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UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS  
MICHIGAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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COMMUNITY FORUM:  
RACE and ETHIC TENSIONS  
IN GRAND RAPIDS

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REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS, taken in the  
above-entitled cause, taken before MS. JANICE FRAZIER,  
Acting Chairperson of the Michigan Advisory Committee,  
taken at The Harley Hotel, 4041 Cascade Road, Grand  
Rapids, Michigan, at the hour of 9:00 o'clock a.m.

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June 26, 1997

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Grand Rapids, MI

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U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

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APPEARANCES:

Michigan Advisory Committee:

CHAIRPERSON	JANICE FRAZIER
	DAVID BULKOWSKI
	LARRAIN THOMAS
	MARYLOU OLIVAREZ-MASON
	PRINCE HOLLIDAY
	JOAN WEBKAMIGAD

For Defendant:	SUE HAMILTON-SMITH
	ELLEN HA AJLUNI
	NOEL SALEH

Also Present:	PETER MINARIK
	CAROLYN WHITFIELD

Court Reporter:	HALSELL & HALSELL REPORTERS
	VERNITA HALSELL-POWELL

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CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Good morning and welcome. This meeting of the Michigan Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights will come to order.

My name is Janice Frazier, I am the acting Chair of the Michigan Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights. The committee is bipartisan and appointed by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights to advise them on civil rights issues in the state. With me today are the other members of the Michigan advisory committee members, some of them are not quite here yet, but will be joining us at a later time this morning. If I may have you introduce yourself, starting with David.

MR. BULKOWSKI: My name is David Bulkowski and I live in Grand Rapids and I work at the Grand Rapids Center for Independent Living and I am the disability rights coordinator.

MR. THOMAS: Laverne Thomas and I live in Detroit.

MS. OLIVAREZ-MASON: Marylou Olivarez-Mason and I'm Executive Director of the Michigan Commission on

1 Spanish Speaking Affairs.

2 MS. FRAZIER: Janice Frazier. I am President  
3 of J. Gregory and Associates, a management consulting firm  
4 in Detroit, Michigan.

5 MR. HOLLIDAY: I'm Prince Holliday. I'm from  
6 West Bloomfield in Michigan. I'm an independent member of  
7 the Commission and I own my own business.

8 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: I'm Sue Hamilton-Smith.  
9 I'm from Detroit. I am Executive Vice President of New  
10 Detroit.

11 MS. HA-AJLUNI: My name is Ellen Ha-Ajluni.  
12 I'm from the Detroit area. I'm a local attorney down  
13 there and I've recently joined the United States Equal  
14 Employment Opportunity Commission.

15 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: All right. We're here  
16 today to conduct a community forum on race and ethnic  
17 tensions in Grand Rapids. This is a public meeting. It's  
18 open to the media and to the general public and all  
19 statements are being transcribed by a court reporter.

20 We have a full schedule of people who  
21 will be making presentations within the limited time  
22 available. Our meeting format allots five minutes to each  
23 panelist for presentation on race and ethnic tensions.  
24 After all opening comments have been made by panel

1 members, members of the advisory committee will be  
2 afforded the opportunity to query the views of the  
3 participants. Agenda times will be adhered to strictly.  
4 If time permits, the advisory committee members may ask  
5 further questions by submitting written questions to staff  
6 present from the Midwest Regional Office who will convey  
7 the questions to the panelist and obtain an answer. If  
8 time for the panel has expired and panelist desire to add  
9 further comment, they may submit additional written  
10 comments to the Midwestern Regional Office for inclusion  
11 in the record.

12 To accommodate persons who have not  
13 been invited, but wish to make statements to the advisory  
14 committee, we have scheduled an open session today at 5:00  
15 p.m.. Any member of the public may address the committee  
16 at that time with the Chair determining the length of time  
17 for each presentation.

18 Though some comments and positions may  
19 be controversial, we will not allow statements that defame  
20 or degrade any person or organization. Any individual or  
21 organization that feels defamed or degraded by statements  
22 made in these proceedings will be given an opportunity to  
23 respond.

24 The Advisory Committee deeply

1 appreciates the willingness of all participants to share  
 2 their views and experiences on affirmative action with  
 3 this committee. The record of these proceedings closes on  
 4 July 26th 1997. With that we will open. I will ask Ms.  
 5 Ingrid Scott-Weekley to begin and then we will go to Lee  
 6 Weber.

7 INGRID SCOTT WEEKLEY

8 Director, Grand Rapids Equal Opportunity Department

9 Thank you. Good morning, acting Chair  
 10 Frazier and members of the Michigan Advisory Committee on  
 11 Civil Rights. I appreciate the opportunity to spend a few  
 12 moments addressing this distinguished body re regarding  
 13 the status of racial and ethic tensions in the greater  
 14 Grand Rapids area. First, let me say that the Honorable  
 15 Mayor John Loggia, Mayor of Grand Rapids sends his regrets  
 16 because a schedule conflict prevented him from being with  
 17 you today. He wanted me to personally extend to you an  
 18 official west Michigan welcome and to express the  
 19 commitment of the city and certainly his administration in  
 20 eradicating racism and discrimination and continuing to  
 21 make strides in moving towards solutions which guarantee  
 22 all members of our society and our community the  
 23 opportunities, rights and privileges guaranteed by the  
 24 Constitution. In my capacity as Equal Opportunity

1 Director for the City of Grand Rapids and staff to the  
2 Community Relations Commission Political Action Chair for  
3 the NAACP and for the Skinner Bar Association and Social  
4 Action Chair for the Greater Rapids Theta Sigma Theta  
5 sorority and former board member of the ACLU, YWCA and  
6 Grand Rapids Urban League, I have many, many opportunities  
7 to become involved in the and am cognizant of the state of  
8 race and ethnic tensions in this area.

