --

21 MR. CHENEY: Who said this to her, her
22 teacher?

23 MS. LINTON: Another student -- about
24 this particular incident and how it affected
25 the rest of the class in relationship to

1 their voting. And I says -- because I said,
2 if this is what the pervasive attitude is in
3 relationship to white students of electing
4 your own kind, then I think that you should
5 specifically add on a panel of --
6 specifically add on a panel of students -- a
7 position for a student of color for the
8 whole class to vote on student of color to
9 give that perspective. I mean, if there's a
10 couple of children, two or three children in
11 the classroom, three or four children in the
12 classroom, then they should have a voice as
13 well. Well, I was told about fair play,
14 democracy, action. You know what I mean? I
15 was told social justice as though I didn't
16 know what that actually meant. And said,
17 well, you know, your daughter, she has to be
18 elected by her peers. I said, which peers
19 is she talking about, the student who was
20 ripping down her posters talking about
21 niggers don't get elected? Which one?
22 Which peers is you talking about? So we
23 went around with this and went around with
24 this, and this was one of the incidents that
25 I reported to the Human Rights Commission.

1 There have been hundreds of incidents
2 that I have reported to the Human Rights
3 Commission. That's only one. Needless to
4 say that my daughter was not elected, nor
5 was there a student of color elected that
6 year, but because of the -- but because of
7 the continuing effort, the next year when my
8 daughter was out of that grade there was a
9 student of color elected.

10 But everybody likes to be able to try
11 to put it down to personality. Everybody
12 has their likes and dislikes, but when you
13 live in a very homogeneous population
14 people -- people have a tendency to, like
15 glue, stick together. I don't know why it
16 happens, it just does, and students have
17 their -- white students have their own
18 little clicks, their own thoughts about
19 things and they leave students of color out.
20 And that means out of simple things such as
21 voting on class presidents, who's going to
22 be the king and queen at the prom, any
23 number of things, any number of things
24 because they're not of the -- they're not
25 what people think should -- the image -- the

1 image that they wish to present for next --
2 you know, people who -- who are having their
3 25th anniversary and 35th anniversary are
4 remembering who was king and queen at their
5 prom. That's really what it's all about is
6 that representation, that power, that
7 representation of what that means, of what
8 that means and carrying on into the next
9 generation.

10 I'll tell you another incident that
11 happened to my daughter. I think she was
12 in -- she was still in grade school, so she
13 would have been in the -- she would have
14 been in seventh grade or eighth grade.
15 Well, let's see, how old was she? Twelve,
16 13 at the time. Twelve. Eleven or 12 I
17 think she was. She had an art teacher
18 who -- in the classroom who happened to be
19 on maternity leave so they had a substitute,
20 and the rule was that if you needed to go to
21 the bathroom, you took a tag off the wall,
22 went down the stairs and went to the
23 bathroom. And because I frequent the
24 school, I noticed this all the time, kids
25 walking the corridors going back and forth

1 to the bathroom, peeking into other
2 classrooms, saying hello to their friends
3 and going back. Well, my daughter just
4 happened to do it that particular day and
5 ultimately the substitute -- she asked the
6 substitute, I need to go to the bathroom,
7 but like a lot of teachers, you know,
8 they're not going to say -- not just the
9 teachers, it's the parents until all of a
10 sudden somebody's out of their eyesight and
11 then they want to argue about the point.
12 She took the tag off the wall and my
13 daughter left the classroom. She was gone.
14 This was on the third floor. I guess it
15 would be the third floor.

16 And so she proceeded down the stairs to
17 go to the bathroom, which is down on the
18 first floor, okay? All of a sudden she --
19 the teacher's screaming at the top of her
20 lungs for my daughter to come back. Well,
21 she's on her way to the toilet. All of a
22 sudden the principal hears a teacher calling
23 my daughter's name. Now instead of him as
24 he encountered her on the bottom stairs of
25 the first floor -- office is over here, the

1 stairs are over here, it was Christmastime.
2 Instead of him asking, Sheila, you heard
3 your teacher talking to you, what happened,
4 she says, oh, I'm on my way to the bathroom,
5 I don't think she saw me when I left the
6 room. No, he didn't say that. He wanted
7 her to go back upstairs and answer her
8 teacher. She was on her way to the toilet.
9 He stood in front of her and played
10 basketball guard for five minutes. My
11 daughter needed to go to the bathroom, okay?
12 She couldn't get around this man. He
13 grabbed her and tried to stop her to force
14 her to go back up the stairs. She literally
15 had to run from that teacher -- run from
16 that principal, who's still principal of
17 that school, out the front door, around the
18 back of the school, run in another -- run in
19 the back door with some other teacher --
20 with him and another teacher chasing her so
21 she could go to the bathroom on the other
22 side -- to the ladies room on the other side
23 of the building in another -- coming in the
24 back hallway and going to the restroom on
25 that end peeing her pants in the process.

1 Well, she called me -- now the first
2 thing it was, I got this phone call from the
3 principal about the fact that my daughter
4 was insubordinate, that he wasn't going to
5 put up with it anymore, that he was tired of
6 it, that he was going to suspend her, blah,
7 blah, blah. I said, where's my child? I
8 talked to her and found out what it is. I
9 said, I'll be there in ten minutes. I
10 didn't have a car. At that time I didn't
11 drive and I didn't have a car. I called up
12 the cab and said, listen, my daughter's in
13 trouble. I know you all are busy, but I
14 need to get there in ten minutes. It was
15 the fastest wash, dress I ever did -- and
16 jumped in a cab that I ever did in my whole
17 entire life. And before I could get -- I
18 called them up and I told them, you son of a
19 bitch, I said, I will be there in ten
20 minutes. Did you know that they had the
21 assistant superintendent -- in that ten
22 minutes it took me to get to that school
23 they had the assistant superintendent and a
24 police officer there to deal with me, my
25 right hand to God, and I don't swear because

1 I'm a Quaker, my right hand to God.

2 Now the reason why I'm telling you this
3 story is when my daughter came home the next
4 day she had bruises on her arm where this
5 man put his hands on her. Do you think
6 anything happened to this man? Of course
7 not. Do you think anything happened to the
8 teacher who chased her into the room and
9 violated her -- into the bathroom and
10 violated her privacy? No, nothing. Do you
11 think --

12 MR. TUCKER: This is a male teacher
13 that went into the girl's --

14 MS. LINTON: No. It was a female
15 teacher. It doesn't make any difference.
16 But it was the principal of the grade school
17 that put his hands on her. They had them
18 there because they thought I was going to
19 punch the man out, and I was. I said, you
20 went -- you want to put your hand on little
21 girls, okay, fine. I'm a big girl, try it
22 with me. They had -- now what's so bad
23 about this is all the times that my children
24 -- before they got to be of an age where
25 they could defend themselves, all the times

1 that my children were walking back and forth
2 to grade school and junior high school, all
3 the times that students used to follow them
4 home, call them every kind of racial epithet
5 in the book, throw stones and rocks at them,
6 physically beat them, tear their clothes off
7 their bodies and I had beaten and broken
8 children by the time they got to my door,
9 all those times not one police officer could
10 ever get to that school to get those
11 children who were in those classrooms who
12 were doing it. No one could ever knock on
13 these parents' doors. No one understood the
14 meaning of racism, not one person, but
15 suddenly here big mama was coming, got the
16 superintendent and a police officer in ten
17 minutes to school to protect the principal
18 because he thought his life was in danger..
19 I couldn't believe this. And these people
20 are still teaching these children. What do
21 they have to teach? These men should be
22 gone. Fired. Gone. But, no, that doesn't
23 happen in white society. Doesn't happen.
24 These people are child abusers. That's what
25 they are. Plain and simple.

1 MR. CHENEY: Do you have a question?

2 MS. ELMER: Yeah. You've mentioned a
3 number of times the Human Rights Commission,
4 filing complaints with them. Was that an
5 effective system for you?

6 MS. LINTON: Sometimes it was and
7 sometimes it wasn't. Sometimes you can get
8 a phone call and people straighten
9 themselves out, but for the most part, no,
10 because you have to understand, there's
11 criteria. It's very hard to prove, oh,
12 well, with this particular incident my
13 daughter didn't listen so therefore -- they
14 can always explain something away. It
15 wasn't right what happened to her, it was a
16 misunderstanding, blah, blah, blah, but
17 nobody could explain away those bruises. Do
18 you understand what I'm saying to you?

19 MS. ELMER: Yeah. If I could follow
20 up. You've given us a number of
21 recommendations about how laws exist and
22 they're almost stated the right way if we
23 could just darn well enforce them. Are
24 there any recommendations you can make about
25 the Human Rights Commission or additional

1 recommendations?

2 MS. LINTON: I think that what's
3 happening is teachers who do this should be
4 fired. Unquestionably. This is the 90s
5 now. Most of these things happened in the
6 80s. Well, some of it happened in the 90s,
7 but most of these things happened in the
8 80s. These people should be fired
9 immediately. I mean, a lot of times they
10 belong to unions so you've got to give them
11 a little bit, but they should be fired. And
12 they should be -- and something permanently
13 should be on their record if they want to be
14 able to work in another school district
15 again in the State of Vermont. Fired. No
16 questions asked. You know, I mean, whatever
17 penalty, maybe they could be suspended for a
18 year, whatever it is, but fired. That's the
19 solution to it. It's not -- you know what I
20 mean? You can't put your hands on children.
21 That man should have been fired. There
22 would have been no question.

23 MS. ELMER: Zero tolerance.

24 MR. TUCKER: Aren't all these teachers
25 in the union?

1 MS. LINTON: They're still teaching and
2 they're still superintendents and
3 principals. Are you kidding me? Dean of
4 students, whatever. You ask for it.

5 MR. TUCKER: Barbara, they're in a
6 union and where a union is, they've got to
7 prove that. There are all kind of steps
8 that have to go through and that's the other
9 part of this scenario that we're playing out
10 today. You know, the union hasn't been here
11 in the two days that we have met.

12 MS. LINTON: Yeah, but there is such a
13 thing as moral torpitude and abuse of
14 children.

15 MR. TUCKER: But that -- I have never
16 been anyplace, lived anyplace where my kids
17 went to school, my kids went to school in
18 New York, Philadelphia, other places where
19 the unions routinely assisted in helping
20 parents deal with teachers that were -- they
21 knew the parents knew that they were
22 ineffective.

23 MS. LINTON: I know for a fact that
24 when that teacher that I was telling you
25 about, the gym teacher who was abusive, he

1 had -- when we had the hearing he had -- he
2 had the right to have a representative from
3 the union come and assist him, and I told
4 him, I said, you know -- and I said, you
5 know what he's doing. You know full well
6 that what he's doing is wrong and it's
7 abuse. You know that. And I said --

8 MR. CHENEY: Did you get any -- any
9 action from the Human Rights Commission? If
10 so, what specific actions did they take?

11 MS. LINTON: My son had an art class
12 when he was -- let's see, how old would he
13 have been, 13 -- 12, 13. He had an art
14 class, and I don't remember how many kids
15 were in that class. Maybe there were 15, 17
16 kids in the class. I don't know. And the
17 teacher purported herself to being a woman
18 who understood diversity. You know, she
19 went to South Africa. You know, she did her
20 thing. You know what I mean. Art classes
21 in South Africa and that sort of thing, but
22 she went there as a white woman and came
23 back as a white woman. And there were --
24 there were these three boys in this class
25 who used to taunt my son on a daily basis.

1 There was not one thing that they could say
2 to him from calling him a monkey to telling
3 him that -- you know, that his eyes looked
4 like girls. You know, that his hair looked
5 like he had put his hands in sockets. There
6 wasn't one thing that they didn't say to
7 this kid, or push him around or do anything.
8 So he exploded in class one day, beat the
9 hell out of three of them, and the principal
10 and the teacher who said she didn't hear
11 anything or hadn't heard anything in that
12 whole entire class all the time my son had
13 been in it, all of a sudden -- you know the
14 class was a small class, it was -- you know,
15 if you took those two pillars and these two
16 pillars and closed it off, it was a small
17 class. And she had her desk up there. She
18 was pretending she couldn't hear. So the
19 only child that got taken away out of that
20 classroom by the assistant principal at the
21 time of the junior high school, or was he
22 principal at the time, I can't remember now.
23 I think he was the principal at the time.
24 He was another man that my husband knew, ran
25 with him and his brother, so it wasn't like

1 he didn't know my son's history and all that
2 sort of thing. He called the -- there were
3 police officers checking lockers for drugs
4 and that sort of thing in the school. He
5 called them over and had my son taken away,
6 and how they chicken winged him out of the
7 school and put him in a squad car and took
8 him down to the police station and put him
9 in a room. How I heard about it was -- this
10 was like at 11, 12:00. I didn't hear about
11 it until two and a half hours later. So
12 they had my son two and a half hours in the
13 police station. No one in that school
14 called me and told me that's what happened
15 to my son, not one person. The teacher
16 didn't call me, the principal didn't call
17 me. He told me it was up to the police to
18 call me.

19 MR. CHENEY: Did the Human Rights
20 Commission get involved in that one?

21 MS. LINTON: Yes. Let me finish
22 please, finish the story. So my son was in
23 the police station for two and a half hours.
24 And I was working at the time at a local day
25 care, so I could not leave because I had

1 just started my shift. My husband was
2 getting off so he went down and picked up my
3 son. They had charged him with aggravated
4 assault, disorderly conduct, assault on a
5 police officer, so on. Now it just didn't
6 go with that, okay? State's Attorney wanted
7 to take my son out of my home, put him in a
8 juvenile -- juvenile facility as a -- you
9 know what I mean, behavioral problem,
10 whatever you call it. She carried on. I
11 had to -- I had petitioned the District
12 Court to get my son a lawyer because he has
13 a learning disability and he's considered
14 disabled by the State of Vermont. Not
15 disabled disabled but, you know. To get a
16 public defender, they wouldn't grant it. I
17 had to go to the Supreme Court to get it.
18 You know that was a pain in the ass. I had
19 to go to the Supreme Court to get my son who
20 was entitled to a public defender in the
21 first place a lawyer. They were going to
22 take my child out of my home and brand
23 him -- local State's Attorney was going to
24 brand him as a felon or whatever you wanted
25 to call it.

1 So you know what my -- his lawyer and I
2 sat and went to the District Court. And so
3 we said that -- the first thing out of his
4 mouth was that we were going to give
5 evidence that this was a racial attack. The
6 next thing I know -- because the State's
7 Attorney, she was going to use these three
8 boys against my son. We got these three
9 boys that are going to testify against your
10 son that he's a criminal, he's this and he's
11 that. The minute we mentioned that it was a
12 racial -- now, see, she didn't want to know
13 what the truth was, try to sit the woman
14 down. I try to tell her, look, you don't
15 know what's going on in that school. She
16 didn't want to know. All she knew was that
17 there was this black kid who had a little
18 musculature who beat up on some white kids,
19 and she was going to get him and fix the
20 community. Whatever was wrong was going
21 to -- once my son was in jail, the whole
22 community was going to be able to breathe
23 easier.

24 So the minute that my -- his lawyer and
25 I sat in the thing and said, okay, fine, you

1 want to make that a trial, fine. We'll go
2 for it. We're going to give evidence on
3 what's happening in that school. We'll
4 subpoena everybody. We'll subpoena all the
5 class and all the kids in the school,
6 principals, everybody. We'll talk about
7 everything that goes on in that school, and
8 what my son's been through and what happened
9 in that particular class. The next thing I
10 know they can't use these three kids, that's
11 what they did. They couldn't -- couldn't
12 use those three kids anymore to testify
13 against my son, so all of a sudden
14 everything went away, the assault on the
15 police officer, the aggravated assault on
16 three kids. And they said, well, you did --
17 your son was a little aggressive. We'll
18 just give him disorderly conduct and he can
19 go to diversion for that so that he can
20 manage his anger. And I said, what happens
21 to these other three little bastards over
22 here, I said to them. Nothing. Oh, you
23 mean to tell me that the hate crime that was
24 going on in that classroom is not going to
25 get dealt with? Of course not. So if it

1 wasn't for the fact that I was the mother
2 that I am, my son would have had a police
3 record, taken out of my home as a juvenile
4 offender, for what? Because he didn't want
5 to be called monkey anymore, because he
6 didn't want to be called nigger anymore,
7 because he didn't want to have his facial
8 features be made fun of, or he didn't want
9 to be poked and made fun of in the classroom
10 and jeered and taunted and having a woman
11 who purported herself to be a woman who
12 understood the need for sensitivity who
13 couldn't hear anything, who was deaf. She
14 wasn't deaf when those three white boys were
15 screaming. She wasn't deaf at all. She
16 wanted to run for help. But when my son
17 needed help, she couldn't hear.

18 So I can't tell you the numerous times,
19 there are just too many incidents. I can't
20 tell you the numerous times that my
21 husband -- we had to sit down as a family
22 and deal with trying to figure out how we
23 were going to keep our children safe.
24 Making sure that my son when they got older
25 walked to school together with their

1 friends, sent my -- taking money that we
2 could have had -- you know, that we were --
3 you know, I mean, you throw your extra
4 change in there, you roll the pennies, you
5 know, and it goes to something else. Taking
6 that money, taking cab, going up every day,
7 you know what I mean, to be there on time to
8 make sure that we got our children when we
9 got -- when they got out of school to walk
10 them so that they would be safe. And it
11 just wasn't -- see? And, I mean, these --
12 these are just a few of the instances that
13 happened to my children.