9           The greater Grand Rapids area which  
10 consists of Kent, Allegon, Ottawa, and parts of Muskegeon  
11 counties has a population of just under a million people.  
12 I believe its about 937,800 people to be exact. Of that  
13 number 88.6 percent are white, 6.7 percent African  
14 American, 3.1 percent Hispanic, .4 percent Native American  
15 and .8 percent Asian. Those statistics are somewhat  
16 higher within the city limits of Grand Rapids which, as  
17 you know, is the second largest city in our state. The  
18 total population of Grand Rapids is just over 189,000 with  
19 76.4 percent of the population being white, 18 and a half  
20 percent African American, 3.1 percent Hispanic, .8 percent  
21 Native American and 1.1 percent Asian.

22           Grand Rapids is not like other cities  
23 of similar size and makeup in our country. Racism,  
24 discrimination, denial, segregation, economic and

1 educational disparity, animous. The races are issues  
2 which are alive and well and manifest themselves regularly  
3 in a variety of ways. Similar to other cities, as the  
4 Grand Rapids African American population grew in the '60s,  
5 white flight became a reality as many whites escaped from  
6 what was already a geographically segregated city to white  
7 suburbs, schools and jobs. In 1967 Grand Rapids  
8 experienced race riots much like Watts and other cities  
9 throughout the country. After the riots efforts were made  
10 to implement positive change. Money poured in and  
11 programs were developed to address the many issues that  
12 the riots really undeveloped. Public housing was erected,  
13 dialogue occurred, affirmative action programs were  
14 implemented. Now we find ourselves in 1997, 30 years  
15 later in a community that although has changed over the  
16 past three decades, has remained the same in many ways.  
17 There is still racial segregation, there's growing  
18 frustration among the under class and a gap continues to  
19 widen between the haves and have nots. Many say that  
20 there's little or no differences between the status of  
21 minority and poor people today as compared to 30 years ago  
22 when our city erupted in violence. Nonetheless, I think  
23 there are several factors that I see today which continues  
24 to contribute to the race and ethnic tensions that exist

1 in our community. One, I think that there still remains  
2 an attitude, particularly among many members of the white  
3 population of denial, of indifference, of intolerance. A  
4 belief that I did not contribute or play any part in the  
5 conditions of people of color; and therefore, I have no  
6 responsibility. The misconception that somehow  
7 affirmative action really does in fact mean excluding  
8 better qualified whites and hiring less qualified  
9 minorities and African Americans. Many individuals do  
10 what I consider to be and many of us consider to be the  
11 politically correct thing. That is that we see them in  
12 our annual NAACP dinner, we sell them at events like this  
13 afternoon, Grand Rapids Urban League dinner or like the  
14 giant banquet so we see people attending these events and  
15 paying lip service to their commitment to eradicating  
16 racism and providing equal opportunity, but that's all we  
17 see is those outward, I guess, manifestations of  
18 commitment and very few groups actually working hard to  
19 affect the necessary change that is needed.

20 Case in point, last year with the  
21 legislation in our state designed to oppose affirmative  
22 action and eliminate affirmative action efforts, there was  
23 quite a lot of activity on our side of the state as we  
24 worked diligently to try to defeat this legislation and

1 many individuals and organizations who we thought would  
2 support this effort weren't willing to do so for a number  
3 of reasons, some of which I consider to be valid and some  
4 of which, in my opinion, are not so valid. But  
5 nonetheless, I think that there is that sort of denial and  
6 that detachment from the problem. I also think the media  
7 has played quite a role in fanning the flames in racial  
8 and ethnic tension. Consistently when you turn on the  
9 news in the afternoon you see story after story depicting  
10 young African American males in particular who are on  
11 fenders, who have been arrested, who have been shackled.  
12 We see this over and over. Most recently in the news  
13 there was a superintendent of schools over in the  
14 Muskegeon area who was arrested and charged with  
15 embezzlement. Whenever the media showed this gentlemen,  
16 who happened to be a former Grand Rapids administrator by  
17 the way, he was always shown handcuffed and shackled. On  
18 the other hand, there was also a white gentlemen who was  
19 affiliated with the Boy Scouts, I believe, who was  
20 arrested and charged with embezzlement as well and  
21 whenever he was depicted in the media, he was seen sitting  
22 at the table, but you never saw him in shackles and  
23 handcuffs. And I think this kind of media display, as I  
24 indicated, continues to perpetuate myths about crime and

1 African Americans, particularly African American males.

2 I have an article that was in the Grand  
3 Rapids press which is our local newspaper. I might add  
4 our only major local newspaper. We have several minority  
5 papers, but this is the major paper and this depicts an  
6 article that was just last Thursday, Thursday, June 19th  
7 and in the city in the region section, which is our local  
8 section, there is story after story after story involving  
9 and depicting African American males in a very negative  
10 light. On the first page we see a situation about Lacey  
11 found guilty in case of assault on ex-prostitute, who was  
12 one of our police officers, large picture. The next page,  
13 two more stories with large pictures, negative stories  
14 depicting African Americans engaged or charged with  
15 various crimes. Another page, we see our executive vice  
16 president of our local community college, another African  
17 American and the story involving a controversy that  
18 surrounds them. I couldn't believe on this particular day  
19 as I read the paper that story after story depicted  
20 African Americans in this manner. And the same paper when  
21 it shows pictures of whites you see crowds engaged in  
22 activities like playing baseball, mother happy, people  
23 sitting, you know, engaged various sort of public  
24 interest, if you will, stories. But these are the kinds

1 of issues that we're confronted against and the kinds of  
2 stereotypes that I think the media contributes  
3 significantly to. I also think that the he economic  
4 disparity is a big problem.