14 I could not -- when my children were
15 younger I couldn't walk -- I used to be in
16 that school a lot because I had to be.
17 Whether people wanted me to be there or not,
18 I was there, in the classroom, walking the
19 corridors, watching the gym class. I was
20 always there. You know what I mean? Maybe
21 two or three times a week I walked that
22 school. Came up, you know what I mean, in
23 the morning, didn't leave till noontime. I
24 couldn't sit in the cafeteria without some
25 little kid in the first or second, third

1 grade calling me nigger, calling me Aunt
2 Jamaima, jigaboo, whatever it was. I
3 couldn't walk on the playground without some
4 kid throwing a rock at me telling me why am
5 I there. You know what I mean? When my
6 children got to be in junior -- I guess
7 there was an old growth school so it must
8 have been the sixth grade, kids from the
9 junior high school and high school used to
10 come down, and when the children of color
11 were outside playing they used to be along
12 the fence saying that they were going to get
13 him and that sort of thing. I had one kid
14 that I had to chase with a baseball bat out
15 of my dooryard where he had -- where he had
16 followed my son home and was beating him,
17 beating him in my own dooryard at my --
18 practically at my front door. I had to
19 chase this boy with a bat in order for him
20 to leave my son alone.

21 MR. TUCKER: Barbara, you still haven't
22 answered my -- the question was previously
23 asked what the Human Rights Commission do --

24 MS. LINTON: Oh, you want to know what
25 the Human Rights Commission did.

1 MR. TUCKER: We have wandered way off
2 the path.

3 MS. LINTON: What the Human Rights
4 Commission did is they were faithful enough
5 to take the report. They were faithful
6 enough to investigate the report and for the
7 most -- for the most part find that there
8 were no grounds. The only time that they
9 found there was grounds was with this
10 incident with the police department where
11 the principal had my son chicken winged out
12 of the school. That was the only time, and
13 that -- on that particular case they settled
14 with me. So they had -- they -- the school
15 district -- there was a court case that got
16 filed by the Human Rights Commission, they
17 wouldn't settle in Washington. In fact,
18 I've got that here -- in Washington County
19 where Montpelier stands where they have
20 their office. They filed, and the school
21 district had to come to grips with the fact
22 that there was racial harassment and that
23 what they did was wrong. They had to come
24 to grips with that.

25 MS. SAUDEK: The case was settled?

1 MS. LINTON: The case was settled.

2 MR. TUCKER: Okay. Let me ask you a
3 question.

4 MS. LINTON: That was in '94.

5 MR. TUCKER: One last question, okay?

6 MS. LINTON: But that was --

7 MR. TUCKER: Have you had any instances
8 where you filed with the Human Rights
9 Commission or with the state Attorney
10 General's Office for Civil Rights that were
11 not followed up on?

12 MS. LINTON: I can't tell you how many.

13 MR. TUCKER: Give me --

14 MS. LINTON: I can't tell you how I
15 many.

16 MR. TUCKER: Okay, but without --

17 RABBI KITTY: That would be a yes.
18 She's saying yes.

19 MR. TUCKER: We want to get a sense of
20 number.

21 MS. LINTON: How many days do you think
22 my children were in school?

23 MR. TUCKER: Okay. So you're saying
24 that you filed every year that your children
25 were in school?

1 MS. LINTON: That's right. Every week
2 my children were in school.

3 MR. TUCKER: You filed with the Human
4 Rights Commission?

5 MS. LINTON: I called them up about
6 everything. Michael knows me real well.
7 Susan knows me real well.

8 MR. TUCKER: Okay.

9 MS. LINTON: Because when they were --
10 I'll put it this way. When the Commission
11 was getting funded again because they were
12 defunct for a long time, and I can't
13 remember what year it was that they became
14 functional was, when, '85? '84, '85.

15 MR. HOFF: In there.

16 MS. LINTON: They became functional,
17 the legislature gave them money again. I
18 was one of the people who went and
19 testified.

20 MR. TUCKER: All right.

21 MS. LINTON: Because I was one of the
22 people that went and testified to assist
23 them to say that there was a need for a
24 Human Rights Commission.

25 MR. TUCKER: But I would like to have

1 some estimate, as close as possible, would
2 you say 20 times in your life since Susan
3 Sussman became the director some nine years
4 ago, the first director of the Human Rights
5 Commission that you filed over 20 reports
6 with them?

7 MS. LINTON: More than 20 reports.

8 MR. TUCKER: And how many were enacted?

9 MS. LINTON: One.

10 MR. TUCKER: Just one out of 20?

11 MS. LINTON: That's right.

12 MS. SAUDEK: The others were
13 investigated?

14 MS. LINTON: They were -- I'm not
15 saying that they didn't investigate and make
16 phone calls; I didn't say that now, but what
17 I'm saying to you is the finding of racism
18 or the finding of the fact that they
19 violated the Public Accommodations Law.

20 DR. HAND: I think what we're asking is
21 in your judgment were there certain
22 complaints that they did not follow up on in
23 some way?

24 MS. LINTON: Yes, there were some
25 complaints that they didn't follow up on

1 because they didn't -- they were not in
2 enough of the criteria enough for them to be
3 able to follow up on. Then there were
4 others that they did follow up on and
5 found -- finding that there was no
6 discrimination, and there was only that one
7 that they -- that they acted on and settled
8 with the school district on my son's behalf.

9 MR. TUCKER: Okay.

10 MS. LINTON: But you have to understand
11 something. When you have -- you have to
12 understand something too, that at the same
13 time that this was going on, I had a teacher
14 put -- I had -- there was a female teacher,
15 I don't know -- I don't know what it is
16 about art teachers, but it was -- there was
17 an art teacher when my daughter was in
18 junior -- was it junior high? Junior high
19 school who put her hands on her, literally
20 put her hands on her, threw her up against
21 the wall, and I took her all the way -- I
22 sued her. I did the case myself because no
23 one would take it. No lawyer would take it,
24 the Human Rights wouldn't take it, so I sued
25 her myself.

1 MR. TUCKER: Wait a minute. You're
2 telling me that you had evidence that a
3 teacher abused your child physically and
4 that the Human Rights Commission didn't take
5 it?

6 MS. LINTON: That's right.

7 MR. TUCKER: The state commission on --
8 the Division on Civil Rights in Montpelier
9 didn't act on this either?

10 MS. LINTON: No. No.

11 MR. TUCKER: Now when you exhausted
12 those did you go to any government agency?

13 MS. LINTON: Of course I called Boston.

14 MR. TUCKER: You called the Office of
15 Civil Rights and Department of Education?

16 MS. LINTON: That's right.

17 MR. TUCKER: And they didn't act on it?

18 MS. LINTON: No.

19 MR. TUCKER: And you sued?

20 MS. LINTON: Yeah. I got out my
21 typewriter and I typed it, that's right.

22 MR. TUCKER: And this went to court?

23 MS. LINTON: I filed it in Superior
24 Court in Newfane, Vermont, myself.

25 MR. TUCKER: What happened with it?

1 MS. LINTON: What happened was I
2 claimed -- I claimed violation of the Civil
3 Rights Act and the Public Accommodations Law
4 in the State of Vermont, and what they did
5 was -- I didn't have a car or anything so I
6 had to have friends take me or hitch there,
7 however I got there.

8 MR. TUCKER: What did the state do?
9 What did they decide? What happened with
10 the case?

11 MS. LINTON: Nothing happened with the
12 case. They didn't find for my daughter,
13 okay? I sued the teacher myself in Newfane,
14 and then what happened was the school
15 district decided -- well, they had at least
16 five or six lawyers. Are you kidding me?
17 They -- this particular case between my son
18 and daughter kept all kinds of offices of
19 lawyers all over the State of Vermont busy.
20 I'm not kidding you.

21 MR. TUCKER: And you give us one more
22 case and I'm going to end this session.

23 MS. LINTON: What do you mean one more
24 case?

25 MR. TUCKER: Of where there was

1 clear-cut racial discrimination about one of
2 your children -- against one of your
3 children. Clear-cut.

4 MS. LINTON: Hold on one second.

5 MR. TUCKER: You've got them notes
6 there. I know you've got it in there.

7 MS. LINTON: I do. Hold on. Hold on
8 now. Hold on.

9 MR. PENTINO: While we're waiting, I'll
10 just make a quick comment. I tried to call
11 my message service in Washington, my
12 personal line and the secretary in the
13 office. No calls were received by our
14 panelists that were scheduled to speak for
15 the morning session. We did have a
16 cancellation. Nancy Mueller of the evening
17 session has come down with the flu, however
18 I did reach Jim Wolynech and his response was
19 I have a conference now and I'm too busy.
20 So that's the only person that I have been
21 able to reach.

22 MR. TUCKER: I would like -- after she
23 gives us this last incident, I would like
24 for us to clear the room and go into
25 executive session, okay?

1 DR. GUSTAFSON: I think that's an
2 excellent idea.

3 MR. TUCKER: Two, because I'm feeling
4 pushed too because of an incident that just
5 occurred in Burlington -- St. Albans while
6 we're meeting with people who didn't show
7 up, I could have been in St. Albans. That's
8 why I'm feeling so impatient. I'm sorry.

9 MS. LINTON: You have to remember, it's
10 been so many years.

11 RABBI KITTY: Do you feel the need to
12 give one more?

13 MS. LINTON: I don't feel I need to.

14 MR. TUCKER: We're going to close this
15 session. I want to thank you for your
16 patience.

17 MS. LINTON: I want to be able to say
18 one thing.

19 MR. TUCKER: One thing, Barbara.

20 MS. LINTON: Quickly and then you all
21 can do this. I thought about what you need
22 to do in executive session and I think that
23 all of you are saying here even though
24 you're sitting on this Commission that
25 you're powerless, but you're really not.

1 The one thing that I think would really help
2 would be if you would -- if -- I don't know
3 what monies are available, but that there
4 has to be a federal mandate that the State
5 of Vermont doesn't get money, school
6 districts don't get money until they clear
7 up these particular kinds of problems that
8 they're having, and it's just not -- you
9 see, we're talking about children of color
10 here, we're talking -- she mentioned Native
11 American children, but we know that they're
12 all over the State of Vermont. Not with the
13 lawyers in Brattleboro now, but up north in
14 Burlington and up -- you know not only
15 lawyers, children with disabilities are
16 having cases by the --

17 RABBI KITTY: Truckload.

18 MS. LINTON: I mean, really, children
19 with disabilities, learning disabilities or
20 any other kind of disabilities about being
21 mainstreamed and whatever. That has always
22 been a crisis problem in Brattleboro,
23 discrimination against the disabled and
24 learning disabled in particular, and
25 physically disabled. I think that the

1 only -- I hope -- it has to come down to the
2 fact of -- that the State of Vermont doesn't
3 get money until they clear up these kinds of
4 problems because why should people be
5 rewarded for their discriminatory practices
6 when it's not necessary in the 1990s. We
7 don't need to go through all that because
8 there's already been meetings, mandates,
9 everything that you can go back and pull and
10 do it like that. They may not like it, but
11 it should happen.

12 The other thing is this, and I think
13 the Rabbi can tell you, that the one thing
14 that -- that African-American people and
15 people of color, whether they be Chinese,
16 Japanese, Native American, whatever, however
17 they came here, the indigenous people that
18 were here, people of Hispanic dissent,
19 people of Indian dissent lower than --
20 talking about in South America and that
21 region there, we need to have accurate
22 history. The one thing that Jewish people
23 can say is that -- from the Holocaust, no
24 one can say it never happened. No one can
25 ever say they didn't burn bodies, that they

1 didn't kill people, women and children, that
2 they didn't eliminate whole entire families.
3 For us it's very difficult -- it's not
4 difficult to prove that there was slavery
5 because we're here and the testimony of the
6 fact that we had great grandparents who were
7 slaves, including mine who escaped from
8 Virginia on the underground railroad because
9 we know about our family history, but the
10 most important thing that would happen, and
11 I don't -- this has to be nationwide but,
12 you know, maybe Vermont can start something,
13 a new trend, that there has to be accurate
14 history and accurate history books that have
15 to be made to be part of all the curriculums
16 in the State of Vermont. That means as much
17 as I know, can remember in fourth grade how
18 my son did all the French and Indian Wars
19 and all the forts going all the way up to
20 Lake Champlain, remember that project today,
21 then we need to find out how the underground
22 railroad went up to Lake Champlain and what
23 people -- and how people suffered and what
24 happened to them and what -- and how that
25 history impacted upon the state, and we need

1 to be able to have accurate history as to
2 the accomplishments. We just didn't go from
3 working in the fields to being million
4 dollar basketball players. You know, I
5 mean, there was -- we have a whole life in
6 between of inventions and about
7 contributions that this world could not
8 exist from unless these men, these brilliant
9 men, brilliant men and women contributed to
10 this society to this -- to this country.

11 MR. TUCKER: Okay. Thank you, Barbara.

12 MS. LINTON: Okay? That would help.

13 MR. TUCKER: All right.

14 DR. GUSTAFSON: Thank you.

15 MR. CHENEY: Thank you very much.

16 DR. JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

17 MR. TUCKER: Take a five-minute break
18 and then we'll come back and start an
19 executive session.

20 (Recess taken)

21 MR. CHENEY: The meeting will be called
22 to order, and I am going to just remind the
23 committee that we can't have a closed
24 session. We will discuss our matters in
25 public, but we'll do it off the record.

1 (Discussion held off the record)

2 MR. CHENEY: We will call the meeting
3 to order. Thank you all for coming. I'm
4 sorry we're late.

5 MR. TUCKER: The train. The train.

6 MR. CHENEY: I'm Kim Cheney. I'm chair
7 of the advisory Commission. I have a formal
8 opening statement which we delivered at the
9 beginning of the day, but I will just tell
10 you briefly that this group, the advisory
11 committee, was established under federal law
12 to advise the U.S. Civil Rights Commission,
13 and what our mission today is to hear from
14 people about experiences in the public
15 schools about racial harassment. We've had
16 two days -- well, we had a day in Burlington
17 and -- yesterday on the subject and we heard
18 from parents and -- mostly parents I would
19 say concerning their experiences of minority
20 children that were harassed in various ways
21 in the public school system. And today we
22 heard two parents from this area or down
23 south. What we try do is have people tell
24 us what their own experience is or if they
25 want to propose solutions or just acquaint

1 with today is handled better, that that
2 won't be a possibility for children. So
3 this is a topic that's very important to me.

4 MR. TUCKER: My name is John Tucker,
5 and I'm director of the Racial Justice &
6 Equity Project at the Peace and Justice
7 Center in Burlington, Vermont. I served on
8 the steering committee to Champlain Valley
9 Initiative. I'm a founding member of the
10 ALANA Health Care organization which is an
11 organization that serves Asians, Latins,
12 Native Americans and Afro-Americans. My
13 very life leads me to this stop along the
14 way. This is a battle that I've been
15 engaged in for many, many years and probably
16 until the day I die. Because of the work
17 that I do, I'm very much aware of what
18 happens to people of color, not only in
19 schools but in employment, and going out to
20 buy groceries and being stopped by the
21 police, a variety of problems, but this is a
22 major problem in the State of Vermont today.
23 So there will be people that you hear from
24 that will tell you something new. There has
25 even been a couple of things that I have

1 heard from all over the state over the last
2 four years. This is my second time living
3 in the State of Vermont. Usually I only
4 last about three years because it's a
5 tundra, but I've managed to last five this
6 time. So this is my second tour of duty on
7 this Commission.

8 DR. HAND: My name is Sam Hand. I'm a
9 professor emeritus of history at the
10 University of Vermont. I've lived in
11 Burlington since 1961, and I've been on this
12 panel -- this Commission for approximately
13 ten plus years.

14 DR. GUSTAFSON: I'm Melanie Gustafson.
15 I teach history at the University of
16 Vermont. This is my first year on this
17 Commission, and I look forward to hearing
18 what you all have to say.

19 MR. DIAMOND: My name is Jerry Diamond.
20 I practice law in Montpelier. I followed
21 Kim Cheney as Attorney General of Vermont
22 and have been a member of this Commission
23 for about 15 years, and I want to say that
24 when you get appointed to this Commission,
25 you just don't automatically have an

1 us with their view of the perspective on the
2 problem. We write a report as to what we
3 find and it goes to Washington for approval
4 by the U.S. Commission. However, our real
5 focus is Vermont, and even though we write a
6 report which goes to Washington, we hope one
7 of the recommendations we have will be
8 listened to here in Vermont.

9 Because you're all new, I'm going to
10 have the panel, once again, just go through
11 quickly and tell you who they are.

12 I'll just say that I am a lawyer in
13 Montpelier, Vermont, and have had various
14 positions in state government, presently in
15 private practice. I've been on this
16 Commission, I can't -- I don't even know how
17 long. I can't remember. It's at least 15
18 years.

19 MR. TUCKER: Aren't you the former
20 Attorney General?

21 MR. CHENEY: I'm former Attorney
22 General. Jerry Diamond's a former Attorney
23 General. I will let you folks go through
24 and give a little run down.

25 MS. ELMER: I'm Pat Elmer. I'm founder

1 and director of Vermont Associates for
2 Training and Development. We do provide
3 employment and training for older workers.
4 The discrimination that I'm most used to
5 dealing with or having to deal with is age
6 discrimination and more subversive is
7 ageism, so I'm here to listen to what you
8 have to say on the issues in front of us
9 tonight.

10 MR. HOFF: I'm Phil Hoff. Any of you
11 might go back to the 60s, perhaps remember
12 that I was Governor. This is an area that's
13 involved me in much of my life. It's a very
14 critical area obviously. Lastly, I've been
15 on this Commission I think about 25 years.

16 MS. SAUDEK: My name's Karen Saudek.
17 I'm director of human resources for Blue
18 Cross/Blue Shield of Vermont. I've only
19 been on this committee for two or three
20 years. I've just come off a six-year
21 appointment to the state Board of Education.
22 One of my major concerns is that every kid
23 in Vermont have access to the best possible
24 public education and that it's very clear to
25 me that until this topic that we're dealing

1 opportunity to stay on. You have to get
2 reasked and in different administrations,
3 whether it be Republican or Democrat, and
4 for the people who have served a long period
5 of time, I think I can say for all of us,
6 it's because of our own personal commitment
7 in this area, and we're very, very
8 interested in what people have to say,
9 particularly in the area that we're holding
10 this particular forum on.

11 MR. PENTINO: I'm Marc Pentino. I'm
12 staff to this committee. I work for the
13 Civil Rights Commission in Washington.
14 Thank you all for coming. If any of you
15 would like to speak during the open session,
16 I'll be walking around. I'll also be asking
17 you to sign in on our sign-in sheet. I can
18 answer any questions you may have regarding
19 the Commission, this advisory committee and
20 our other projects that we're doing
21 throughout the country.

22 MR. CHENEY: We have an agenda which
23 we'll try to follow, and we would just ask
24 when your name is called if you would come
25 up here and tell us what you want to know

1 about the subject. We may or may not jump
2 in with questions depending on where we go
3 with it. So I guess we have -- well, let's
4 see. Sam has prodded me to put a time limit
5 on, but let's say try to keep it no more
6 than ten minutes. That's a rule of thumb
7 rather than an absolute. David Shiman.
8 Shiman.

9 MR. SHIMAN: I brought me a little
10 clock so I'll control myself a little bit
11 better. I teach at the University of
12 Vermont in the College of Education and
13 Social Services. I've been there for 25
14 years or so and I guess that -- I don't know
15 if that says something about emeritus; it
16 says something about perseverance. I also
17 have a two year old child that is biracial.
18 I anticipate that she will encounter some of
19 the issues that you folks heard about in
20 Burlington yesterday. Something happened
21 this past week. I went to a conference with
22 a colleague, an African-American colleague,
23 on multicultural education. In the course
24 of standing around in the hotel lobby
25 waiting for somebody to check in he was

1 twice in the course of an hour asked to go
2 and pick up someone's bags and bring them in
3 from outside.

4 MR. CHENEY: Where was this?

5 MR. SHIMAN: This happened to be New
6 Mexico, but it could have happened and I'm
7 sure similar things have happened elsewhere,
8 twice. And he politely said, I don't work
9 here, you need to find somebody who works
10 here. Half an hour, 40 minutes later the
11 same thing happened again, a different
12 person.

13 MR. TUCKER: Did he ask for a tip?
14 That's what I do.

15 MR. SHIMAN: We can't treat this as an
16 insensitive person, somebody who doesn't
17 know; we can treat it as a racist. We can
18 look at it as a child in the school who
19 calls a child a name, they're sick. The
20 person who puts cross burning on someone's
21 lawn, blame them as a drunk or something.
22 And I think the tendency to do that is --
23 leads us away from looking at our
24 institutions and leads us to blaming bad
25 people, and I think that's a problem that we

1 have to look at when we look at the context
2 that gets created that allows, condones,
3 does not speak out against the racial
4 harassment.

5 There's a line that I quoted from Sonia
6 Deto called Affirming Diversity. It's a
7 wonderful book. She writes that the ruckus
8 of individual racism obscures the silence of
9 institutional racism. And I think to me
10 it's a very powerful statement because I
11 think it takes us back to looking at the
12 role of our schools in constructing and
13 contributing to the construction of racists.
14 And what -- and also the role of our schools
15 can do in addressing that construction and
16 try to change it. I live in South
17 Burlington. I happen to be teaching in the
18 Rutland area tomorrow morning, so it was
19 nice to be able to come down here, visit
20 some relatives and be able to speak down
21 here.

22 One of the things that struck me -- and
23 I'm working with student teachers right now
24 and doing seminars and things -- is a lack
25 of the sense of urgency among the white

1 student teachers and students I work with.
2 They have never experienced being mistaken
3 for a bellhop. They have never experienced
4 most of these things. They can read about
5 them. That's why the stories to me are so
6 powerful and so important. And in fact what
7 I found lately with students and with the --
8 and with teachers in training is almost an
9 impatience with the demands being made on
10 them by these folks who never made demands
11 before. And someone said to me the other
12 day, we were talking about language
13 diversity, well, I had a friend who came
14 over here from Pakistan and that person kept
15 saying to me, am I speaking proper English,
16 am I speaking proper English. Why is it
17 that these African-Americans want Ebonics?
18 And I -- you know, that's a long way from
19 where I hoped we would be from someone who
20 was going out to be student teaching who
21 would at least have a sense of a history of
22 racism in this country and not trying to
23 place the immigrant experience, which was in
24 this case a voluntary immigrant in the
25 experience of involuntary immigrants, which

1 I think is quite different.

2 So as I look at the institution, the
3 institution of school, this is what I wanted
4 to comment a few things on -- yeah, I'm all
5 right. It strikes me -- I live in South
6 Burlington. I've been on the diversity
7 committee in South Burlington and I've been
8 on the diversity committee in Burlington.
9 South Burlington, as do a lot of other
10 communities around your high schools, have a
11 diversity day or a diversity week. Not that
12 that's all they do, but it's a showcase
13 week. As a level of institutional
14 commitment, the students in the
15 multicultural club at South Burlington have
16 to raise all the money. They have to go out
17 and sell chocolate bars. They have to go
18 out and sell pizzas. The school has not put
19 a cent into that in the last two or three
20 years even though the issue has been raised
21 by the diversity committee.

22 To me if you want to look at it -- this
23 is what I consider, quote, one of the better
24 districts, want to look at institutional
25 commitment. What is that saying to other

1 students about how much the institution
2 values all students learning about this when
3 no support has been given it? Some support
4 has been given it in time and a little bit
5 in faculty attached to the club, etc., but
6 almost nothing.

7 There is a nice policy statement that's
8 part of the strategic plan and I would say
9 not very much is going on. I'd say not
10 much, I can hit three or four different
11 areas that I think are not just unique to
12 South Burlington. Very little has been done
13 in the state with respect to personnel, to
14 hiring the people of color to teach in
15 schools. And invariably if there is a
16 hiring effort, it's to hire somebody to
17 teach African-American history as if that's
18 all people of color can do. I think there's
19 sort of an association there that's not a
20 healthy one. A number of times I've heard
21 it's too cold up here, African-Americans
22 don't like to be in the cold, or there isn't
23 a critical mass in the community, no wonder.
24 I think it's just our excuses for lack of
25 commitment and effort on our part.

1 I think we all need to see the
2 diversity of faces in front of us as our
3 teachers, all of us, white and black, and
4 every student needs that sort of thing, and
5 I think that is an area that needs to be
6 addressed in every district in the state.

7 MR. CHENEY: Can I interrupt? You're
8 with the College of Education?

9 MR. SHIMAN: Yeah. We are the biggest
10 glass house in terms of throwing stones.

11 MR. CHENEY: You're training teachers?

12 MR. SHIMAN: Uh-huh.

13 MR. CHENEY: They have a lack of
14 urgency about this issue?

15 MR. SHIMAN: Yes. I would say they --
16 they see it as a problem, as a question, as
17 a concern. They have not ever -- they go
18 through their lives and never have to think
19 about being white.

20 MR. CHENEY: We've heard
21 recommendations that there be either
22 in-service training or requirements for
23 recertification that there be training.
24 Does the College of Education have anything
25 to offer in that department?

1 MR. SHIMAN: Oh, I think we -- I think
2 we have developed a variety of very good
3 courses that are there. I think one of the
4 big areas of improvement in general at the
5 University of Vermont is in the emergent
6 creation of a lot of new courses that deal
7 with diversity. We have a good course on
8 multicultural literature. In a lot of the
9 methods courses it's there. It's just how
10 do we help our students who are generally
11 students of relative privilege feel this.

12 MR. CHENEY: Well, that's my question
13 if there's a lack of urgency.

14 MR. SHIMAN: A workshop and a course
15 doesn't do it. I think it's got to be woven
16 into the fabric of their education, you
17 know, as a diversity day in a high school is
18 a nice thing, but it doesn't do anything
19 unless it's to sustain staff development for
20 faculty, that it's woven into curriculum
21 courses.

22 MR. CHENEY: Have you looked at any of
23 the curriculum in South Burlington?

24 MR. SHIMAN: I was chair of the Social
25 Studies Review Committee.

1 MR. CHENEY: What's your impression?

2 MR. SHIMAN: It wasn't -- well,
3 fairness to them, they are revising the
4 whole curriculum, the social studies
5 curriculum. I don't know what the new one's
6 going to be like, but they have an elective
7 course in black history. Not a requirement.
8 The women history appropriate courses are
9 elective so students can go through and I
10 have not -- in my analysis of the social
11 studies, I have not seen the experience of
12 people of color woven into the curriculum.
13 You have a little pocket here and a little
14 pocket there.

15 MR. CHENEY: What about stereotypes of
16 Native Americans or others?

17 MR. SHIMAN: I think there's been, in
18 my experience, more of an effort to address
19 some of that in curriculum. I think what's
20 happened, and I think this happens all over,
21 is issues of racism and diversity in
22 curriculum get associated with social
23 studies. And I think that's a real copout
24 for other people.

25 MR. TUCKER: They don't include it in

1 their particular curriculum?

2 MR. SHIMAN: Yeah. And also they tend
3 to see it as curriculum. In fact, it deals
4 with how a teacher relates to a student,
5 what sort of evaluation procedures are set
6 up. I think the danger is only seeing it as
7 a curriculum response, and I think all the
8 other pieces of it that are part and parcel,
9 every piece of the school are diversity
10 pieces as well. I mean, I have a child who
11 just finished the elementary school, a
12 little something in the school on Martin
13 Luther King Day around that time. Some
14 research that I just read recently, which
15 was very interesting, talks about addressing
16 sexual and racial harassment in the
17 kindergarten and first grade when it's not
18 racial or sex ruled but it's bullying. And
19 the bullying is the precursor to the
20 harassment. And that if you can start with
21 antibullying, there are some very nice bully
22 proof programs before -- even before they're
23 explicit race consciousness. There's been
24 some very interesting results with that.

25 MR. CHENEY: We heard some testimony

1 today about a disciplinary scheme in which
2 the school says if two kids are fighting,
3 they'll both be suspended, and what
4 inevitably happens is the white kids pick
5 serially on the black kid so he gets
6 suspended five times and five of them get
7 suspended once. Have you done anything in
8 your teaching in the College of Education
9 about discipline and how to relate to these
10 kinds of things?

11 MR. SHIMAN: Well, in the course work
12 that I offer, which is more the sociological
13 historical analysis stuff, it's not
14 something -- the general method course does
15 address that, but to be honest, I'm not sure
16 what they do. I would hope they do some
17 day.

18 MR. CHENEY: Questions? If you have
19 more to say, I interrupted.

20 MR. SHIMAN: Two other points because I
21 know there are other people.

22 MR. CHENEY: No, go right ahead.

23 MR. SHIMAN: I did say that already.
24 Most of your questions got to most of my
25 answers. I guess I think what needs to be

1 done, whatever we do has to be sustained and
2 I --

3 MR. TUCKER: Has to be what?

4 MR. SHIMAN: Has to be sustained.

5 MR. TUCKER: Okay.

6 MR. SHIMAN: I mean, I've done a lot of
7 workshops. I've written curriculum on
8 prejudice and human rights, and the problem
9 of having an in-service day or setting --
10 let's change our secondary curriculum so
11 that we build in, which is generally build
12 into the dominant view some other folks who
13 haven't been there before is then seen as,
14 well, it's done now. And it's not. It has
15 to go on, and on, and on and on, so to me
16 that -- and that is a hard thing given that
17 thousands of demands being made on the
18 public schools, it's a very hard thing I
19 think for schools to do because particularly
20 if they don't see the urgency of it in terms
21 of the life experience of the teachers and
22 most of the kids.

23 MR. TUCKER: Let me ask you something
24 else. How do you see since even the worse
25 schools that I've observed throughout, not

1 only in Vermont but in a lot of other
2 places, don't have a curriculum on racism,
3 how do you see -- so the kid gets that
4 someplace and he's not getting it off of TV.

5 MR. SHIMAN: True.

6 MR. TUCKER: So that means that some
7 adults in this place -- and I'll give you an
8 example what I'm talking about. Having been
9 in Southeast Asia a time in my life a group
10 of kids were calling kids in a high school
11 north of here slope, slant eye, all the
12 names that I heard American soldiers use to
13 just -- you know, in Southeast Asia to
14 describe people the way Americans have their
15 own unique way of doing that. How do you
16 see reaching a school community outside of
17 the teachers because there's more than the
18 teachers and administrators involved in this
19 process? There's the parents and the adults
20 that feed these kids and tell them that it's
21 okay to be this way. Is that arrogance?

22 MR. SHIMAN: How do you reach that?

23 MR. TUCKER: Yes.

24 MR. SHIMAN: I think that the boundary
25 lines between school and community need to

1 be blurred. That would be a major piece,
2 and that people, particularly people who
3 haven't had -- who didn't have a lot of
4 success in school need to feel that they're
5 comfortable in school. I mean, the people
6 who have a bad school experience, whether
7 the lowest socioeconomic groups, often
8 people of color don't want to go back to
9 that place to talk to people if it was a bad
10 place for them. And somehow that -- having
11 meetings elsewhere, somehow bringing people
12 in to a conversation around that, and to me
13 that's a central part of it. And I think
14 there's some organizations being established
15 in the Burlington area that are trying to
16 build bridges like that. And I think for
17 the school to have a policy of no tolerance.

18 MR. TUCKER: Zero tolerance.

19 MR. SHIMAN: Zero tolerance on these
20 issues, as it has trying to develop on
21 cigarette smoking. Talk about things
22 dangerous to your health, racism and
23 cigarette smoking, I'm not sure which one
24 I'm going to pick, but certainly there
25 need -- and the students need to be brought

1 along with that. I think it's got to be --
2 if students are involved in some of the
3 destruction of that, I mean, every school in
4 the state probably has a racial or sexual
5 harassment policy. And that was probably
6 because Montpelier said you have to have
7 this. You have to get this in place. Some
8 guidelines or some strong statements from
9 the Board of Education which came out with a
10 set of competencies for beginning teachers,
11 and in one of the drafts of those
12 competencies they eliminated -- they had
13 eliminated the one statement that related to
14 teachers' commitment to equity and working
15 against --

16 MR. TUCKER: It was put back in?

17 MR. SHIMAN: It was not in the draft.
18 The final copy there are segments with
19 respect to that. I don't know the history
20 of that, but I think every institution,
21 particularly the school, needs to be
22 actively against the racism and sexism, not
23 just promoting sort of a tolerance and
24 understanding of differences in sort of a
25 passive curricular sense. I think there

1 have to be antibully programs, sort of
2 engaging kids and engaging teachers who act
3 in insensitive ways. And I think it's a big
4 project.

5 MR. CHENEY: Does it surprise you that
6 not a single superintendent or principal has
7 volunteered to come before this Commission
8 and talk about solutions to the problem?

9 MR. SHIMAN: Surprise me, yeah.
10 Because I know some I think pretty highly of
11 and it might very well be they saw this, I
12 don't know as you know public forum for
13 members of the community. I don't know. It
14 does surprise me. I know some people who I
15 feel really care about this who can't always
16 do what they want to do. So it disappoints
17 me.

18 MR. TUCKER: We've had one school board
19 chairman who talked to this Commission.

20 MR. CHENEY: I meant it literally. I
21 was interested since you know these people
22 whether you were surprised by that fact.

23 MR. SHIMAN: Yeah, I don't know why.
24 And certainly I'm disappointed by it.

25 MR. CHENEY: Any questions?

1 MR. DIAMOND: David, you were talking
2 about the bullyism, and it just brought to
3 mind that there was the experiment that
4 started years and years ago with first
5 graders out in the midwest where the
6 teacher --

7 MR. SHIMAN: Yeah.

8 MR. DIAMOND: And it was tremendously
9 successful and it --

10 MR. SHIMAN: The blue eyes, brown eyes
11 thing.

12 MR. DIAMOND: And I'm just curious.
13 I'm assuming that's the kind of program
14 you're referring to.

15 MR. SHIMAN: Maybe. I mean, I don't
16 know enough about these -- all these
17 bullying programs. That -- blue eyes, brown
18 eyes was a very powerful one. Divide the
19 class in half.

20 MR. TUCKER: Third grade.

21 MR. SHIMAN: Third or fourth grade.
22 The teacher treated them differently whether
23 they were blue eyes or brown eyes over a
24 period of a couple of days, and they started
25 taking on behaviors that associated with the

1 dominant group or the subordinate group. To
2 be honest, I think there's some interesting
3 ethical questions about doing that in
4 classrooms. I wouldn't want to particularly
5 without consent.

6 MR. TUCKER: The thing that got me is
7 also the adults that came back, because she
8 had a reunion, all of whom now carry that
9 out in their own life that the affect of
10 that on them as people was lasting because
11 the interesting thing was that whoever was
12 the out group scores in reading dropped, did
13 not do well.

14 MR. SHIMAN: Math performance dropped.

15 MR. TUCKER: Stuttered in a couple of
16 days, and the parents all did give
17 permission because I met her.

18 MR. SHIMAN: So, I mean, I think part
19 of what I was thinking about, a lot of it's
20 being done, is working with counselors and
21 social workers at the elementary level who I
22 think are potentially very powerful people
23 in terms of offering staff development and
24 helping students. And a lot of these
25 programs are more called human relations

1 type than experiments like this. I'm not
2 against this, I'm concerned about things
3 being done to kids often without, you
4 know -- that can have these sorts of affects
5 without their consent or their parents'
6 consent. I don't know a lot of the history.

7 MS. ELMER: I just wanted to ask a
8 question about your experience in South
9 Burlington. Is there any coordination
10 between I think what you called the
11 diversity committee and the school
12 administrators, their enforcement or looking
13 at the antiharassment policies? And the
14 reason I ask that is we've heard some
15 testimony about South Burlington of some
16 very serious issues and I'm kind of
17 surprised.

18 MR. SHIMAN: With my understanding of
19 it, the diversity committee was advisory to
20 Bruce Chapman, the superintendent. Our job
21 was to help in getting a principle written
22 into what's called the strategic plan or
23 whatever it is that would enable him then to
24 have a legitimizing statement that would
25 allow -- now we need to do this because we

1 say we're going to do that. Now we need to
2 redo curriculum, those sort of things. We
3 haven't met in eight months, and what
4 happens -- and I appreciate how incredibly
5 busy Bruce is and everybody is, if you see
6 it as a special thing, diversity, budget,
7 personnel, it never seems to bubble up to
8 high enough on the list. If you saw it as
9 part of budget, and part of personnel and
10 part of staff development all the time, then
11 it would be there all the time. And what
12 happens is I've got to deal with this thing,
13 get the bond issue first; therefore, we'll
14 put that aside. We can't do it now;
15 therefore -- and I think that -- that's a
16 mindset about the way you think about
17 issues. You think about issues around
18 diversity is it's a little pod, that you get
19 to it when you can, you know, when you have
20 time, and I'm -- and I haven't been very
21 satisfied with the South Burlington
22 diversity -- it's nothing more. We haven't
23 met in ages unless I haven't been invited.