5 I see that my time is up. I won't go  
6 into much detail there. I also like to indicate, and I  
7 think others will speak to the issue of police community  
8 relations, there are lots of issues, lot of perceptions  
9 that many in the minority community have about police and  
10 we're endeavoring to try to bridge that gap and create  
11 greater understanding. And finally, a final note about  
12 hate groups. We see that the presence of hate groups are  
13 on the rise in our particular community. I have tried to  
14 hate groups along with others, particularly through  
15 assistance in research of Klan Watch. We have groups here  
16 such as the Neo Nazi party, the Aryan Woman's League,  
17 Northern Hammer skins and the Knights of KKK. There's a  
18 disturbing trend where we see articles in the newspaper  
19 about the KKK. There was one in the Grand Rapids presently  
20 and I also have a copy of one that appeared in the  
21 Middleville newspaper depicting a kinder and gentler Klan  
22 where you have Klan members and they're stating that they  
23 are indeed not violent. They are indeed not racist.  
24 They're committed to separation of the races, but

1 certainly not racism and violence as I understand it is  
2 this is nothing new. It sort of started with the election  
3 of David Duke. This somehow mis-portrayal of this group in  
4 order to increase recruitment and make that organization  
5 more attractive to those members of our society who are  
6 susceptible to it anyway. And as I understand it, many  
7 have been recruited and have subsequently really found out  
8 what indeed the agenda was and have left the organization.

9           So again I say to you that our city is  
10 not unlike many other cities, having shared with you all  
11 of my concerns and probably some of the negative issues, I  
12 can also say that there are many forces in Grand Rapids  
13 who are working to bring about change. We have groups  
14 like Grace, we have the Citizens League who conducted a  
15 study on race relations and out of that came a lot of  
16 dialogue in work places throughout greater Grand Rapids we  
17 do have many people in our community who are committed to  
18 resolving the issues and the tensions that exist and I  
19 certainly thank you for your time and I'm open to any  
20 questions that you might have. Thank you.

21           CHAIRPERSON FRAZIER: I would ask committee  
22 members to hold your questions until we hear from Ms.  
23 Weber and at that time we will ask questions.

24           LEE NELSON WEBER

1 Executive Director, Fair Housing Center

2 Good morning. Thank you very much for  
3 the opportunity to comment this morning. I have to  
4 congratulate the Committee and your staff people on the  
5 agenda that you have assembled. I think you have a good  
6 representation of the community. I'm certain you will  
7 see some other people in your open sessions and I really  
8 appreciate being included in the invitation. I have an  
9 appreciation and just an echo of all of the issues that  
10 Ingrid has already mentioned. I think that to even hit on  
11 so many areas is really beneficial to a hearing like this.

12 As Director of the Fair Housing Center,  
13 however, my particular expertise focuses on the matter of  
14 housing discrimination. I'm happy to discuss our programs  
15 briefly this morning. Education and enforcement is the  
16 basis of our fair housing program and I trust that the  
17 information will assist your understanding of racial and  
18 ethnic tensions in Grand Rapids. By way of explanation,  
19 the Fair Housing Center is a private, non profit  
20 organization established in 1980. Our purpose is to  
21 ensure equal access to housing opportunities throughout  
22 the metropolitan Grand Rapids area. We pursue that  
23 mission by means of education and enforcement. Programs  
24 which are specifically designed to further Title VIII of

1 the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1968. The Fair Housing  
2 Amendment Act of 1988 and similar state and local laws  
3 which have to do with fair housing. During the past two  
4 years since January of 1995, the Fair Housing Center has  
5 received 393 complaints of housing discrimination. All  
6 but a few of those complaints are residents or would be  
7 residents of this Metropolitan area. 232 of those  
8 complaints or 60 percent alleged some form of racial or  
9 ethnic discrimination in a housing transaction. With the  
10 support of Grand Rapids, Wyoming, Kent County and also the  
11 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Fair  
12 Housing Initiatives Program we are able to investigate  
13 many of those complaints primarily through the use of  
14 housing testing whereby we obtain information regarding  
15 differences in the treatment of testers who differ in a  
16 single characteristic; race or national origin, which  
17 information can then be used as evidence to support  
18 housing discrimination complaints. Currently we have 24  
19 cases which are right now in litigation or in some form of  
20 administrative enforcement procedure and a dozen more are  
21 under investigation.

22 The following examples will briefly  
23 illustrate some of our complaints. First example: An  
24 African American student visits a large apartment complex

1 near a college campus. She is told corporate policy  
2 prohibits renting to students in favor of a more "family  
3 oriented population". A series of three tests conducted  
4 shortly thereafter reveals that white students are never  
5 told about a no student policy while each African American  
6 student tester is quickly informed that they cannot rent  
7 at that complex and referred to other locations. That's  
8 discrimination based on their race. Second example: A  
9 Mexican home seeker calls a mobile home park to inquire  
10 about renting a lot for the home she and her husband  
11 have purchased. Over the phone she is given directions to  
12 the office and told when to come in for an application.  
13 When she arrives with her husband who is also Mexican,  
14 they are told, frankly we don't have applications for  
15 people like you. A third and last example: A real estate  
16 agent present a very an attractive offer on behalf of an  
17 African American household seeking a larger suburban home  
18 for their growing family. The owner questions the agent  
19 about the race of the prospective buyers and when the  
20 agent repeatedly declines to discuss their race, the  
21 seller refuses to consider the offer, despite the buyer's  
22 qualification and even pre approved financing. Two points  
23 are important from these examples. The first is that  
24 housing discrimination exists in Grand Rapids. This is not

1 something that we have left behind 20 or 30 years ago.  
2 Last year we conducted 300 housing tests and we documented  
3 measurable differences between testers who differ in race  
4 or in other variables in more than one of three of those  
5 tests. 117 tests or 44 percent of the ones in which we  
6 could draw a conclusion showed a measurable difference  
7 between the treatment of testers who were similarly  
8 qualified and second, similar housing. Given an average  
9 housing search of two to five inquiries that we might all  
10 make, home seekers who are racial and ethnic minorities  
11 are virtually certain to encounter housing discrimination  
12 whether or not they are ever aware of it. Secondly,  
13 housing discrimination, when identified, can often be  
14 corrected. With evidence provided through housing testing  
15 and claimants who are willing to pursue the resolution of  
16 complaints. Based on our complaints received in the last  
17 two years, we have handled 101 actual cases alleging  
18 rental, sales, or lending discrimination. 72 of those  
19 cases have already been resolved in favor of the claimants  
20 resulting in payments to those claimants or plaintiffs of  
21 just over \$80,000 along with fair housing training to  
22 housing professionals and many of the firms involved and  
23 also significant corrections in what we feel are  
24 discriminatory housing policies and practices.