24 MR. CHENEY: Any other questions?

25 DR. HAND: Yeah. If you were asked by

1 Marc to provide a list of superintendents
2 who might be willing to, you know, consult
3 with this group, would you be willing?

4 MR. SHIMAN: Superintendents?

5 DR. HAND: Yes.

6 MR. SHIMAN: That would be really hard
7 because I think I could identify some
8 teachers who are and probably some
9 principals who I think are pretty -- I don't
10 know of many districts that have -- probably
11 Burlington is ahead in terms of
12 developing -- well, ahead. You know, you
13 might say it's not far, but in terms of
14 having had a sustained diversity committee
15 that tried to do stuff over a period of time
16 doing a needs assessment and a bunch of
17 other things. In terms of
18 superintendents --

19 DR. HAND: Well, I specifically --

20 MR. SHIMAN: I would be hard pushed. I
21 know some good people, but that doesn't mean
22 anything much is going on in the districts,
23 and I don't claim to know what's going on in
24 a lot of districts.

25 MR. TUCKER: I'd really like a

1 presentation because the thing that I'm
2 always scared about in this subject is that
3 we're going to divide up into the overall
4 committees thing, you know, majority white
5 and the two, but that hasn't happened here.
6 We are all on the same page about this and
7 that's what's great about this. And I'm --
8 I've really found what you've said helpful.
9 The only thing I question is, and I would
10 like to talk to you sometime about that, is
11 about what Carrie's impact was on that, that
12 was the black teacher.

13 MR. SHIMAN: Oh, sure. I know Carrie
14 well. That is right.

15 MR. TUCKER: The black teacher in South
16 Burlington and we heard some interesting
17 stories about how she was treated by staff.

18 MR. SHIMAN: She and I talked a little
19 about that.

20 MR. TUCKER: I really want to talk to
21 you about that because she and I have had
22 many conversations about it, and I know that
23 children, white children were very upset
24 that she left, okay. Not just black kids
25 but white children, and the kids were not

1 listened to, was my understanding, by the
2 administration. The kids really didn't want
3 to see her go and went and appealed, and
4 they turned their backs on their own kids
5 around this subject. I mean, is that almost
6 true or close to the truth?

7 MR. SHIMAN: I don't know the whole
8 thing.

9 MR. TUCKER: People have a way of
10 making themselves more heroic than they are.

11 MR. SHIMAN: I have a great deal of
12 respect for her, and I was very sorry to see
13 her go. And I know some students I knew in
14 South Burlington who were in the high school
15 were very sad about it.

16 MS. SAUDEK: I would love to hear -- as
17 a teacher educator, I'd love to hear your
18 best suggestions on what can be done in
19 preservice training to get at a systemwide
20 solution and whether you think there's work
21 to be done in recertification of teachers
22 that can address the issue.

23 MR. SHIMAN: Several things I think.
24 To me in the preservice, some are very hard
25 to do at the University of Vermont. I think

1 students need experiences in their
2 professional preparation working with
3 culture diverse populations, whether it's
4 racially diverse or not, they need to
5 encounter, you know, people other than
6 those, in most cases, than they grew up
7 with. That to me is important and we work
8 on that. It's very hard for a whole bunch
9 of geographical, demographical reasons. I
10 think we need to spend -- and I don't know
11 where this goes in a course, but we need --
12 I need and I think all my colleagues -- a
13 lot of my colleagues need to understand
14 better the baggage that we carry around with
15 us and that when a colleague talks about
16 unpacking it, unpacking the cultural baggage
17 and seeing how I explain away -- how we
18 explain away why people are poor, why people
19 don't succeed, why -- you know, and the
20 explanations end up being ones that in some
21 ways explain for us why we were where we are
22 and they are where they are. And they look
23 at the individual ideology of individual
24 achievement. And I don't want to throw that
25 out, but it interacts with structures. It

1 interacts with curriculum where some student
2 can't find themselves ever in the school and
3 other students, they're there every day of
4 the year. And I think we in teacher
5 preparation can prepare students to use
6 books that are out of date. I think
7 there's --

8 MS. SAUDEK: That's what I'm trying to
9 get at.

10 MR. SHIMAN: And help people to become
11 more -- to develop curriculum materials that
12 challenge students to look at things from
13 different perspectives.

14 MS. SAUDEK: We heard a great deal of
15 testimony yesterday in Burlington from
16 parents of children who were feeling
17 extraordinarily overburdened and having to
18 teach their children's schools how to
19 respond to their kids' needs, and having to
20 do it teacher by teacher, year by year,
21 administrator by administrator to give them
22 the information they needed in order to
23 respond appropriately to their children's
24 needs. It would seem to me that part of
25 that burden should be borne by the teacher

1 preparation institutions.

2 MR. SHIMAN: Yeah. And I think we
3 should be -- and I'm hoping we're doing a
4 better job so that a student who picks books
5 for kids to read in -- an elementary school
6 prospective teacher will be thinking about
7 diversity issues in the selection of books
8 from the choosing of perspectives. That
9 wasn't done a generation ago.

10 MR. TUCKER: Can I ask you a question
11 along that line?

12 MR. SHIMAN: Yeah.

13 MR. TUCKER: I see large amounts of
14 money in Vermont being spent going off to
15 Beijing and Tokyo and romantic places in
16 Africa and yet these people need retraining
17 and certification and they go past
18 Chinatown, they go past Harlem. And it
19 would seem to me that if you want to learn
20 how to teach diverse populations, you would
21 be sent to where diverse populations are
22 rather than being sent to Beijing. Not that
23 I'm against Beijing, don't get me wrong, but
24 the influence that Beijing is going to have
25 on a school situation as opposed to

1 Chinatown -- a school in Chinatown in San
2 Francisco or from New York is going to be
3 far more impactful and it would seem to me
4 that we would be sending our young people
5 and our administrators to these areas for
6 recertification to learn. I mean, how do
7 you feel about that?

8 MR. SHIMAN: I founded the China
9 project, so I was one of the co-founders of
10 it and stuff, and I work -- and I've done a
11 lot of work in Africa.

12 MR. TUCKER: I'm not against that.
13 You've got to hear that clearly.

14 MR. SHIMAN: I think we need both of
15 those perspectives. I think the Vermont
16 students and teachers need to have a global
17 perspective too, and I would hate to -- and
18 I think they're saying they're given limited
19 resources, where should we spend our time
20 and energy. Should we be going to some of
21 the -- more places that are within our
22 immediate world? I can see an argument for
23 that, but I also believe sometimes we see
24 our nation and our society better when we're
25 outside it.

1 MR. TUCKER: Well, I'm concerned about
2 it because -- let me give you an example.
3 People go to Africa and then come to
4 Afro-American students and treat them like
5 they're Afrikaans, and the only thing we
6 have in common is complexion and some ties
7 in a mystical way from 4 or 500 years ago.
8 We are truly a product of America, and to
9 understand our culture you need to go where
10 our culture operates, and it ain't in
11 Africa, you know. And so that's why I'm
12 concerned about that part, David, because I
13 think there's dangerous messages in that
14 because people -- I'll give you an example.
15 I go in and people are teaching
16 Afro-American history over in Africa and
17 people assume absolutely that's true, and
18 that's not true. That's why I'm asking you.

19 MR. SHIMAN: Let's not blame Africa for
20 failure of an educational system.

21 MR. TUCKER: I don't want you to think
22 I'm blaming Africa, but I'm trying to get
23 some feeling for why would Africa be a far
24 more valuable experience if people are going
25 to be teaching basically Afro-American

1 children?

2 MR. SHIMAN: My experience, we don't
3 send in the teacher preparation program
4 anybody anywhere overseas as part of their
5 professional program. Most of that staff
6 development work is done with teachers. The
7 China projects, the Asia projects, some of
8 the work going to Africa has not been with
9 people for licensure, it's been people for
10 one reason or another wanted to do that. I
11 think it makes them, from my experience,
12 more culturally sensitive teachers. It
13 might not make them more aware of what's
14 going on always within their own
15 communities, but they -- you -- you engage
16 yourself and your own ethnocentrism when you
17 go overseas. And I think there's a value to
18 that. I think it needs to be processed, it
19 needs to be education. You don't just go
20 and experience and come back. But I think
21 what we are trying very hard to do in our
22 program, and I know some other
23 institutions -- higher education
24 institutions is to provide ways our students
25 can go to other settings while in their

1 preparation program and encounter
2 themselves, engage in other cultures for
3 them, in many cases here, and become a
4 stronger teacher.

5 MR. TUCKER: So what you're telling me,
6 if I move back to Philadelphia, which I
7 intend to do, and someone from Vermont
8 school system comes and applies for a job in
9 a high administrative post and I look that
10 they spent 15 years in Vermont, all the time
11 that they've been in an administrative post,
12 you're telling me I shouldn't hire them
13 because they've had no experience of dealing
14 with the kind of diverse culture that I'm
15 dealing with and that's what you're really
16 saying?

17 MR. SHIMAN: I'm saying that would be a
18 problem for me if one of the charges was to
19 deal with diverse cultures and one had never
20 had that experience. We're trying to place
21 some of our people in New York City. There
22 are a lot of other folks.

23 MR. TUCKER: I'm sorry.

24 MR. CHENEY: Anybody else? Thank you.
25 That's very helpful.

1 MR. SHIMAN: We can get together.

2 MR. TUCKER: We can get together.

3 You're going to leave your card, right?

4 MR. CHENEY: I guess Heather Clark was
5 on the list. Is Heather here?

6 MS. CLARK: Hi. My name is Heather
7 Clark. I'm a training coordinator with the
8 Vermont Department of Corrections, and I
9 spoke to Marc Pentino a couple weeks ago
10 about some of the things that we've been
11 doing with the department. I asked a
12 co-trainer of mine, Jay Simons, to come with
13 me tonight mainly because he can share some
14 very real experiences in terms of what's
15 going on in the -- I guess we call them the
16 trenches. He works in a correctional
17 facility in Newport, Vermont. Was there a
18 seat for Dr. Johnson, Charles Johnson
19 earlier?

20 MR. CHENEY: Yes.

21 MS. CLARK: He really -- is he going to
22 be here tonight?

23 DR. GUSTAFSON: No.

24 MR. CHENEY: He was here today but not
25 this evening.

1 MS. CLARK: His role in this, the
2 diversity training that we were doing in the
3 department, is sort of pivotal for me in
4 that he sits on a reparative board in the
5 southern part of the state, and the angle
6 that we're taking with the Department of
7 Corrections in terms of diversity and the
8 training is really around community and how
9 we can become a better, more organized
10 learning organization and make better
11 connections with the community as part of
12 our restorative justice initiatives, some of
13 the community corrections that we're doing
14 and the work that we're trying to do with
15 community policing. I know this gets a
16 little bit away from the public education
17 system, but if we look at the educational
18 system as part of our community, and
19 certainly we're hoping that we're headed in
20 the right direction.

21 I was listening earlier, and one of the
22 things that came to mind was in terms of the
23 target audience and, how can I say this -- I
24 want to say this appropriately. One of the
25 differences I see between young students and

1 young kids and corrections staff is their
2 willingness to participate in some of these
3 kinds of trainings and programs. That's
4 been the biggest struggle I think for our
5 department is getting people interested.
6 Well, actually first, getting them there.

7 MR. CHENEY: Are you talking about
8 staff training?

9 MS. CLARK: Yes. Getting them to come
10 and listen, to take part and participate
11 productively and respectfully in a topic
12 that's also value laden. The most common
13 phrase we hear in any kind of cultural
14 awareness training that we're trying to
15 offer is, oh, we don't have diversity in the
16 Department of Corrections and so we don't
17 have a problem. So, you know, why don't you
18 go away because we've got other more
19 important things to deal with.

20 Some of our learning objectives around
21 diversity training with the department are
22 really about awareness, and the awareness is
23 self-awareness. We started asking our staff
24 in terms of your heritage, where do you come
25 from? How do you see yourself? What kinds

1 of things are you proud of and what kinds of
2 things are embarrassing. We're having more
3 success doing that than we are lecturing
4 them on how we define racism, or
5 stereotyping what we think is prejudice,
6 things like that. Not that we don't value
7 that, but we -- we needed to get dialogue
8 going. We've been chipping away at this
9 for -- actually, I think, Mr. Tucker, you
10 could probably clear that up better than me,
11 five years, six.

12 MR. TUCKER: I thought that you weren't
13 going to bring me into this conversation.
14 People don't need to know that Dick Turner
15 and John Gorczyk are two of my closest
16 friends.

17 MS. CLARK: Okay. I won't dwell on it.

18 MR. TUCKER: It's been about five years
19 that we initially started that program, and
20 I think we started it in Northwest which is
21 St. Albans, Chittenden County Correctional
22 Center and then Rutland were the three
23 places that were started first, and then we
24 did all of the superintendents, and Dick
25 Turner and even John.

1 MS. CLARK: That's right. That's
2 right.

3 MR. TUCKER: And then you took over.

4 MS. CLARK: I took the project on a
5 little over a year ago.

6 MR. TUCKER: Right. Bob Smith. Yeah.
7 Yeah.

8 MS. CLARK: Who's the chief of human
9 resource and development. We took sort of a
10 middle to top down approach back down to the
11 bottom up to the middle, and that was based
12 on our highly effective needs assessment
13 which was really about -- which was mostly
14 anecdotal data. Our Agency of Human
15 Services collects all of the information
16 around grievances, complaints, hostile work
17 environment grievances as well, and so --
18 and, as you know, most -- oftentimes the
19 incidents themselves are confidential. What
20 information I get as a trainer is that we've
21 identified a problem, please put together a
22 curriculum.

23 MR. CHENEY: Is your training to keep
24 staff from chewing each other up or is it
25 related to the inmates?

1 MS. CLARK: It's a little bit of both.
2 Our needs assessment -- our informal needs
3 assessment came from a couple of places.
4 One is our changing offender population.
5 Jay was saying to me about 15 minutes ago,
6 he said, geez, if you want to go to a
7 diverse --

8 MR. TUCKER: I know what you're going
9 to say.

10 MS. CLARK: -- culture, come visit one
11 of the facilities. Actually, maybe you'd
12 like to speak to that.

13 MR. TUCKER: What is the population
14 now, Jay, 10 percent minority now still?

15 MR. SIMONS: My facility I would say is
16 approximately 10 percent. I can speak for
17 my facility. What I was saying to Heather
18 was there was some talk about sending
19 teachers to other countries to study culture
20 and bring them back to train people in our
21 school systems about culture, and I believe
22 it was you that said the only thing that
23 people of color in our country and people
24 from Africa have in common are the shade of
25 their skin. If you want to send teachers to

1 a place to learn about a diverse population,
2 send them to a correctional facility. We
3 have a very diverse population, not only
4 color but religion, and people from all over
5 the country from urban areas, from country
6 areas and, quite frankly, we could use the
7 help. We could use some people in there
8 teaching people who need to be taught.

9 MS. CLARK: Some of the feedback that
10 we get from our participants in these
11 trainings, one of the things that I hear the
12 most in terms of the most -- the most
13 effective learning moment for them has been
14 exposure. The kinds of stories I hear is I
15 grew up in Vermont and I haven't met this
16 group of people or that group of people, and
17 I learned the most having finally been
18 exposed to this group of people or that
19 group of people whether it be in the
20 military or some other opportunity that
21 they've had to this kind of exposure. Not
22 only having this exposure, putting their
23 foot in their mouth or doing something
24 unintentionally inappropriate or hurtful and
25 having the person or people they do that to

1 be forgiving.

2 And that -- that is sort -- that's kind
3 of where we're coming from in our training
4 plan which is to try to take away the risk,
5 encourage respectful dialogue for the folks
6 in the department. We have two reasons for
7 that. One is we want to increase awareness.
8 We want to take away the fear, and then we
9 have a more fundamental need which is we
10 really need to get them in the door. It's
11 not an easy task just getting them to get
12 interested and enthusiastic about this
13 topic. They're afraid of words like
14 diversity, affirmative action, difference in
15 the workplace, EEOC, ADA. They can't stand
16 acronyms as a general rule. I know we all
17 struggle with that but the lesson plans that
18 we've designed are not complicated.

19 One of them is the components of
20 culture which is getting folks talking about
21 how they see culture, what it's made up of.
22 We start with things like recreation, what
23 do you do for fun, where do you think that
24 comes from. Use the iceberg exercise which
25 I think a lot of people are familiar with

1 which is what do you see -- when you look at
2 an iceberg, what do you see, you see the
3 tip, you see the behaviors, and the clothes
4 people wear, and the things people eat and
5 who they hang around with and what don't you
6 see? You don't see the attitudes and the
7 beliefs, things like that. We have a lesson
8 plan that addresses stereotyping and we use
9 the media to take the risk away. What do
10 you see in the movies and on TV?

11 MR. TUCKER: So you think this is
12 appropriate for school-aged children?

13 MS. CLARK: Well, it's -- it's not
14 complicated. I don't know if it's
15 appropriate or not.

16 MR. TUCKER: What do you think? You've
17 been doing it for a year. Say I bring a
18 group of nine and ten year olds, where would
19 you use this and how would you monitor it to
20 see to it that it would work?

21 MS. CLARK: The key for me isn't the
22 target -- target audience; the key for me is
23 a very strong, confident, respectful
24 facilitator to keep track of where the
25 conversation's going and how people are

1 reacting to it and that they're kind to each
2 other.

3 MR. TUCKER: Good answer.

4 MS. CLARK: Thank you.

5 MR. CHENEY: We had the last witness
6 who was talking about sustainability. You
7 can do a workshop, how do you sustain it?

8 MS. CLARK: Tenacity perhaps. I think
9 that when I -- when I look at Corrections as
10 a learning organization, my feeling is that
11 how -- how -- how I measure success is very
12 important to the organization and to me
13 because really our large objective is that
14 our staff are respectful of each other and
15 respectful to offenders. We work in a high
16 pressure organization where there's always a
17 risk of danger or violence. The
18 sustainability to me is recognizing that
19 when we work in a place where there's
20 potential violence and risk all the time,
21 staying on top of that, encouraging
22 improvement through exposure constantly and
23 coming up with a good evaluation plan which
24 we're not there yet.

25 MR. CHENEY: You need a lot of

1 administrative follow up.

2 MS. CLARK: That's right.

3 MS. ELMER: Is your position full time?

4 MS. CLARK: Yes, but my loyalty -- my
5 dedication or my -- the amount of time I can
6 spend on this project isn't full time.

7 MS. ELMER: Well, I noticed your title,
8 director of diversity training.

9 MS. CLARK: That's a typo.

10 MS. ELMER: Really? What's is it?

11 MS. CLARK: Training coordinator.

12 MS. ELMER: All issues?

13 MS. CLARK: Right.

14 MS. ELMER: What I was trying to get at
15 is we're talking -- asking you to help us
16 draw the parallels between what you've done
17 within one state department, Corrections, in
18 terms of diversity training and what we're
19 talking about, Department of Education. You
20 have a handful of correctional facilities
21 and look at how many educational
22 institutions we have. Tell us, is one
23 coordinator in Montpelier going to make a
24 difference? Does it need to be staffing at
25 each supervisory union level? Does it have

1 to be at each school? Talk to us about how
2 you think from your experience, how do we
3 get it into the schools right down to the
4 level where it's working with kids.

5 MS. CLARK: I don't know. That's such
6 a big question. My -- my feeling is that
7 it's -- the amount of dedication we have to
8 talking to each other first and going around
9 and finding out what is it that -- what is
10 it that these kids -- do they see a problem
11 I guess would be my first question. That's
12 where we started in our organization, and it
13 was very interesting to find out that a lot
14 of people don't see a problem.

15 MS. ELMER: That's what we're hearing.

16 MR. TUCKER: I need to help you with
17 this. She was right, I was there from the
18 inception of this. When Dick Clark --
19 Turner, and John Gorczyk and I had our
20 initial conversations, the three of us,
21 about this is one of the things that
22 Corrections has is if they do this well, it
23 makes their life safer, it makes the jail
24 safer not only for guards but for inmates
25 and staff. So they have an incentive in

1 this, plus the fact is that they're stuck
2 with where everybody else can run away with
3 this problem, turn their back on it, they
4 have to live with it day in and day out.
5 There is no running and hiding once you
6 close the door at one of those facilities.
7 So the problem you have is that they have --
8 I don't want to say it, but they do, you
9 know, they have a situation where they're
10 there and they need help with that. I mean,
11 it's going to make your life easier if you
12 understand what it is that's motivating and
13 promoting --

14 MS. ELMER: But she's already told us
15 that even at that level the interest is -- I
16 mean, that's one of your biggest challenges.

17 MR. TUCKER: But it's scary. You have
18 got to make them understand that. That's
19 why I'm trying to help her with this because
20 it really is about that, but there's a
21 commitment from the top to this. The other
22 thing is that they're a paramilitary
23 organization. Let's be really clear about
24 that, so the headset is already different.
25 Some of the best criticism I ever -- and

1 critiques I ever got about training came out
2 of Corrections. I mean, out of Corrections
3 came the trainings that we do now. They
4 were the toughest in some ways, but they
5 were -- they asked the hardest and most
6 appropriate questions because their job was
7 to be in a diverse atmosphere whether they
8 wanted to be there or not. And I have high
9 regard for Corrections. I mean, as you can
10 tell, I'm a little prejudiced, but she has a
11 tough job, and I think that what she's
12 relating to you is that it becomes even
13 tougher without all those other layers that
14 they have going for them. Is that --

15 MR. SIMONS: Can I try to answer your
16 question about how do we keep -- how do we
17 get this training from our central office
18 level to -- down to the officers on the
19 blocks, the people that are working with the
20 offenders where the rubber meets the road.
21 One way we do that is by implementing a
22 training that isn't scary for people to go
23 to. We get people -- it's nothing safer for
24 me to do than talk about myself. That's
25 extremely safe, and when I talk about myself

1 what I want to do is find or get my fellow
2 officers to do is find the components of
3 their culture. And what we see is that when
4 I'm aware of the components of my culture,
5 I'm aware of why I do the things I do, the
6 behaviors that other people see. Now when I
7 see somebody different from me, I see myself
8 as the average and the norm, and when I see
9 myself as the average and the norm, then I'm
10 what's right. What we do is we get these
11 people looking at this stuff and show them
12 that it is dangerous and make assumptions.
13 Do a paradigm shift. Look at yourself
14 objectively. When they do that you don't
15 see themselves as being right, you being
16 different from me, they see how am I
17 different from you, that's pretty safe,
18 that's not as scary. Then where we go from
19 there or from what we have done is we train
20 their peers in these techniques and these
21 modules, and their peers then go and
22 maintain the trainings at those levels and
23 that's how -- and it's equitable and it's
24 efficient. We're getting people that they
25 know to get them to become aware of these

1 things. And we're addressing topics like
2 language that perpetuates stereotypes and
3 how that can be dangerous. All of these --
4 all of these areas we're training specific
5 modules and then we recertify staff through
6 a set of these modules that their peers
7 deliver.

8 MR. CHENEY: I'm going to -- we've got
9 to keep moving here because we've got a lot
10 of other people, but could you -- do you
11 have a curriculum that you could send to us?

12 MS. CLARK: Yes.

13 MR. CHENEY: Could you do that?

14 MS. CLARK: Yes.

15 DR. GUSTAFSON: Thank you.

16 MR. CHENEY: Thank you. Tory Rhodin.

17 MS. RHODIN: Hi. I'm Tory Rhodin, and
18 I'm a clinical social worker in the post
19 adoption program in case adoption services.
20 I work as part of a two-person team that
21 provides a range of counseling, and
22 training, and consultation and educational
23 services to adopted families and people
24 helping adoptive families all over the State
25 of Vermont. So I can comment to a certain

1 extent on experiences that I've heard of
2 from transracial adoptive families in
3 Vermont. I also am the mother by adoption
4 of a two year old child who happens to be
5 African-American. There are a fair number
6 of children placed transracially in Vermont,
7 which is to say children of various racial
8 backgrounds who have been adopted by white
9 families. I don't know what the numbers
10 are, but they're significant compared to
11 many of the other states around the country.
12 In the past a large number of Asian
13 children, particularly children from India
14 and Korea, have been placed with families in
15 Vermont. More recently a large number of
16 African-American children and also girls
17 from China have been placed, again,
18 primarily with white families in Vermont.

19 I have a range of concerns I'd like to
20 share. My feeling both as a parent and as a
21 person who's been working professionally
22 with adoptive families for a number of years
23 is that families need to be very, very
24 proactive in creating a positive environment
25 for their children and working in the larger

1 world to help that happen. I think that
2 adoptive families face a double challenge
3 both of promoting positive racial identity
4 development for their children as well as a
5 strong attachment to the family and then
6 later to the larger community. My own
7 experience, again both as a parent and as a
8 clinical social worker, is that the
9 development of a positive racial identity in
10 a child and the development of a strong
11 attachment to the family absolutely work
12 hand in hand because that's what will help
13 the child feel known and feel connected to
14 the family. I find myself repeatedly
15 stressing to families that we need to begin
16 thinking of ourselves as families of color
17 who are parenting a child that we're
18 parenting and we're living in a larger
19 world, not as white families that have a
20 child from, quote, a different racial
21 background, that's part of the family. I
22 think what -- I think something needs to
23 change and can be helped to change in the
24 racial identity of the family that will help
25 a stronger identity development in the

1 child.

2 Some families -- I think that some
3 adoptive families, I'm sure you've heard
4 from some of them over the last couple of
5 days, have experienced racial harassment in
6 the schools. Of the families I've heard --
7 I work with directly, I've heard of that
8 from one family. What I've heard of very
9 frequently is what I believe is a perhaps
10 more subtle racist experience in the school
11 in a larger community in Vermont where the
12 child day after day after day does not see
13 anything or anybody that reflects who the
14 child is in terms of race and culture. The
15 very I think stressful situation for a child
16 who's been adopted by a white family is that
17 the child is not also seeing their identity
18 reflected when they look at their parents
19 and siblings a lot of the time. I think
20 that the experience of seeing themselves not
21 reflected in a world that they live in can
22 be very demoralizing for a child. I think
23 it can be very emptying for a child.

24 I spent the afternoon before I came
25 here with a family where I don't -- I don't

1 think that the child would say that very
2 many things have happened that she
3 experiences directly being aimed against
4 her, but I think that when she looks around
5 her in the world, including in her home, she
6 doesn't see herself, and that's something
7 that I think is very complicated and is a
8 very difficult situation. Certainly our
9 children are exposed, as are all children of
10 color in this country, to a fairly constant
11 onslaught of negative media images, negative
12 images of themselves and of their culture in
13 what we see around them. I've also talked
14 with families and I've also experienced in
15 my own family people who have -- what I
16 already consider to be a subtle kind of
17 racism that's initially framed as being
18 something very positive. People condemning,
19 "how cute" your child is when they don't
20 know you or your child and your child isn't
21 any cuter than anybody else. People
22 commenting on your child's hair. I was
23 the -- the day care provider who cares for
24 my child told me the other day that another
25 child had been saying -- had been asking

1 where my child got her barrettes. I said I
2 got them at the Rite Aide down the street
3 from where we live. That wasn't the
4 question that this child was raising.

5 Maybe to move on to something -- I
6 think there have been a series of people
7 probably describing the problem in many
8 details. I was surprised when I got here to
9 discover that I was a panelist to talk about
10 solutions although I have a lot of ideas
11 about them. Part of what I do involves --
12 in addition to doing counseling and therapy,
13 part of what I do does involve some training
14 for adoptive families and people working
15 with them. I led a workshop at the Vermont
16 Adoption Conference which is an annual
17 conference up in Burlington that usually
18 attracts several hundred adoptive parents
19 called Taking a Stand Against Racism, and
20 our intention was to help perspective
21 adoptive families and adoptive parents
22 explore their own racial and ethnic
23 background, explore their own experiences
24 with racism and come to some understanding
25 of what this experience has meant for their

1 parenting of their child. Again, our
2 intention was to help them both be
3 reflective about their own experience and
4 become more clear that they were moving into
5 a time when they needed to be taking
6 practical action against racism in the
7 world. I'll also state just for the record
8 that I -- the same colleague and I offered
9 the same workshop as part of the mental
10 health day in a local public school about a
11 year ago and nobody signed up for it at all.
12 We had 67 people at the Vermont Adoption
13 Conference and I'm not sure what that means,
14 but I thought it was sort of interesting.

15 My feeling is that schools need to be
16 very, very proactive with regard to racial
17 issues. I think that anybody involved with
18 the school, including the parents, need to
19 be thinking about whose history is being
20 taught in the school, what images is the
21 child seeing in the school and what are the
22 stories that are interwoven into every
23 aspect of the curriculum. I had the great
24 good fortune to be a high school student 30
25 years ago when I think there was a lot more

1 consciousness among white high school
2 students as well as others about the fact
3 that we -- there were vast areas of history
4 that we were not being taught in the United
5 States history, and our school developed a
6 student initiated course on African-American
7 history which led me later to study that in
8 college and then later to be able to pick up
9 on it in graduate school and to be able to
10 have that be part of the teaching I've done.
11 That was helped by the fact that a teacher
12 who all the kids in the school were a great
13 fan of a particular teacher, and that
14 particular teacher who also happened to be
15 white said this was something we needed to
16 know about and he was going to help us
17 learn. Later when I was in college a
18 professor who had a great deal of influence
19 over what I could and couldn't study told me
20 that I needed to take a course in
21 African-American history, and much later as
22 a teacher about ten years ago I offered a
23 course in African-American history and
24 literature which most of the students in the
25 school sign up for and that was partly

1 because it was offered both in the English
2 and history department and you had to take
3 English and history.

4 MS. ELMER: May I ask you, was any of
5 that in Vermont?

6 MS. RHODIN: The latest -- the latter
7 school was The Meeting School which is a
8 small Quaker school in New Hampshire about
9 45 minutes from the Vermont border, so I
10 think it's transferable.

11 MS. ELMER: But your elementary
12 experience wasn't hear?

13 MS. RHODIN: No, Pennsylvania. I went
14 to high school and college in Pennsylvania
15 and graduate school in New York and
16 Massachusetts. I want to say that as part
17 of my own training I was strongly encouraged
18 to live and work in an African-American
19 community and was -- also, I think, had the
20 privilege of being able to study at the time
21 when affirmative action was taken very
22 seriously and when it was seen as a serious
23 and necessary goal for every student and for
24 every teacher that there be a genuinely
25 diverse population. These are I think just

1 the -- the background environment, who the
2 population of the school and who the
3 authority of the school is made up of makes
4 a huge difference in what you get to learn
5 and what is considered important to learn.
6 I think I had the privilege of being able to
7 go to school at a time when issues of racial
8 justice were considerably less marginalized
9 than they are now, and that is something I
10 think that we can do a lot about.

11 MR. CHENEY: I have an issue maybe you
12 could help us with. We've heard a lot of
13 testimony from adoptive mothers, actually,
14 of multiracial children. It seems to me
15 there's a cadre of skills being built up by
16 these parents to counteract racist
17 experiences.

18 MS. RHODIN: That's true.

19 MR. CHENEY: And in some ways this
20 group may have a lot of news for the
21 educational establishment, and I wonder if
22 you have developed kind of a strategy that
23 you can pass on not only to your adoptive
24 parents but to others who might want to use
25 it.

1 MS. RHODIN: I think the -- what I can
2 do with, if this is helpful, is to tell some
3 of the practical ideas that we pass on to
4 adoptive families and I think have been put
5 into practice by many of the families that
6 you've heard from as well as probably a
7 couple of hundred that you haven't heard
8 from yet. A lot of the work that we do is
9 to link parents and link families with other
10 families who are like them in some way.
11 There are several multicultural family
12 groups around the State of Vermont. Some of
13 them are primarily adoptive families and
14 some of them are a combination of families
15 formed by marriage and formed in various
16 other ways and adoptive families.

17 We strongly encourage transracial
18 adoptive families and people who are
19 thinking about adopting a child of color if
20 they happen to be white to become involved
21 with the multicultural family groups so that
22 both the children and the parents are
23 spending a significant amount of their time
24 with children of color and with adults of
25 color. And I think that is -- I think it's

1 easier for some parents to think about why
2 that's important for the child, but it's not
3 only important for the child, it's at least
4 as important for the adult because it's the
5 adult, generally speaking, who's got the
6 power in the family. Casey was also
7 involved in working with a group of
8 African-American and Latino students at
9 Dartmouth who formed the Dartmouth Alliance
10 for Children of Color which provides a range
11 of activities and a big brother, big sister
12 program but also student parent and faculty
13 parent conversations; mainly who they reach
14 is adoptive families, sometimes they reach
15 also families that are formed by birth, and
16 I think that's been a very strong
17 intervention for families.

18 MR. CHENEY: You know, some of the
19 specific issues people speak of their kids
20 as invisible.

21 MS. RHODIN: That's right.

22 MR. CHENEY: And they have adopted
23 strategies to deal with that. I mean, do
24 you have -- other than how to parent a child
25 like this, we're talking about specific

1 interventions in the public schools. Do you
2 have strategy for interventions?

3 MS. RHODIN: I think the best thoughts
4 I have are for the family to be spending as
5 much time as they can with families of color
6 and multiracial families so that the child
7 is seeing on a regular basis children like
8 him or herself. Also that the friends that
9 are in the home, the church that the family
10 attends if they go to church, the social
11 life of the family, the images that are
12 available in the home, what's watched on
13 television, what's listened to for music,
14 the books that are available in the home,
15 the history that's talked about in the home
16 are experiences that are reflecting the
17 child's culture of origin. In terms of
18 school I'm not sure I have anything to offer
19 that hasn't already been offered. We do
20 some work to help schools around general
21 issues of adoption, and we strongly
22 encourage families where it's possible to
23 live where their child will not be the only
24 child of color and where it's possible not
25 to have their child be in opposition at

1 school. A number of the families I've
2 worked with have also had the experience of
3 the child feeling invisible and the child
4 not having words for what they're
5 experiencing. If the child is in that
6 situation of being the only child of a
7 particular race in the school and the
8 parents aren't willing or able to move to a
9 community where that won't need to be so, I
10 think at the very least it's important that
11 the rest of the child's life be a lot more
12 culturally diverse and that the adults who
13 care about the child be working with the
14 child to help him or her find words to
15 describe what they're experiencing so at
16 least it's not just an inner suffering that
17 there aren't any words for.

18 MR. CHENEY: Any other questions? Is
19 there anything you want to add?

20 MS. RHODIN: I think that that's about
21 it.

22 MR. CHENEY: Thanks so much for coming.

23 MS. RHODIN: Sure. You're welcome.

24 MR. CHENEY: Bill Herrington?

25 MR. HERRINGTON: As you note on the

1 agenda here, I'm a counselor at the Rutland
2 Middle School. I'll have to tell you, I
3 feel a considerable amount of discomfort
4 being here this evening. Unfortunately, I
5 couldn't come this afternoon, but I was able
6 to come this evening, so I'd like to address
7 more issues that are occurring in the
8 schools. My discomfort has to do with that
9 I'm feeling that you folks are here wanting
10 to hear about problems of racial harassment
11 in our schools, and I'm sure there's going
12 to be some parents and some other folks here
13 who are probably going to speak to that. I
14 can only speak from my experience and, as
15 you can see, I'm really white and I'm sure
16 there's a certain amount of ignorance on my
17 part. I've come with a prepared statement
18 because I thought that we needed to limit
19 our presentation so if you don't mind, I'm
20 going read that presentation and then
21 certainly feel free to ask me any questions
22 afterwards.