1                   So my point today is that housing  
2 discrimination exists and also that it can be corrected.  
3 As adviser to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, I ask  
4 that you urge the Commission to support effective levels  
5 of enforcement funding at the Department of Justice, the  
6 Department of Housing and Urban Development which is  
7 charged with enforcing fair housing and at those agencies  
8 to whom enforcement authority is delegated. Given the  
9 progress of fair housing nationally over the past five  
10 years, the rental and sales transactions and also in the  
11 areas of lending and home owner's insurance, this is no  
12 time to cut back on enforcement. With all due respect for  
13 the committed efforts of all of those who are charged with  
14 investigating, conciliating, and litigating complaints of  
15 housing discrimination, they cannot at this point do  
16 enough and they cannot be effective without resources for  
17 enforcement. The Fair Housing Center does not also claim  
18 to be doing enough here in the Grand Rapids area. We are  
19 fortunate, however, to work with the support of local  
20 units of government, housing and lending leaders and a  
21 large membership of individuals and organizations who  
22 share our commitment to housing opportunities. The more  
23 that were able to publicize fair housing issues, including  
24 the kind of hearings that you are holding today, the more

1 we find an intolerance, a healthy intolerance of illegal  
2 discrimination growing in the community. We find that's a  
3 healthy factor and we believe that sort of a shared  
4 intolerance can be a force to unify Grand Rapids across  
5 racial lines rather than to divide its residents.

6 I realize that my discussion of fair  
7 housing is only one piece of broader topic of racial and  
8 ethnic relations in Grand Rapids and I hope that you will  
9 learn much about that topic over the course of today's  
10 hearing. Thank you again for the opportunity to present  
11 the prospective of the fair housing center and I'll be  
12 happy to provide any additional information that I can.

13 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Thank you very much Ms.  
14 Weber. At this time if there are questions from the  
15 Committee, Joan, would you just introduce yourself?

16 MS. WEBKAMIGAD: I'm Joan Webkamigad from  
17 Lansing and I had a question for Ms. Scott-Weekley. What  
18 is Grace?

19 MS. SCOTT-WEEKLEY: Grace is Grand Rapids  
20 Area Center for Ecumenism. Its one of my favorite words  
21 that I can't pronounce and its -- the director of that  
22 organization is David Bach. Its a religious group and one  
23 of their primary objectives is to work within the  
24 religious community and part of their objective is to try

1 to eliminate racism through working through religious  
2 means and with various religious groups.

3 MS. WEBKAMIGAD: Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Yes, David?

5 MR. BULKOWSKI: A question for Lee. Ingrid  
6 had mentioned that in a lot of ways in the last 30 years  
7 there hasn't been much improvement in race relations in  
8 the Grand Rapids area. What do the Fair Housing Centers  
9 statistics show and how come there hasn't been, if there  
10 hasn't been much improvement here are renters just not  
11 getting it or what are some of the sources to those  
12 statistics.

13 MS. WEBER: You would think we were all doing  
14 a good job, these problems would have been well behind us.  
15 At the Fair Housing Center we tend to measure progress in  
16 individual terms. Certainly at those ten year marks when  
17 the census figures come out and we can measure  
18 demographics, we can look at progress towards integrating  
19 neighborhoods which is the public policy of this country.  
20 I think there has been some individual progress. If we  
21 look at claimants, if we look at particular firms,  
22 particular housing locations, particular industry groups,  
23 we see progress and we see a growing commitment to fair  
24 housing when a light is shined on it and I really do think

1 its important to put that light on it. But, I think that  
2 the problems are fundamental. I think they are  
3 persistent, they are pervasive and so even those individual  
4 successes are not going to add up to a solved problem.  
5 The first point that Ingrid mentioned, which I agree with  
6 wholeheartedly, is the level of denial that operates in  
7 this community. What I often observe in the community is  
8 that if problems are not important to white people in  
9 Grand Rapids, they are simply not important problems. I  
10 think we need to get beyond that level of denial to say  
11 that things are fine here and to really say these are  
12 problems that we all need addressed. These are not  
13 problems that only affect the minority or in racial or  
14 ethnic minority community. This is something that holds  
15 our entire community back from realizing its potential.

16 MR. BULKOWSKI: Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Mr. Holliday?

18 MR. HOLLIDAY: I was going to ask Ms. Weekley  
19 would you say that based on some of the things that you  
20 have uncovered that there is a strong feeling among some  
21 people when you bring up these issues like in the  
22 newspapers that are quick to tell you that African  
23 Americans are just being extra sensitive.

24 MS. SCOTT-WEEKLEY: Yes, there is. This

1 example that I shared, but in the newspaper is not some  
2 new principle exactly. Over the years there have been  
3 issues such as this that have been brought to the  
4 attention of the media or to whatever group it applied to  
5 and, you know, there's been a willingness certainly to  
6 listen, but to the extent that these concerns have been  
7 taken seriously and to the extent that we have seen  
8 changes implemented and processes to prevent in kind of  
9 continuing and pervasive reporting of African Americans.  
10 Its just not ended. So, certainly I don't think that  
11 they're hearing us, they're taking us seriously or they  
12 perhaps simply don't care. The need to get a story, to  
13 sell a story, to sensationalize a story, overrides any  
14 need to really more accurately portray what is happening.

15 MR. HOLLIDAY: Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Thanks.

17 MS. SCOTT-WEEKLEY: There's been an attempt on  
18 the part of the administration of the city to engage these  
19 people, the various media representatives in any kind of a  
20 round table discussion to actually come up with a plan  
21 that could be implemented. There has not to my knowledge  
22 on the part of the city. I can say that community  
23 organizations such as the NAACP, such as the Coalition for  
24 Representative Government have made contacts. I

1 personally made contact with the general manager of a  
2 local television station when our community relations  
3 commission, which is our human rights commission, held a  
4 public hearing for citizens to express their views on  
5 affirmative action and I felt that the reporting of the  
6 story was very distorted. I personally called and spoke to  
7 the general manager and she again listened, but really  
8 didn't seem to be that concerned about my concerns and  
9 perhaps that's what's needed. Perhaps our city leaders,  
10 our elected officials need to take steps to act upon this  
11 issue.