23 I would like to thank the Vermont
24 Advisory Committee for the opportunity to
25 make a short presentation on my perception

1 of racial harassment at the Rutland Middle
2 School. I'm going to be just speaking to my
3 experience at the middle school. I'm a
4 licensed clinical social worker and hold the
5 position of support services counselor at
6 the Rutland Middle School. We are a seventh
7 and eighth grade school with a student
8 enrollment of 400. We presently have 15
9 minority students in our school. Last year
10 we had 12 minority students. Less than 4
11 percent of our student body are minority
12 students.

13 I have worked in the Rutland public
14 school system for nine years. The last four
15 years of my employment with the district
16 have been at the Rutland Middle School. My
17 perception, again this is my perception, of
18 racial harassment in our school is that
19 there is not a smoldering problem which
20 needs immediate attention. On January 20th,
21 1997, which was not quite a year ago, the
22 principal at our school invited all parents
23 of minority children to attend a roundtable
24 discussion about multiculturalism and the
25 issues that confront minority children in

1 the public school. Mr. Doug Samuels from
2 Burlington facilitated this discussion.
3 One-third of the parents of our minority
4 students, which would be four, attended this
5 forum. Parents who attended this meeting
6 did not express concern about racial
7 harassment, instead expressed concern that
8 we did not offer more multicultural
9 experiences for students at our school.
10 They felt that prejudice was alive and well
11 in Rutland even though it might not overtly
12 rear its ugly head in the form of racial
13 harassment in the schools. If our school
14 provided more multicultural experiences for
15 students, then there might be better
16 understanding, appreciation and sensitivity
17 to multicultural issues.

18 I recently had an opportunity to speak
19 with 12 of our 15 minority students. They
20 did not feel that racial harassment was a
21 problem in our school. One student had
22 experienced racial harassment in sixth grade
23 and when brought to the attention of the
24 administrator this student felt it was
25 resolved. I am aware of an Afro-American

1 student last year who was a recipient on
2 several occasions of racial slurs in the
3 heat of verbal disputes with peers. These
4 incidents were immediately -- incidents were
5 immediately addressed by our school's
6 administrator. Has racial harassment
7 occurred in our school? Yes. Is it a
8 smoldering problem that needs immediate
9 attention? I say no. I am actually more
10 concerned with the general lack of empathy
11 that many of our students have for each
12 other no matter what their ethnic
13 background. Many students seem to have
14 little tolerance for individual differences,
15 whether it is height, weight, socioeconomic
16 standing, religious affiliation, sexual
17 orientation or ethnic background.

18 I recently had a group of 25 peer
19 leaders from the Rutland High School come to
20 our school and present an interactive
21 program about appreciating individual
22 differences with all of our seventh graders.
23 We plan to follow this program up with a
24 peer mediation initiative that utilizes high
25 school students trained in conflict

1 resolution to mediate middle school
2 conflicts. The Rutland City school district
3 has a harassment policy that was approved on
4 July 25th, 1995, and is included in its
5 entirety in the Rutland Middle School
6 Handbook that is distributed to every
7 student in our school at the beginning of
8 the school year. This policy has also been
9 distributed to all school personnel and is
10 posted in a conspicuous location in our main
11 office. Last year the principal personally
12 discussed this policy with the whole student
13 body. We have not made any whole school
14 public comments about this policy this year
15 other than encourage and expect all teacher
16 advisory staff to review the Rutland Middle
17 School Family Handbook with their students.
18 It is my belief that all forms of harassment
19 are a smoldering problem in the public
20 schools which need immediate attention. We
21 need to provide training opportunities for
22 students and staff that reduces
23 prejudicialal behavior. All of us carry
24 some unintentional prejudices from early
25 experiences in learning. These prejudices

1 will only be reduced through training by a
2 culturally diverse group of trainers.

3 Approximately four years ago the Mt.
4 Elmore Institute provided a sexual
5 harassment workshop for all Rutland City
6 school staff. This was a very informative
7 and sensitizing experience. It would be
8 very timely for our students and staff to
9 participate in some diversity training that
10 moves beyond the legal response to
11 harassment and attempts to reduce prejudices
12 through awareness and empathy-building
13 activities.

14 I applaud the time and effort of the
15 Vermont Advisory Committee to the United
16 States Commission on Civil Rights in
17 organizing and facilitating the two
18 community forums in Burlington and Rutland.
19 I hope that your report and recommendations
20 will indicate the communities and schools in
21 Vermont need to develop plans and strategies
22 to reduce all different forms and types of
23 harassing behavior and not limit your
24 concerns solely to racial harassment. Thank
25 you.

1 MR. CHENEY: Any questions?

2 MR. TUCKER: I have none.

3 MR. CHENEY: I think I want to say,
4 Bill, you must have a unique school because
5 the testimony is in variance with statements
6 that people have brought to us quite
7 forcefully, problems in the -- with minority
8 students in the schools. So I'm -- you're
9 also the only staff person that's come
10 before us to give us this information. So I
11 really thank you for coming.

12 MR. HERRINGTON: You're welcome.

13 DR. HAND: There is one question. When
14 you encounter the -- there are these
15 isolated -- you would say there's no
16 smoldering problem but there are isolated
17 incidents. How are they reported to you?
18 How are you aware of them?

19 MR. HERRINGTON: The incidents that
20 have come to our attention have either been
21 observed by our staff or have been reported
22 by other students. And I guess my -- my
23 feeling whether it's racial harassment or
24 any other form of harassment is that we need
25 to do an educational piece and try to build

1 some sort of empathy on the part of the
2 perpetrator towards this kind of harassment.
3 So I can't say that in all cases or even in
4 the majority of cases isn't necessarily
5 there's going to be a suspension or some
6 strong disciplinary response. It's more
7 trying to get the perpetrator to understand
8 what it's like for the victim to experience
9 this kind of behavior.

10 DR. HAND: But you don't think there's
11 any inhibitions in reporting these
12 harassments?

13 MR. HERRINGTON: Again, you're hearing
14 from my perspective.

15 DR. HAND: I realize that.

16 MR. HERRINGTON: I don't believe so.

17 MS. ELMER: Do you feel that the
18 children that you can so easily identify
19 feel that your school is a safe environment?
20 What we've heard from countless parents and
21 students is not only is the school not a
22 safe environment but parents are having to
23 give up jobs to go into the schools to
24 monitor on a regular basis what's happening.
25 Clearly that's not your experience, but can

1 you address that at all?

2 MR. HERRINGTON: I guess it's not my
3 experience specifically around racial
4 issues. I'm very concerned. Obviously I'm
5 not conveying that. You're wanting to hear
6 about racial harassment and, I'm sorry, what
7 I'm concerned about is harassment in
8 general. Before I left today, almost the
9 last period of the day I had an obese
10 student who's very sensitive about his
11 weight who had been harassed about his
12 weight, and those kinds of things happen
13 often and frequently. So it's not just
14 racial harassment. I'm just concerned the
15 lack of empathy the kids have for each
16 other.

17 MS. ELMER: Well, what we heard
18 today --

19 MR. TUCKER: We heard from a person
20 that bullying leads into the kind of
21 behavior that children can end up being
22 racially harassed about, and my experience
23 with children and in the work that I've
24 done, if someone does obesity, they will do
25 sexuality. If they do sexuality, they will

1 do another ism. They go from one to the
2 other. That's what skinheads are all about.
3 I mean, there is more than one group. We
4 just happen to be specializing in racial
5 harassment because of the uprise of this
6 over the Vermont school systems, and it
7 hasn't been attacked, it hasn't been
8 approached. Also, it's really clear to us
9 from other stuff that's been told to us that
10 not a lot of children of color feel
11 comfortable about going and saying something
12 to school officials so --

13 MR. HERRINGTON: And I think you need
14 to -- I can only tell you my perspective,
15 okay, and that's why I think it's important
16 for you to hear other people's perspective.
17 When I spoke with these students, and you
18 could say this is an artificial situation,
19 you know, I know many of these students and
20 I really wanted -- I told them that I was
21 going to be coming here. I said, you
22 folks -- this panel really needs to hear
23 what life is like for you in these schools.
24 I mean, one Afro-American spoke about after
25 a high school -- not a high school but it

1 was a middle school game playing against
2 another school walking down, they were
3 shaking hands and one student, you know,
4 just picked up his hand, did not want to
5 shake with him. When I asked him other
6 experiences that he's had in our school, I
7 mean, he just was unable to articulate. And
8 whether that's because of my color is a
9 barrier to him, I'm not sure, but I really
10 was not hearing from these kids that racial
11 issues were making it an unsafe place for
12 them to come to school.

13 MR. TUCKER: Okay.

14 MR. CHENEY: How did you hear about the
15 Commission meeting?

16 MR. HERRINGTON: Actually, somebody had
17 given my name and Marc gave me a call.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I gave your
19 name.

20 MR. CHENEY: Do you know of anybody
21 else in the school system that was going to
22 come to talk about it?

23 MR. HERRINGTON: I knew several other
24 people that were approached, and I hate to
25 speak for other people, but I think what I

1 was hearing was that people did not feel, at
2 least within our school system, that the
3 concern was -- we have -- I think there was
4 recently a concern about sexual orientation
5 and harassment, that we do have concerns
6 about a variety of different harassments but
7 did not feel that racial was a major issue
8 or concern.

9 MR. TUCKER: Well, schools must be
10 changed in Rutland because when I went to
11 school people who bullied bullied and they
12 bullied an enormous amount of groups, so I
13 have some concern. Also, I know as a parent
14 of three children of color that they're not
15 going to feel comfortable about telling
16 everybody about the stuff that happens to
17 them. So I'm not sure. And, plus, in the
18 work that I do in this state, I get a lot of
19 calls from Rutland and I don't believe -- I
20 mean, I just -- this is my cynicism, that
21 there is a word that the Catholics use when
22 you go into church and you've found
23 sanctuary. I find it hard to believe that a
24 school in Vermont today is a sanctuary for a
25 child of color when he's getting it from all

1 these other places.

2 MR. HERRINGTON: Sanctuary. I don't
3 think it's a sanctuary for any kid, I really
4 don't. I would invite you to come to our
5 school. I mean, that's what I say. You
6 maybe feeling I'm wearing blinders, and I'm
7 sure to a certain degree I am.

8 MR. TUCKER: I don't want to attack
9 you. See, that's not what I'm in the
10 business of doing. I'm just saying that
11 there is no minor issue for kids when
12 they're attacked racially. There are no
13 isolated incidents, see? I mean, so right
14 there I was concerned. You know, that was a
15 small incident. I can tell you that each
16 one of my kids can tell you every time that
17 they've had an incident in their young life
18 between first and twelfth grade about race.
19 So there are no isolated incidents.

20 MR. HOFF: John, in all honesty, I
21 think this witness has testified.

22 DR. GUSTAFSON: May I just ask one more
23 question? About the parents that were
24 concerned about the curriculum rather than
25 specific incidents, do you know what was

1 followed up with about the curriculum? Were
2 there changes in the curriculum? Did that
3 become a project of the school?

4 MR. HERRINGTON: I guess what I'd like
5 to speak to is that the principal at that
6 particular time had hoped to keep -- and
7 I've heard in Burlington that they are doing
8 this, wanted to keep this particular
9 committee going. He since has left. We
10 have a new principal. Although I'm a
11 counselor there and I was at that forum, I
12 must say that it has not continued.

13 MR. CHENEY: Thank you very much.
14 Really appreciate you coming by. Lyndia
15 Cobbett.

16 MS. COBBETT: Hi. I don't mean to be a
17 negative person and contradict any of the
18 things that have been said, but I kind of
19 feel a person that has experienced this
20 community, what do you call these people
21 that come in state, implants? I'm from a
22 biracial relationship, and I have two
23 school-aged children. The community at all
24 hasn't been -- you know, it hasn't been user
25 friendly whatsoever. In fact, my summation

1 of the situation has been that we are being
2 persecuted in town. I know Mr. Herrington,
3 I know her. I visited the biracial groups.
4 I guess I was seeking some kind of allies or
5 support groups initially trying to
6 re-establish myself in the town. I went
7 through several job prospects only to be met
8 with opposition like dogs running after me,
9 and Sambos being put, being tripped up in my
10 employment efforts. After so many times
11 telling significant whos in the town about
12 it, them knowing my personality they were
13 going like, Lyndia, let it slide off your
14 back.

15 And after so many times I decided to
16 try to refer to some of the appropriate
17 offices. At first I thought -- what is it,
18 ACLU, Civil Liberties, the fact that my
19 rights, my restriction to go places, you
20 know like in a grocery store, any whos.
21 There was a pattern made up of this woman
22 does this, this woman does that. The lies
23 and slander began. I haven't been allowed
24 to be on the premises of a lot of places
25 based on two people who will want to say,

1 just like I said, that I have a pattern. By
2 now these people know that this is all you
3 have to do against this woman and she can be
4 just dismissed. And I've been dismissed
5 from wherever I live in the downtown
6 vicinity, which is where our residence is,
7 grocery stores, convenience stores,
8 restaurants, nightclubs and the like just
9 based on slander. And we don't want to
10 hear, oh, you did this and they're blatant
11 lies. From the time that I resorted to like
12 some of the employment and from the public
13 establishments thinking that ACLU and
14 whichever were for -- I thought was people
15 would go against these people to make them
16 not restrict my liberty and go where I want
17 to go just based on slander; that didn't
18 happen.

19 Ms. Sussman sent back to me a letter
20 that they didn't have enough funds, and I
21 was also referred to -- I was put in contact
22 with the EEOC and the like. I'm now in
23 touch with Mr. Golubock and Mr. Powers at
24 the Human Rights Commission for housing and
25 my children at school and from the fact that

1 I did refer to these offices to help resolve
2 some of the problem. I haven't been allowed
3 employment, and I have my children and my
4 family to support. And it's like being some
5 kind of conspiracy, it really is.

6 I know a lot of the people that are
7 involved because they let me know in a lot
8 of different ways that they have a problem
9 with the fact, and it was also said to me
10 once you refer to offices in this town,
11 you're labeled a whistle blower and nobody
12 wants to employ you or this and the like,
13 and that has happened to me. I have a
14 family. I feel that I have a right to live
15 anywhere in the United States regardless of
16 whatever reason that I landed in the town.
17 Even if I wanted to live here, they're
18 telling me, we're making it hard for you.
19 We're not going to allow you to support
20 yourself and to carry on your life;
21 therefore, I guess their motivation is to
22 have me have that be a process of
23 eliminating me be a resident here.

24 I've been at violence several times and
25 reported it to the policemen. They were

1 also some of the perpetrators and they made
2 sure I was supposed to be set out and
3 presented in a very indignant way. At
4 present I'm supposed to be Rutland's
5 stereotypical thief, violent drug prostitute
6 and female because I'm outgoing and
7 articulate and -- you know, just a basic
8 friendly person, and those don't flatter me.

9 MR. TUCKER: What happened to your
10 children at school?

11 MS. COBBETT: Recently my daughter was
12 chased across -- near this area by a group
13 of those people that they had in the media
14 that were supposed to be gang people.

15 MR. CHENEY: What school is it?

16 MS. COBBETT: This is Rutland High
17 School.

18 DR. GUSTAFSON: How old are your
19 children?

20 MS. COBBETT: Mr. Herrington has some
21 minor incidents. He doesn't speak for the
22 fact of what these other people are all
23 about, that's why they're not here, he is.
24 He's the decent side of what these people
25 aren't; therefore, he can come and have his

1 rhetoric for his summation of what Rutland
2 schools are like and it's a fallacy. None
3 of these people are in the interest of our
4 children. We have to go there and act
5 belligerent and defend our children for the
6 little sick things that we know shouldn't be
7 in schools. The situation with my daughter
8 that's at present, Mr. Powers was even
9 called this morning and he questioned her
10 this afternoon. The fact that she's black
11 and white, she's white as any of you and my
12 children, they don't -- practically don't
13 know, and she's not looking at it from the
14 perspective that I would look at it nor they
15 would. He ask her, do you think this was
16 racially motivated? Naturally a good
17 hearted child raised properly wouldn't feel
18 that way, but that's not the fact of it in
19 the community because I'm as a parent
20 knowing that these kids are time -- or
21 trained to know that the big word, the key
22 word is don't say the word nigger because if
23 that's going to be the word, that's going to
24 push the situation overboard, but otherwise
25 you can fight, you can do this, you can do

1 whatever you want to and nothing else will
2 be done about it.

3 MR. TUCKER: You think children of
4 color are picked on?

5 MS. COBBETT: My daughter is -- she's
6 having blatant things said to her. She's
7 being called sluts, and whores and -- you
8 know, things that don't belong in a school
9 and that's when I came forward. I requested
10 a meeting with them yesterday and with them
11 also to be with a policeman and a prime --
12 some person, mediator in the community, to
13 resolve these people that want to jump on my
14 daughter. And their reason for wanting to
15 bother her is she thinks she's a prep and
16 she thinks she's this and the other.

17 MR. TUCKER: Is this happening in the
18 school?

19 MS. COBBETT: The situation started in
20 the school. They tried to implicate her
21 with some hearsay and they practiced that,
22 you know, in the community as a way of
23 trying to suck you in to be a certain
24 caliber of a person that -- you know, their
25 way of inviting you to be on the level of

1 trying to concern themselves with you
2 negatively. And if you don't buy into it,
3 you know, that -- that's like invited more.
4 You think you're better than this, you're
5 different from us and we're just like a --
6 some people that got dropped into a very
7 ugly -- to me, half-civilized situation.

8 MR. TUCKER: So you're saying your
9 daughter is picked on in school and the
10 school has done nothing about it?

11 MS. COBBETT: They didn't. I thought
12 the guy actually poured the gasoline on the
13 situation. He had this little -- the
14 person, this girl that chose to want to
15 invite her to this violence, he at first was
16 trying to say if I heard anything -- if I
17 hear anything from either of you regarding
18 like some hearsay, try to make my daughter
19 responsible for what other kids would say,
20 all the instigators, the kids in the school
21 that knew this girl was after my daughter,
22 make my daughter responsible for whatever
23 the hearsay was coming from these other
24 students. In other words, my daughter
25 had -- you know, had no choice but to, like,

1 shut up. And at present she -- we discussed
2 yesterday why didn't you go to the
3 principal. She's like playing this peer
4 thing on us like she didn't want to be a
5 snitch. And basically this is what I've
6 been telling her to do. I don't care if she
7 looks at you wrong, go to the principal.
8 Let them resolve it because she shouldn't --

9 MR. TUCKER: You're saying the
10 principal told her she was a snitch?

11 MS. COBBETT: No. My daughter wouldn't
12 go on. This is going on right under her
13 teacher's nose and she's worried about what
14 the other students are going say because the
15 girl's sitting up in the class, you're fat
16 rat, this, that and the other. My
17 daughter's refusing to go to the office to
18 the appropriate people to let them know
19 about it simply because she doesn't want her
20 little peers to think that and make the
21 situation worse by that girl getting more
22 ammo and her little allies calling my
23 daughter a snitch and having to go to the
24 police and the like just to defend herself.

25 MR. TUCKER: Do you think some of this

1 is racially motivated?

2 MS. COBBETT: I think all of it is. I
3 think it comes from the community themselves
4 and they're just trying to use -- the girl
5 that's involved, the major player is a
6 juvenile delinquent. She's involved in the
7 system. She does not care, and basically
8 they're using an innocent child, mine, who
9 doesn't practice violence to make their
10 point. We're just being a family picked at,
11 and they're doing it through a child, the
12 child they -- I don't care to have to put
13 names. I know what the people do by now,
14 and they're using this child to try to bring
15 conflict on a family. And my daughter's not
16 the type, not in the next life, but they're
17 using her to make a point to our family to
18 disturb us as another way of showing we
19 don't want you in this community. And it's
20 another --

21 MR. TUCKER: What I'm trying to
22 separate is what happens in the schools in
23 particular which is what we're addressing?

24 MS. COBBETT: They use these children
25 to interfere. A lot of white kids, you ask

1 them, what are you going to do when you grow
2 up. I'm going to college, this, that and
3 the other. Black kids, my children are very
4 uncertain because, first of all, I am not
5 able -- if they're not going to allow me to
6 support my family, she has no future to look
7 forward to anyway. So they're sitting up in
8 school and they have these other little
9 white kids that are so certain and confident
10 in, you know, what their life passage is
11 going to be. Therefore, they have this
12 extra time to -- you know, to parasite on
13 our children, trip them up in their
14 education efforts, you know, state their
15 life passages.

16 MR. TUCKER: You think what happens is
17 the white kids have the privilege of
18 treating these kids this way because of the
19 fact that they're so secure in what they're
20 going to do?

21 MS. COBBETT: They're confident either
22 way they're going to pass.

23 MR. TUCKER: No matter what they do,
24 nobody is going to do anything to them?

25 MS. COBBETT: Nobody.

1 MR. TUCKER: I want to ask her because
2 she's shaking her head yes.

3 MS. ADAME: I have several issues I
4 want to go over, but I wanted to let her
5 finish speaking.

6 MR. TUCKER: You seem to be agreeing.

7 MS. ADAME: With that portion that you
8 were just talking about, yes.

9 MR. TUCKER: You are?

10 MS. ADAME: I am Judy Adame. I have a
11 son who is 16, and he does not go to school
12 anymore because he feels that the racism is
13 so bad in the school system at Rutland High
14 that he refuses to go. I'm from California.
15 I moved here in 1995. My son was labeled as
16 a gang member because of his different
17 ethnic colors, and he would hang with --
18 hang around the friends that he -- were of
19 ethnic colors, different ethnic colors, and
20 they considered them a gang. And they
21 actually called the La Salito gang.

22 MR. TUCKER: Is that the incident that
23 appeared in the newspaper when the Mayor
24 went --

25 MS. ADAME: I even went to the meetings

1 that the Mayor had, I was right next to
2 them. I was appalled at the way it's
3 handled and the way the issues are being
4 treated as being pushed under the rug like
5 if you give up, they're going to shut up and
6 leave you alone.

7 MR. TUCKER: What happened to your son?

8 MS. ADAME: My son was -- for instance,
9 on one occasion he was -- he was going on
10 his way to a class, he wears his pants
11 baggy, that's the style, even the white kids
12 style do that, and he rolls the bottoms up
13 because he doesn't want them to drag or trip
14 on them. He fixed his pants. His -- the
15 vice principal was walking by, looked at him
16 and said, you have drugs in your pants. And
17 he said, no, I don't. I'm just fixing them
18 because they came loose. And he says, come
19 with me, you have drugs. They physically
20 searched my son, literally strip searched
21 him. They searched him --

22 MR. TUCKER: Wait a minute. They strip
23 searched him in school?

24 MS. ADAME: Yes. They took his
25 backpack and searched everything on his

1 person, his pants, his shirts, his shoes,
2 took everything apart. Went to his locker
3 and furthermore tore that apart looking for
4 drugs accusing him of selling or doing drugs
5 in the school system. I contacted an
6 attorney personally, Brian Dempsey, and
7 scheduled several meetings with Mr. Guy
8 who's the principal at the school and,
9 coincidentally, every time the meeting came,
10 he had to cancel at the last minute for some
11 reason or another. And I'm on a limited
12 income. I'm a disabled nurse, and I wasn't
13 able to keep up with the attorney's fees
14 because I still had to pay for the cost of
15 his time even though he didn't go to the
16 meeting because he scheduled a time to be
17 there.

18 MR. TUCKER: Did you report this to the
19 Human Rights Commission?

20 MS. ADAME: No, I did not. I didn't
21 know who to go to. I was just trying to
22 help my son and reinforce him in
23 conferences.

24 MR. TUCKER: Did the school officials
25 say to you -- since part of the racial

1 harassment policy is to inform parties of
2 agencies that are available to them, did
3 anyone in that school say anything to you
4 about that?

5 MS. ADAME: No. No. I went to the
6 school the next day because my son came
7 home. I was not even called to be there
8 when he was searched if they wanted to
9 search him. I was not given that right, and
10 I believe his Constitutional rights are
11 violated because he was not given the option
12 to be searched or not to be searched.

13 MR. TUCKER: How old was your son at
14 the time? He wasn't -- he's 16 now?

15 MS. ADAME: He was 15.

16 MR. TUCKER: Did they call you?

17 MS. ADAME: They did not call me. My
18 son came home. He was very depressed, very
19 closed, clammed. I said, what's the matter?
20 He says, I don't want to talk about it.
21 Then finally during the evening -- course of
22 the evening after dinner he discussed it
23 with me, and I was appalled. And I said,
24 we're going to school. I'm going to school
25 with you first thing in the morning, and I

1 did. And I voiced my opinion. I said, I
2 think it's -- you guys are being very
3 racist. He hasn't even been here very long
4 and you're already accusing him of being a
5 gang member, a drug pusher and I -- I'm very
6 appalled that you searched him without my
7 permission or did not even call me to offer
8 me to come up and be there and be present
9 while he was searched or even hire an
10 attorney to defend him if he even had
11 something on him. He was not given the
12 Constitutional rights just like the Miranda
13 rights. When you -- a police officer stops
14 you, you have a right to remain silent until
15 proven guilty. He was not given that right.
16 It was taken away from him.

17 MR. TUCKER: When did this happen, last
18 year?

19 MS. ADAME: In 1995. The end of 1995.
20 And I was personally appalled, and my son
21 was too. And ever since that day he has not
22 liked school.

23 MR. TUCKER: Where is your son now?

24 MS. ADAME: He's at work at Denny's.

25 MR. TUCKER: He hasn't gone back to

1 school?

2 MS. ADAME: He won't go to this school.
3 He won't go to this school.

4 MR. TUCKER: He dropped out?

5 MS. ADAME: He wants to move out of
6 this state. I like it here. I want to
7 stay. We're constantly having conflicts in
8 my family now because of this, because of
9 the school system.

10 MR. TUCKER: You're from California?

11 MS. ADAME: Yes.

12 MR. TUCKER: Did they know that?

13 MS. ADAME: Yes. And they quote,
14 unquote --

15 MR. TUCKER: Do they know they don't
16 have any gang members in California?

17 MS. ADAME: They think anybody of
18 different racial color or different color
19 per se, they're all bringing drugs in and
20 they're all gang members.

21 MR. TUCKER: Was your son dating a
22 white girl at the time?

23 MS. ADAME: Yes.

24 MR. TUCKER: Oh, okay.

25 MS. ADAME: He was. And the other

1 thing I wanted to add is he -- his
2 expression to me is he felt the staff was
3 very discouraging toward him and very
4 prejudiced toward him in relation with them
5 thinking that he's a gang member, and not
6 having much verbal contact with him and
7 helping him and assisting him in his goals
8 in completing the subjects that he needed to
9 complete. And he felt uncomfortable --

10 MR. TUCKER: How long has he been
11 working at Denny's now?

12 MS. ADAME: He's been working there for
13 three months.

14 MR. CHENEY: Ms. Cobbett, had you
15 finished what you wanted to say?

16 MS. COBBETT: Oh, this gang she's
17 referring to, that girl at school that's
18 after my daughter and the group, they're
19 supposed to be at -- having each other back
20 to retaliate with my daughter, so I'm trying
21 to get the police to have a meeting so that
22 this can all die.

23 MR. CHENEY: Do either of you know of
24 other incidents of this kind where the
25 parents do not want to come forward?

1 MS. COBBETT: They were run out of
2 town, and that's why they're trying to do it
3 to me. We're not wanted in the town. These
4 are tactics used to discourage us from
5 living here.

6 MS. ADAME: There was an article in the
7 newspaper, I don't know when it was exactly,
8 but it was very unconstitutional. It
9 suggested that every nonwhite person
10 register with the police department when
11 they move into Rutland.

12 MR. TUCKER: No, no, no, no. Wait.
13 What?

14 MS. ADAME: Yes.

15 MR. TUCKER: Can you get a copy of that
16 article?

17 MS. ADAME: I could sure go research it
18 in the library, yes. And it was voted down.

19 MS. COBBETT: That was what Mayor
20 Wennberg said a couple of years ago, and it
21 was in the paper that he said that. People
22 of color should make themselves known to the
23 police if they didn't want to be harassed in
24 the community because that way the police
25 would know who they were, that they lived

1 here.

2 MR. TUCKER: I see a lot of shaking of
3 heads in the audience.

4 MS. ADAME: The chief of police shortly
5 thereafter, I forget exactly what he said,
6 but he made some comments about those racial
7 ethnic types from out of town, referring to
8 any person of color around here.

9 MS. COBBETT: Most of the composition
10 of Rutland are transient people other than
11 the ones in the last ten years who have set
12 up to be residents. Most are transient.

13 MR. CHENEY: You might have answered my
14 question. Some people are afraid to come
15 forward.

16 MS. COBBETT: They're illiterate, not
17 interested, or maybe they have a better
18 status that they don't have to associate
19 themselves to feel as if problems are that
20 bad.

21 MR. TUCKER: So you say there are some
22 people of color --

23 MS. COBBETT: Yes.

24 MR. TUCKER: -- who are doing well
25 economically who are not here?

1 MS. COBBETT: Yes. Mostly men.
2 Preferred customers.

3 MR. TUCKER: Don't look at me when you
4 say that.

5 MR. CHENEY: We're moving up rapidly at
6 9:00 here.

7 MS. ADAME: Can I finish mine? It's
8 not one more, I have several issues.

9 MR. TUCKER: We're supposed to close at
10 9:30.

11 MS. ADAME: Okay. Well, I would like
12 to speak about my son had an IEP which I had
13 to pull teeth to have done because I noticed
14 he was having problems in school, and I
15 noticed this in California. He was in
16 Christian school in California, and he was
17 brought up as a Christian in a Christian
18 school through kindergarten to when we moved
19 here.

20 MR. TUCKER: You're born again?

21 MS. ADAME: Yes. It was Baptist
22 school.

23 MR. TUCKER: And they still called him
24 a gang member?

25 MS. ADAME: Oh, no, I'm talking about

1 he was having difficulties learning.

2 MR. TUCKER: I'm saying did you tell
3 the police this and they still called him a
4 gang member? I'm just curious.

5 MS. ADAME: Oh, yeah, they knew that.
6 The school board knew that. I mean, the
7 school that he goes to, Rutland High knew
8 that. I showed them the curriculum that he
9 was using when he was in California.

10 MR. TUCKER: Okay. Tell us this.

11 MS. ADAME: Now what happened was he
12 was having difficulties in meeting the goals
13 that he was expected to have, and I had
14 suggested to the teachers that he may have a
15 learning disability because my daughter did.
16 My daughter, praise the Lord in heaven, she
17 died of heart disease, and she did have mild
18 retardation which was a genetic disorder.
19 My son doesn't have a genetic disorder, but
20 he does have mild depression and mild ADD,
21 and the teachers, and the counselors and the
22 vice principal when we had our IEP meeting,
23 I invited Charlotte Gladdeon from the Prime
24 Family Resources to meet with -- to come
25 with me and be my liaison person. And we

1 had the meeting, and all the teachers seemed
2 to be in the same category of not even
3 addressing his problems. They thought that
4 his scoring -- his scoring was low on a lot
5 of levels and moderate on some levels, so
6 they felt that he was not in need of Special
7 Education. But he did -- I took him to his
8 doctor and he did need to be put on
9 medication to help him with his learning
10 disability which he said he had mild ADD
11 according to his physical examination. So
12 it was the doctor versus the school. The
13 school didn't want to do anything about it.

14 And after we had this IEP meeting
15 Charlotte Gladdeon even mentioned to me, who
16 is white, that they seemed very prejudiced
17 toward my son for some reason, and she
18 picked it up. And she said that she
19 understands now why Richard was cutting
20 school, and not going to school and getting
21 frustrated because he's getting taunted in
22 the hall by the teacher's, looks, names, the
23 way they speak to him.

24 MR. TUCKER: So he was literally
25 discouraged?

1 MS. ADAME: Yes, literally discouraged.

2 MR. PENTINO: Excuse me, is that a
3 written journal you have kept there?

4 MS. ADAME: This is something I've been
5 writing notes.

6 MR. PENTINO: Can you share that with
7 us?

8 MS. ADAME: Sure.

9 MR. PENTINO: Or I can make a copy.

10 MR. TUCKER: That way we can enter
11 everything you say in the record because
12 we're running behind time.

13 MS. ADAME: Just the last issue I'd
14 like to say is --

15 MR. PENTINO: Can I just talk with you
16 later? I usually try to speak with everyone
17 either by phone, in person before or after
18 the meeting just so I can get a complete
19 picture.

20 MS. ADAME: Okay.

21 MR. PENTINO: If I talk to you on the
22 phone at length, half hour on Friday or on
23 Monday, can you finish relating these
24 stories to me? I can pass on. I do want to
25 move on. We do have some other panelists

1 and we want to get their story as well.

2 DR. GUSTAFSON: You should realize that
3 we will get these stories. They will be
4 distributed to us and they'll be part of the
5 written record.

6 MS. ADAME: Okay. Thank you.

7 MS. COBBETT: Here's the daughter I was
8 telling you, the teenager.

9 MR. TUCKER: Okay.

10 MR. CHENEY: Is it Andre Robinson?
11 Sorry.

12 MS. ROBINSON: Hello, my name is
13 Aundrie Robinson. I'm a resident of
14 Brattleboro, Vermont, been there for about
15 three and a half years. I consider myself a
16 social justice activist. I'm heavily
17 involved in a number of different nonprofit
18 grass roots organizations for social change.
19 I'm with the organization called the
20 Coalition for Unlearning and Uprighting
21 Racism through Education as well as the
22 Roundtable of Unity. And the Roundtable of
23 Unity's mission is to create a model for
24 building a healthy diverse community united
25 in commitment to change promoting harmonious

1 relationships by working collaboratively
2 with local businesses, nonprofit and grass
3 roots organizations offering educational,
4 social and cultural activities in an
5 integrated environment and also a commitment
6 to developing an awareness encouraging
7 tolerance of other's difference and will
8 increase understanding of our changing
9 multicultural community through conscious
10 self-empowerment, mutual respect, empathy
11 and compassion. Actually, I came here today
12 to talk about how these two organizations
13 are making a change in our community, but as
14 I sat here and listened there are quite a
15 few things that I have to say.

16 One of the things I want to talk about,
17 I heard that the two women that were talking
18 just a few minutes ago and what's going on
19 in their community, and I know that in order
20 for people to make a difference it's
21 important for groups to work together. It's
22 important for people to feel safe, and that
23 it's also important that privileged voices
24 that have been surprised, and I notice a lot
25 of that that goes on. And what happens in

1 my community is a lot of times the people
2 with privilege are in control. A lot of
3 times things are done fear based. I know
4 there's quite a few people from my community
5 that were afraid to come here, whether they
6 were educators in fear of losing their job
7 or what the ramifications were of coming to
8 a meeting like this, there were several
9 people. I mean, if you don't make waves,
10 you won't have problems.