12 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Thank you very much, both  
13 of you. I appreciate you taking the time this morning to  
14 come before us and if you have any materials or any  
15 written information that you'd like to leave as a part of  
16 the record we'd be happy to accept that.

17 MS. SCOTT-WEEKLEY: Thank you.

18 MS. WEBER: Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: At this time I would like  
20 to acknowledge Carley Hurley from the U.S. Commission  
21 office in Washington D.C. Ms. Hurley is with us today and  
22 we also have in a attendance, I believe, Nancy Ostafoe  
23 from Congressman Laverne Elders' Office. We appreciate  
24 your being in attendance today. Our next two presenters,

1 Lieutenant William Ferris, I believe, from the Grand  
2 Rapids police Department and staff.

3 JAMES FERRIS

4 Lieutenant, Grand Rapids Police Department

5 Good morning, my name is Lieutenant  
6 James Ferris, however, there was a misspelling and the  
7 wrong name is on the agenda. I am Lieutenant James Ferris  
8 and I am of the Internal Affairs Unit of Grand Rapids  
9 Police Department and here with me also is Lieutenant Mark  
10 Harold of the Staff Services Bureau of our Grand Rapids  
11 Police Department.

12 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Please forgive us for  
13 calling you William.

14 MR. FERRIS: That's all right. I'm here to  
15 give you an outline of what the Department is doing  
16 towards the issues at hands from an internal affairs  
17 viewpoint and the first thing I would like to mention is  
18 that the Jamal Lacy that was mentioned earlier was not a  
19 Grand Rapids police officer and never has been. We have  
20 had some police officers who have made the newspaper, who  
21 have been terminated, but Jamal was not one of them.

22 The internal affairs unit of the Grand  
23 Rapids Police Department, it's the policy of the Grand  
24 Rapid Police Department to investigate and properly

1 resolve all allegations of employee misconduct. The goal  
2 of the internal affairs unit is to maintain the integrity  
3 of the operation of a competent, objective, fair and  
4 impartial internal investigation and review system. The  
5 internal affairs unit was created by one of our general  
6 orders back in 1982 and the organization of that unit is  
7 one lieutenant, myself, and I have one sergeant and we  
8 report directly to the chief of police. Our task and  
9 responsibilities are to receive and investigate complaints  
10 and allegations regarding police officer misconduct, to  
11 jointly investigate any notice or claim or civil suit  
12 regarding any police officer with the city attorneys  
13 office, and we also investigate all firearm incidents  
14 involving police officers and we maintain contact with  
15 state, federal prosecuting attorney's office when they're  
16 conducting an investigation involved in alleged criminal  
17 conduct on behalf of one of our officers. We are also to  
18 make available to the community in an appropriate manner  
19 the procedures for registering complaints against the  
20 Grand Rapids Police Department or any of its employees.  
21 Such a program and procedure has been in its draft form  
22 and its prepared for final approval by the chief of police  
23 that will outline the entire step by step process that  
24 individuals can use to lodge a complaint. The complaints

1 are received directly by our office and internal affairs  
2 unit or they can be received by the city attorney's office  
3 or our labor relations bureau. The source of our  
4 complaints regarding employee misconduct may include  
5 verified citizen complaints, anonymous callers, fellow  
6 co-workers, supervisor and other documents which  
7 are generated as a result of our operation of our police  
8 department. All our complaints receive appropriate  
9 investigation and for those that cannot be satisfactorily  
10 resolved by just speaking to the complainant, we fill out  
11 a complaint form that is sent to the individuals in a  
12 normal manner, outlining what their complaint is against  
13 the officer and when a final disposition is generated  
14 they're also sent a copy of that as well. All use of  
15 force cases and discharge of firearm complaint  
16 investigations are also reviewed by a city prosecuting  
17 attorney. All use of force and discharge of firearm  
18 complaint investigations shall be reviewed by a retired  
19 judge as well as designated by the chief of police and the  
20 purpose of this review is to enhance everyone's trust in  
21 fairness and validity of the complaint process.  
22 Monitoring weekly internal affairs investigations and  
23 summaries are forwarded to the city attorney and the labor  
24 relations director at different times during the year or

1 whenever it may be deemed necessary. The chief of  
2 police, the city attorney, and the labor relations  
3 director, in addition to other city staff will get  
4 together when deemed appropriate and we meet periodically  
5 to review the police misconduct complaints and to make any  
6 changes and we also prepare an annual statistical summary  
7 for the chief of police regarding the total number of  
8 complaints that we've had during the year. On January  
9 23rd of 1996 Mayor Loggia appointed a committee consisting  
10 of himself and Commissioner George Hartwell and Eric  
11 Williams to conduct investigations into the allegations of  
12 police misconduct. They had eight formal sessions and as  
13 a result of these meetings they determined that the  
14 committee felt it needed to recognize that some racism  
15 exists within the Grand Rapids area and other communities,  
16 and as a result of that, a civilian appeals board was  
17 created. And this civilian appeals board has the power to  
18 oversee whatever an internal affairs complaint result is  
19 and they have the opportunity and the power to adjust or  
20 change or affirm that decision. So, for cases that are  
21 taken before the civilian appeals board after the internal  
22 affairs unit has made a disposition on the complaint, it  
23 can be taken to them for further review.

24 At this point I'd like to turn it over

1 to Lieutenant Harold who has information on our  
2 neighborhood services project which works in conjunction  
3 with what we're trying to do as far as establishing  
4 discipline and to keep things in order from this side of  
5 fence.

6 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Lieutenant Harold, may we  
7 have your complete name and your role?

8 MARK HAROLD

9 Lieutenant, Grand Rapids Police Department

10 Sure. My name is Lieutenant Mark Harold, I'm  
11 commander of the staff services bureau of Grand Rapids  
12 Police Department.

13 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Thank you.

14 What the chief wanted me to talk to you  
15 about first are he sends regrets, but he wanted me to  
16 indicate the direction. What the chief would like me to  
17 do today is talk to you about the general philosophy of  
18 where we're going in the police department because some --  
19 a more community oriented approach. I think this is  
20 a correct approach that we're taking and some of the issues  
21 and problems that are being discussed today, the general  
22 philosophy of the Department we hope will alleviate some  
23 of those concerns. During the past several months the  
24 Grand Rapids Police Department has initiated a major

1 program, a design to more efficiently identify and respond  
2 to neighborhood problems in our community. The  
3 neighborhood services project was created to achieve this  
4 goal because of the increasing availability of staffing in  
5 the Department have that fully. The voters in Grand  
6 Rapids approved on March 28, 1995 an income tax adjustment  
7 that permitted the employment of 95 additional police  
8 officers most importantly and because of this increasing  
9 level of staffing, the Department has adopted a number of  
10 programs that will achieve the aforementioned goal  
11 regarding the neighborhood service project.

12 One of the very first thing that we did  
13 when we started, we drafted a new mission statement about  
14 where we wanted to go as an organization and I think I'm  
15 going to read that because I think its very important. It  
16 uses words like community, neighborhood. One of the  
17 things that the chief is very adamant about is responding  
18 to individual neighborhood needs. One of the problems  
19 with community policing is its very labor intensive. You  
20 needs a lot of manpower to pull it off. We believe with  
21 the additional 95 police officers we are going to be able  
22 to respond to the community in a more effective, proactive  
23 manner. The Mission of the Grand Rapids Police Department  
24 is the professional police service to communities with the

1 intent of protecting life and property. To achieve the  
2 goal we work directly with communities for the purpose of  
3 and the very first goal is creating neighborhood safety.  
4 Properly and courteously responding to requests for police  
5 services, identifying and correcting the apparent causes  
6 of criminal activity or reported neighborhood problems.  
7 Encouraging people to accept responsibility for themselves  
8 and their neighborhood. We have approximately, when we  
9 got done with the hiring process this January, we will  
10 have a 400 manned police department. That may seem like a  
11 lot of people, but the Grand Rapids Police Department  
12 cannot go alone. One of the sub goals of the neighborhood  
13 services project is to act and I'll talk about this a  
14 little later, as a funnel for problems being the only  
15 government agency open 24 hours a day. We handled a lot  
16 of complaints that aren't police related; however our new  
17 philosophy, even if they are not police related, we are  
18 either going to try to respond to them or give them to the  
19 appropriate agency that can handle the problem. We are  
20 professionally enforcing violation of federal and state  
21 statutes and city ordinances, respecting the  
22 Constitutional rights of all people and strictly complying  
23 with professional standards. And encourage other  
24 components of the criminal justice system to share our

1 goals and mission. In February and March of this year, to  
2 prepare for this, we had some very interesting training  
3 programs going on at the training department. We had a  
4 diversity training program for all, at that time, 330 odd  
5 members in Grand Rapids police, all sworn personnel,  
6 including the chief went through diversity training by Dr.  
7 Troy Coleman out of Dallas, Texas. He was very good and  
8 the diversity training program was very well-received by  
9 all members of the police department. He presented he the  
10 information in a very non confrontational way that allowed  
11 us to learn what diversity is and how to manage diversity.  
12 So we view that as a very successful program. We've also  
13 had some mandatory training police officers to bring them  
14 up to speed on where we're going with the community  
15 policing process, again, all members of the police  
16 department and went through that and that training went  
17 very well with the intent of achieving the goals that are  
18 outlined in the mission statement and reflect the contents  
19 of the aforementioned training program, the department has  
20 adopted programs that are designed to expand the  
21 partnership between neighborhood and all the employees in  
22 the organization. One of the things that we may have done  
23 wrong in the organization but is good is use the word  
24 neighborhood too often, but its very important to us.

1 Chief Haggerty consistently attends neighborhood meetings  
2 and he is very open to the concerns of the individuals in  
3 this neighborhood meeting. So, we tried to reflect that  
4 in the mood of our units and bureau. We think that for  
5 some people in the department think we've got too many  
6 things neighborhood and they're probably correct, but it  
7 tells them where we're going as an organization. We are  
8 more customer driven. Our objective is to respond to  
9 individual neighborhood needs and try to address them as  
10 best we can as a major effort affecting all police  
11 officers, their role and responsibilities and their  
12 relationship with the community, neighborhood and police  
13 association partnership program. At this time two  
14 officers of the community affairs unit are assigned to  
15 work with all of the neighborhoods and business district.  
16 Their sole responsibility is to become the link or liaison  
17 between the neighborhood and the Department. The  
18 responsibilities of the officers are, for example, to  
19 attend neighborhood meetings to work directly with staff  
20 volunteers from the association to prevent or control  
21 neighborhood problems. Mutually develop plans or  
22 programming with their assigned neighborhood. Provide  
23 statistical reports to the association and neighborhood  
24 regarding reported criminal active or neighborhood

1 problems concerning the officers assigned to other  
2 division bureaus and units of the Department where there  
3 are assigned neighborhoods with the intent on of  
4 coordinating police reports to coordinate and possibly  
5 become the liaison between the neighborhood and patrol  
6 units assigned to corresponding patrol districts. What  
7 we're trying to do is get the officers out of the cars,  
8 get them into the neighborhood and we have created bicycle  
9 patrol program, foot patrol program. We had 125 bicycles  
10 of which 65 our patrol officers are now trained to ride  
11 and we are forcing our officers to gets out into the  
12 community to meet the individual residents and respond to  
13 the neighborhood concerns that are important. We want to  
14 respond to the concerns of the neighborhood.