11 MR. TUCKER: Do you think there's a
12 party line?

13 MS. ROBINSON: Some of the things I
14 want to talk about as far as reaching the
15 community is it's important to establish
16 culturally inclusive educational programs
17 and learning environments that reflect all
18 races, nationalities and beliefs in a
19 factual and realistic manner. Now one thing
20 that I want to talk about is there's a
21 diversity committee in Brattleboro, Vermont,
22 that's the Windham Southeast Supervisory
23 Union Diversity Committee. Now from their
24 last meeting they talked with -- or they
25 approached the superintendent of schools,

1 whose name is Ray McNaulty, and what they
2 approached him about was implicating some
3 changes in the curriculum, and I'll give you
4 a direct quote which I have here is you
5 can't force people -- you can't force people
6 to change. Now making a comment like
7 that --

8 MR. TUCKER: Is that what he said?

9 MS. ROBINSON: A direct quote from him,
10 yes. Making a comment like that, those are
11 the type of comments that set a certain tone
12 or precedence, and it's very important -- I
13 mean, everything's -- people are talking
14 about diversity. That all sounds good on
15 paper, but the bottom line is unless, you
16 know, things are really done, there are
17 going to be no changes and, like I said, a
18 lot of times people are afraid because
19 everything's fear based. And --

20 MR. HOFF: Everything's what?

21 MS. ROBINSON: Fear based. You know,
22 it's important to foster understanding and
23 respect for personal and group diversity and
24 to use the educational and training
25 structure process to accomplish these goals.

1 I know that the Green Mountain Challenge
2 goals for the 2000 update, there's a lot of
3 information and it all sounds good on paper.
4 The bottom line I'm trying to say, but a lot
5 of times what happens is that's what it
6 actually is is just on paper. A lot of this
7 is not really being -- you know, as far as
8 establishing culturally inclusive
9 educational programs, it's not really
10 happening in the school. And this --
11 there's a way that people can kind of push
12 things off.

13 A lot of things are done in a covert
14 way, and it happens all the time. I think
15 one of the problems is that I know that the
16 community that I live in, Brattleboro's no
17 longer homogenous and white; it's becoming a
18 multiethnic town. There are a lot of
19 changes. I heard these two people being
20 labeled as gangs. We had the exact same
21 problem two years ago, and what happened was
22 the media helped with the hysteria. Over
23 and over again on a daily basis there were
24 articles in the newspaper about the gang
25 presence in Brattleboro. At that point a

1 couple of local organizations got together
2 and sponsored a gentleman by the name of
3 Tracy Lifcut, who is a youth service
4 director for outreach program, to come into
5 Brattleboro and talk to area businesses,
6 local people, that type of thing. And for
7 about two, three weeks it was played up in
8 the media the gang presence in Brattleboro.

9 This gentleman did come to town with a
10 former gang member who's an outreach worker,
11 and after going through a number of
12 different meetings with area residents there
13 was a quote in the paper that there wasn't a
14 big gang presence in Brattleboro; what they
15 needed was to have some program to take kids
16 off the street. And a lot of times what
17 happens is that a lot of these traditional
18 programs that are already set in place --
19 and I can speak for my community because
20 I've worked with a lot of nonprofit
21 organizations as a volunteer, I mean, people
22 say that they have training, but a lot of
23 times people's cultural and ethnic
24 background, you need a certain type of
25 sensitivity training, and people fall

1 through the track -- the cracks. And it's
2 important sometimes to have some type of
3 nontraditional services set in place because
4 what happens a lot of times in these -- the
5 organizations that are already well
6 established, they've been in town for a long
7 time. I mean, it's just like -- whether
8 it's youth services or the crisis center,
9 they've been there. They're well
10 established. It's a small community of
11 12,000 people. As everybody knows,
12 corporate and foundation money and federal
13 money is being cut. People become very
14 territorial. There's a lot of separatism.
15 People are afraid of overlap of services.
16 All of that creates an environment that is
17 not conducive with dealing with the problem.

18 MR. CHENEY: Do you have any specific
19 school-related issues that you can tell us
20 about?

21 MS. ROBINSON: Well, from my experience
22 in the Brattleboro area there is -- I've
23 worked with children that are home schooled
24 and that at one point have never gone into
25 the public school system. One of my main

1 complaints is that -- actually, as a matter
2 of fact, today the diversity committee was
3 meeting and the two organizations that I
4 talked about, their representations from
5 those organizations that will be meeting
6 with them to try to work collaboratively on
7 some projects in the community.

8 MR. CHENEY: Are these kids being home
9 schooled because of incidents in the public
10 schools?

11 MS. ROBINSON: Well, I can think of one
12 person in particular, yes, she was home
13 schooled up until her senior year of high
14 school because of problems in the community.

15 MR. CHENEY: In the school itself?

16 MS. ROBINSON: In the school, right.
17 There is one African-American teacher that I
18 know of that's there in Brattleboro. I
19 mean, you have to look at -- I can't speak
20 for him, but I know myself if I was in a
21 position -- it's sort of like if you're in a
22 certain position, it's like you speak for
23 your race, that's how people look at it, and
24 that makes it very difficult for a person --
25 I mean, you have to use a certain approach

1 to deal with issues because you're next on
2 the line, so to speak. So that makes it
3 very difficult, and that is one of the
4 reasons why people have a lot of fear of
5 being targeted in the community that don't
6 want to come out and speak.

7 And there are a lot of people of color.
8 I know most of the people of color in my
9 town because there are only 12,000 people
10 there, and a lot of people are afraid
11 because they're afraid of being targeted.
12 They're afraid of being labeled whether it's
13 by the police department, they don't want
14 any problems. They don't want any problems
15 with their children in the school as this
16 woman was talking about here. If you're a
17 person that's assertive and stand up for
18 your rights, then you have to, you know, get
19 the backlash for that type of thing.

20 MR. TUCKER: Do you think the schools
21 and certain agencies in Brattleboro are hand
22 in hand when it comes to talking about
23 racial issues if they talk about them at
24 all?

25 MS. ROBINSON: I think that they like

1 to put up a good front.

2 MR. TUCKER: Okay.

3 MR. CHENEY: I hate to cut you off, but
4 we've been at this for quite a while and
5 we'd like to finish by 9:30. We have one
6 other witness on the list.

7 MR. PENTINO: I think two other.

8 MR. CHENEY: Two others. Would you
9 mind if we went to them? Marc, again, there
10 are specific things, we can get it into the
11 record.

12 MS. ROBINSON: Okay.

13 MR. CHENEY: Judy Arnado.

14 MR. ARNADO: Hello. I'm Judy Arnado,
15 and I am a parent of a 16 year old son and a
16 23 year old daughter who is here with me.
17 My children have been raised to be
18 colorblind, and I firmly believe that
19 everybody should, but they go or went to
20 Mill River School district.

21 MR. CHENEY: What school district?

22 MR. ARNADO: Mill River. My ex-husband
23 is Filipino, French, Indian and Spanish. He
24 is dark colored and I am French, Indian and
25 a little bit of Swede. For a full year my

1 daughter in Mill River was spit on. Her
2 lunches were smashed. Her books were
3 knocked over. We had phone calls all night
4 long. She was called Filipino slut, whore.
5 One night we had to unplug our phone because
6 the phones, it wouldn't stop ringing. The
7 teachers ignored the problem. The students
8 ignored the problem. Finally it got so bad
9 that the young man approached her, she was
10 probably 15, and frightened her so bad that
11 she thought she was going to be hurt, and
12 she defended herself, begged me not to say
13 anything because nobody would do anything.

14 When my son got to high school I came
15 home from work one day, and this boy is
16 almost six foot tall, he weighs about 200
17 pounds, and he stood in our yard with tears
18 running down his face. And I asked him what
19 was wrong, and he said, mom, they're calling
20 me Oreo and they're calling me nigger. He
21 was in chorus, and they were kicking the
22 chair when he stood up to sing into the back
23 of his legs. He asked me to sell my house
24 and move because he didn't want to go to
25 school. He didn't go to school for about

1 three days. I contacted the school and, oh,
2 it won't happen again I was told on several
3 occasions. These children, their parents
4 would be horrified if they knew what was
5 happening. But these children are 15 and 16
6 years old and they certainly knew what they
7 were doing, and it didn't come from
8 television or from reading material. I
9 mean, this is generational.

10 My ex-husband's father when he got into
11 West Rutland had a petition signed against
12 him because they didn't want him to live on
13 their street, and there were racial names.

14 MR. CHENEY: Can you tell me where Mill
15 River is?

16 MR. ARNADO: It is in Clarendon,
17 Vermont. My ex-husband works for the
18 federal government and was asked to fill
19 quota by signing a statement of -- of race.
20 I've been called some names because I was
21 married to a biracial or what -- a human
22 being. I have brought my children up to be
23 very proud of their national origins, and
24 I -- my children are very kind. My daughter
25 and son would help anybody, but my son

1 doesn't even want to play football this
2 year, he did last year, because of the
3 racial names, and I'm being pacified by the
4 school. I finally told them the next time I
5 went to school on an issue like this they
6 would be talking to my lawyer.

7 So it doesn't start in high school, it
8 doesn't start in middle school, it starts
9 when these children are born with their
10 parents teaching them colorblindness. I
11 don't know what to do about it. I've talked
12 to the school and they kind of just sweep it
13 under the rug. I'm not as financially set
14 as a lot of people in Mill River, and there
15 is also a socioeconomical prejudice too.

16 MR. TUCKER: How many times would you
17 say in the last year have you gone to the
18 school administration to talk about your
19 son?

20 MR. ARNADO: A couple of times this
21 year. Three or four times last year.

22 MR. TUCKER: So about five or six times
23 in the last two years?

24 MR. ARNADO: Yeah.

25 MR. TUCKER: Last year and a half

1 really?

2 MR. ARNADO: Uh-huh. Since he got a
3 little bigger. He was in a car accident and
4 got his nose broke so now his nose is a
5 little wider. He's light brown maybe, curly
6 dark hair and these kids have known him all
7 his life.

8 MR. TUCKER: And they still call him
9 these names?

10 MR. ARNADO: Yes, they do. And he
11 won't fight back because he knows you're not
12 supposed to fight in school, but he doesn't
13 like to go to school. He doesn't do well.
14 My daughter, she's too shy to get up here,
15 but she spent a whole year in just terrible
16 pain and fear. She was afraid of this boy.
17 So it exists in the schools, and a lot of
18 schools --

19 MR. TUCKER: So it does exist?

20 MR. ARNADO: Yes. And they have
21 policies about ethnic diversity and stuff at
22 Mill River, but it's superficial. It's
23 surface, and they kind of sweep it under the
24 rug and kind of try to ignore it. And I
25 have no solutions except to start when

1 children are born.

2 MS. ELMER: Since you know the policies
3 are there, are they written in a way that
4 make them -- that you could use them to your
5 benefit?

6 MR. ARNADO: I doubt that that would
7 happen. If I speak to anybody at all, it's
8 to a vice principal or something and they're
9 very pacifying on the surface, but nothing
10 gets done afterwards.

11 MS. ELMER: So they're polite to you?

12 MR. ARNADO: Oh, definitely, but that's
13 about it. That's about all I have to say.

14 MR. CHENEY: That's a lot.

15 MR. TUCKER: That's more than a lot.

16 MR. CHENEY: Thank you very much.

17 MR. TUCKER: Thank you very much, and
18 thank you for your patience.

19 MR. CHENEY: Is there anyone else that
20 was on the list?

21 MS. PELLIGRINO: Good evening. My name
22 Maria Pelligrino. You'll have to forgive my
23 accent. I'm from Puerto Rico.

24 MR. TUCKER: It sounds great.

25 MS. PELLIGRINO: And my husband is a

1 Vermonter. And I'm not going to say much,
2 but what I would like to say is it's a
3 privilege for me to be here tonight and I'm
4 glad you all took your time to come and, you
5 know, talk to us. I don't know a lot of
6 beautiful vocabulary, but I'm going to try
7 to be simple. Last week I had the privilege
8 to -- and that's why I'm probably here
9 tonight, because somebody's got to do
10 something. Last week I had the privilege to
11 meet this family, wonderful family that they
12 had to leave Vermont. They had to move to
13 Florida. They were crying. They were very
14 hurt because their son -- they came from --
15 she's a Vermonter and he's from Los Angeles,
16 and they live there in a low income -- you
17 know, in Los Angeles, California. And their
18 son -- they -- actually, she is a Vermonter,
19 but he's -- they were Jewish descendants.
20 And since their son came to Fair Haven High
21 School they -- right away they said that he
22 was a gang member. And one day they were
23 calling my daughter all kinds of names
24 because my kids are -- some of them have
25 darker complex than I do, and some are more

1 green eyes, but they were calling my kids
2 names. And that kid stood up for him
3 because where he lived in California there's
4 different kinds of people, and he lived, you
5 know, with a lot of Spanish people around
6 him and he said that they were very nice to
7 him, so he stood up for my kids. And this
8 kid, they -- they sent him home for a long
9 time and they didn't want him back in
10 school. And right away they said that he
11 was a gang member.

12 And finally he went back to school, but
13 this year he started -- he bought all these
14 good clothes and everything, but he didn't
15 want to go back to school because he knew
16 that they were -- nobody liked him there.
17 And this kid, he's not Spanish, he is -- he
18 had blue eyes, very light skin, but he
19 happened to be Jewish and he happened to
20 like blacks and Hispanics, and right away
21 they started with him. One teacher that
22 stood up for him got in trouble, and I -- as
23 far as I know he's being removed from that
24 school.

25 And I want you to know that there is --

1 there's a lot of racism in school. And my
2 kids are being called and being humiliated
3 for so many years. And I feel bad that I
4 finally have the nerve to speak up. One of
5 my kids when he first came from Puerto Rico
6 that he went to the elementary school, his
7 first experience, they were teaching them
8 history and they started saying that Puerto
9 Rico's houses were all shacks and they were
10 built from can Coca-Cola sign. My kid tried
11 to say that that was not truth, and the
12 teacher started humiliating him in front of
13 the class. This teacher has been to my
14 husband's cousin. I told my husband about
15 it and like a typical Vermonter he said,
16 don't pay any attention to it. Just ignore
17 it. Don't pay any attention to it. Don't
18 even listen to him. Just ignore it.

19 And all these years my kids are being
20 complaining to my husband about name
21 callings. They've been calling them spics
22 and all kinds of things in school. And I
23 tried to tell them, you know, just to ignore
24 it because I lived in Brooklyn for seven
25 years and I know how it is, you know,

1 prejudicism, how it is, and you either have
2 to, you know, fight or you have to -- so I
3 told them just to ignore it. But at the
4 beginning of this year my son, he's 17, he
5 said that this kid every single day when
6 he's going to go to school, he stands in the
7 middle of the stairway and -- this is in
8 Fair Haven High School, and he stands there
9 and he lets everybody pass and when my --
10 when it's my son's turn to go upstairs he --
11 then he -- he holds him back and he runs in
12 front of him like telling him you going to
13 be last because you Hispanic.

14 Finally, one day he told me, mom, I'm
15 going to punch him. I just can't stand it
16 anymore. He's no better than me. I'm going
17 to punch him. I said, don't do it. Talk to
18 somebody. He said, why? Why am I going to
19 talk to somebody? They know what's going
20 on. They don't care. They really don't
21 care. They say they do. And I know there's
22 at least one teacher that does care, but a
23 lot of the teachers just -- they just ignore
24 it. Last year things got really bad so they
25 expelled this -- I have the kids' names here

1 that my daughter wrote it always says racist
2 stuff and -- about blacks, and Hispanics and
3 all the people that are nonwhite. And he
4 says that he's Hitler and that he's -- you
5 know, he's going to -- he's going to be like
6 Hitler. And there's another one. I have
7 their names here if anybody's interested in
8 these names. This other one, he was a
9 skinhead. Last year this is the -- this is
10 one of the kids who they had a lot of.

11 Last year this is the -- this is one of
12 the kids who they had a lot of problems with
13 because he doesn't like Hispanics, or blacks
14 or nobody unless, you know, they are -- and
15 he was expelled from school last year, but
16 he's back this year. And my kids are afraid
17 that one of these days, you know -- this is
18 like -- like a ticking bomb that one of
19 these days is going to explode. And the
20 thing is that these kids, that they
21 brainwash other kids to believe what they
22 believe. And they see our kids like
23 intruders, you know? Why do they have to
24 come to Vermont? Why -- you know.

25 This is a nice state and I know. You

1 know, this is a beautiful state, and I try
2 to teach my kids to respect, and to respect
3 other cultures and to respect other -- I
4 like Vermont and Vermont is a beautiful
5 state, but it's too bad that a lot of
6 people, they don't -- they don't want to
7 admit that there's a problem. And they say
8 that, you know, they like the way Vermont is
9 and, you know, why do people want to change
10 things. They like it the way it is and
11 that's it. Whoever doesn't like it, just
12 move back.

13 MR. CHENEY: We've heard a lot of
14 people say the same thing. Were you
15 through? Go ahead.

16 MS. PELLIGRINO: I'm sorry. There is
17 another kid that -- he graduated last year
18 that he -- he -- he called my -- my daughter
19 all kinds of dirty names and everything
20 because my daughter -- I teach my kids to
21 share with blacks, Philippino, any other
22 kid, and sometimes especially when kids move
23 from other states and other places and they
24 feel insecure because my kids have been
25 there. They know how it is, so they try to

1 make other kids comfortable. So my daughter
2 got picked last year, and this kid made her
3 last year almost impossible. She was always
4 nervous. She was always complaining. She
5 was crying a lot. She didn't want to go to
6 school. And this year she just -- she says,
7 mom, let's move back to Puerto Rico. I
8 can't stand it. But, you know, I know that
9 this is going to continue and if somebody
10 doesn't do something about it, there's other
11 kids that will be coming, other new kids,
12 and they'll be going through the same thing.

13 MR. CHENEY: I really admire your
14 courage for coming forward. I certainly do.
15 Our part is to do what we can to put a stop
16 to it.

17 MS. PELLIGRINO: Thank you very much.

18 MS. ELMER: Thank you for sharing with
19 us.

20 MR. CHENEY: I guess that concludes the
21 hearing. Going once, going twice.

22 (WHEREUPON, the hearing was closed at
23 approximately 9:35 p.m.)
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CERTIFICATE

I, Lisa M. Hallstrom, Court Reporter and Notary Public, certify that the foregoing pages 2 - 252, inclusive, comprise a full, true and correct transcript taken from my stenographic notes taken to the best of my ability in the Public Hearing taken before me as Notary Public on Wednesday, November 5, 1997, at the Franklin County Conference Center, Rutland, Vermont.


Lisa M. Hallstrom

My commission expires February 10, 1999.