15 All right, in the past traditionally  
16 police departments have sometimes kind of done what they  
17 felt was important. We're trying to rearrange our  
18 philosophy to respond to the individual concerns of the  
19 community and the neighborhood. One of the key things  
20 we've done that I'd like to talk about is created a  
21 neighborhood survey program. This is quite unique. I  
22 don't know of another department that does this. What we  
23 have done in July of last year, we ran a pilot program  
24 where we surveyed 8,000 residents in the city. We had a

1 very unique way, we surveyed everybody on every street in  
2 the city, okay. That program was very successful. The  
3 citizens were able to tell the officers were mandated to  
4 do this. They had to go out into the community and talk  
5 with individuals on each block in the city and they report  
6 the problems to us, okay. In February of this year we  
7 adopted that program and since that time we've conducted  
8 3,400 more surveys. Each officer has to go out on each  
9 block of the city, conduct four surveys. So the way we  
10 have the program set up is the entire city will be  
11 surveyed once a year. That's got to be approximately ten  
12 thousand surveys. So we are getting direct input from the  
13 community as to what they want us to do with our police  
14 department. That's something that's quite unique and I  
15 don't know if that's being done anywhere else in the  
16 state. The surveys are collated and Sergeant Beth  
17 Symechek (phonetic) who works for me in the staff service  
18 bureau, she takes all this information in. We have a  
19 meeting with the police and staff once a week and we  
20 decide to look at the problems. There are enough surveys  
21 that qualify to serve as assignments, that's basically our  
22 problem, identification problem. We make service  
23 assignments based on not only surveys but all the other  
24 input that goes into the Department, whether it be through

1 the phone, people calling the chief, through the community  
2 affairs unit. So we take a look at what's going on from a  
3 total community perspective and try to respond as best we  
4 can to the community needs.

5 I'm very positive about this  
6 program. It's not an easy thing to do, change the  
7 orientation and philosophy of the police department like  
8 this, but what the chief is doing is correcting philosophy  
9 is an extremely customer driven approach to resolve  
10 problems in the neighborhood and hopefully alleviate some  
11 of the problems pertaining to race that are going on in  
12 the City of Grand Rapids. Thank you very much.

13 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Sue?

14 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: Yes. I'd like to know  
15 what percentage of the current department is other than  
16 European decent?

17 MR. HAROLD: I can tell you.

18 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: I'm going to ask you a  
19 follow up. The current police personnel, I'd like to know  
20 how many lieutenants and above are people of color?

21 MR. HAROLD: Okay. I can tell you Lieutenant  
22 Ferris and myself and Lieutenant Corasco, a Hispanic male.  
23 We have three minority lieutenants at this time.

24 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: Are there any people of

1 color above the rank of lieutenant?

2 MR. HAROLD: At this time, no. We have --  
3 are you just interested in people of color right now?

4 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: Yes, I am, as a matter of  
5 fact.

6 MR. HAROLD: We have four black male police  
7 sergeants, one black female sergeant, one Indian male  
8 sergeant and one oriental male sergeant in the police  
9 officer ranks. We have 21 black male police officers,  
10 four black females, eight Hispanic males, two Hispanic  
11 females, seven Indian males and six oriental males and two  
12 oriental females. The breakdown is percentage wise,  
13 percent of the total number of sworn people working on the  
14 police department, eight percent is black male, one  
15 percent is black female, three percent is Hispanic male,  
16 one percent is Hispanic female, two percent is Indian male  
17 and two percent oriental male and one percent as oriental  
18 female. If I could, I'd like to say something about that.  
19 When I joined the department in 1984 there was one  
20 minority supervisor in the department. That was at the  
21 time Sergeant Curasco. Since that time, as indicated here  
22 the, numbers have gone up steadily. Any minority that was  
23 in a position to be promoted at the time by Chief of  
24 Police Haggerty, he promoted and he promoted them not

1 because they're minority, but because they are capable and  
2 qualified to do the job. So I think that's important that  
3 we have made progress as far as promoting African  
4 Americans and other minorities into the ranks and females  
5 at the police department. The primary reasons there are  
6 no minorities at the rank of captain and above, there is  
7 nobody eligible to take the test at that time. That may  
8 occur next time around.

9 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: So the eligibility to  
10 take the test is based on time on the job?

11 MR. HAROLD: Yes, it's a rank structure.  
12 First you have to be an officer, you have to be a  
13 sergeant, you have to be a lieutenant, and then you have to  
14 be a lieutenant before you can take the captain's  
15 examination.

16 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: So currently there are  
17 three lieutenants and all three of those lieutenants are  
18 eligible to test the next level the next time the test is  
19 administered?

20 MR. HAROLD: Yes, that is correct.

21 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: I have a question. Are you  
22 responsible for keeping the statistics on racial incidents  
23 and hate crimes? How do you break those down?

24 MR. FERRIS: As far as hate crimes, no, I

1 don't have statistics for that and racially is whether or  
2 not the incident is racial, that would be something that  
3 we could check back to see what the race is, but  
4 categorically, no.

5 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Lieutenant Ferris, your  
6 civil appeals on your civil appeals board, how many  
7 members do you have and are these individuals appointed by  
8 the police chief; are they appointed by the may or -- and  
9 what's the breakdown of those individuals on that Board as  
10 far as race?

11 MR. FERRIS: All right. The civilian  
12 appeals board consists of nine members, established as the  
13 reviewing agency, each city commissioner can nominate one  
14 member and the mayor has the ability to nominate three  
15 members. Appointments to the Board will be the first  
16 Monday in May for a term of two years and no member shall  
17 serve more than three consecutive terms of six years.  
18 Residents staying within the city is a continuing  
19 qualification for office for those members appointed. At  
20 this time I believe the membership consists of Chuck  
21 Kasinco (phonetic), who is with the sheriff's department  
22 who is a black male, there is former police captain  
23 Charles Tushan who is retired, he's on the board, he's  
24 a white male. We have Dorothy Brown, a black female member

1 of the board. We have a new member that just began and  
2 her name is Chris January-Craft, she's a black female.  
3 She's a member of the board. We also have Robert Dean,  
4 Reverend Robert Dean, a black male who is a member of the  
5 board and serving we did have Dottie Klein, a white female  
6 and she's on the board and David Kam, a former prosecutor  
7 retired is also on the board and we have Michael Barrios,  
8 a Hispanic male on the board.

9 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Thank you very much.

10 MS. HA-AJLUNI: I had a question. I'm  
11 sorry, I think you had one with regards to your  
12 neighborhood services that you were talking about some  
13 where you had an addition of 95 police officers this year  
14 alone. How are they divided in terms of neighborhoods?  
15 Is it divided by precinct, and is this a voluntary  
16 neighborhood service program or is this something that all  
17 police officers must participate?

18 MR. HAROLD: Yes. The way the department is  
19 currently structured, we don't have precincts in the City  
20 of Grand Rapids. The city is divided into sectors; Adams,  
21 Baker, Charley, David and we make manpower assignments of  
22 what is going on in each one of those sectors. The  
23 neighborhood service project is the operating philosophy  
24 of the Grand Rapids Police Department. So, the officers

1 have to abide by the mission statement and abide by what  
2 we're trying to do with the project officer. What we're  
3 trying to do is go to a system where officers are  
4 permanently assigned to districts. We believe that if  
5 you give officers permanent ownership for what's going on  
6 in the district, we will be able to hold them accountable  
7 and they'll be responsible in responding to those  
8 individual neighborhood's needs. We are slowly getting  
9 there. We haven't -- we have technically employed the 95  
10 people that the tax proposal allowed us, but because of  
11 retirements and other things, we're still 52 short. So  
12 we're kind of in a transition process here. Where we want  
13 to go to is to have officers geographically assigned to  
14 districts or neighborhoods so they get to know the  
15 neighborhood, individuals in the neighborhood. If  
16 problems arise in the neighborhood, they then respond to  
17 those concerns.

18 MS. HA-AJLUNI: And does it cover all the  
19 neighborhoods as opposed to one neighborhood versus  
20 another?

21 MR. HAROLD: This is one of the things I  
22 think the chief did, his primary concern, when he passed  
23 the tax, concern is we were not able to respond to all  
24 neighborhood's needs in the city, okay. A

1 disproportionate amount of our time was spent in high  
2 crime neighborhoods or neighborhoods that had a lot of  
3 problems. He wanted to be able to spend time in every  
4 neighborhood in the city, okay. He wants to have an  
5 officer in each district 24 hours a day able to respond to  
6 the differing needs of each neighborhood and we believe we  
7 have enough manpower to do that once we get everybody on  
8 board and trained. So the goal is to respond to  
9 individual neighborhoods, their desires and their needs.

10 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: I have one last question  
11 and then I think we're going to have to send our questions  
12 in to you. Have you used community volunteers at all in  
13 terms of your -- as partners in your effort to live out  
14 your mission statement?

15 MR. HAROLD: I guess I have a personal  
16 investment in this. We use senior volunteers in the Grand  
17 Rapids Police Department. We have two programs; one is  
18 the crime analysis program where we utilize senior  
19 volunteers for the past 15 years. What they do is they  
20 come in, they review the report, they help us analyze  
21 crimes, prepare maps, charts, that type of thing.

22 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Are they police officers?

23 MR. HAROLD: No, they are just retired  
24 individuals. What we felt in the police department is

1 that there's a huge untapped potential of senior people in  
2 the city that we wanted to utilize. The other program we  
3 started in 1994 and I was a part of that, is called the  
4 senior volunteer program and what that is is senior  
5 volunteers, we have approximately 65 of them. They  
6 respond on the street in cars to certain types of calls  
7 for service and its a fairly diverse group. We won an  
8 international award for that last year, so we're quite  
9 proud of that. So we want to try to include people in the  
10 department in as many different ways as possible and one  
11 of the groups we felt had an extreme amount of talent was  
12 senior volunteers. Extremely strong work ethic and they  
13 worked out great.

14 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Thank you.

15 MR. BULKOWSKI: I just wanted to check with  
16 you. It says break is 10:15. It's a little after ten.

17 MS. THOMAS: What about the living patterns,  
18 are they required to live in the City of Grand Rapids?

19 MR. HAROLD: Are you talking about police  
20 officers?

21 MS. THOMAS: I'm talking about police  
22 officers.

23 MR. HAROLD: Up to about 1985 they were,  
24 then we got rid of the residency requirement, so Grand

1 Rapids police offices can live wherever they want.

2 MS. THOMAS: Could you tell me why?

3 MR. FERRIS: There was a request by officers  
4 and they got together, they formed a coalition to remove  
5 the residency requirements. It was the feeling that  
6 Grand Rapids police officers did not necessarily have to  
7 live in the city in order to do the proper job of  
8 protecting the public and as a result of that, that was  
9 repealed. There was a time prior to that, too, when  
10 officers were not required to live in the city. And one  
11 last thing in response to the earlier question about the  
12 civilian appeal board member. There is one that I did  
13 leave out and that is attorney James Burke who is a white  
14 male. Does that clarify it for you?

15 MS. THOMAS: Not completely, but its nothing  
16 I can do about it.

17 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Can citizens go directly to  
18 that board or do they have to use the due process as you  
19 outlined?

20 MR. FERRIS: They would have to go through  
21 the due process of internal affairs first and then once  
22 they receive that disposition, then they could appeal that  
23 to the civilian appeals board.

24 MS. HA-AJLUNI: Approximately how many

1 citizens complaint do you get per year?

2 MR. FERRIS: So far this year we've received  
3 formal complaints, 139 and 389 informal complaints. They  
4 are complaints that whenever the phone rings between 9:00  
5 and 5:00, whatever it may be, if it's a complaint about a  
6 parking ticket or about the officer's behavior on a  
7 traffic stop. We've had that many so far this year. Last  
8 year, formal complaints we had 154. City attorney claims  
9 against the citywide, 60, Freedom of Information Act  
10 requests we had 4. There were a total of 10 lawsuits and  
11 we have what we called procedural reviews, accidents, and  
12 other things that occurred and we had over 222 of those.

13 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: There were no police  
14 brutality or any of those type complaints against the  
15 police department by citizens?

16 MR. FERRIS: Yes, there would be complaints  
17 of those included within there for excessive force or  
18 police brutality.

19 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: That's the term, it's  
20 termed excessive force?

21 MR. FERRIS: Yes.

22 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: How many were those?

23 MR. FERRIS: How many excessive force, I  
24 missed that? My calculations from this year so far there

1 are ten. I can get the exact figure for you for the total  
2 excessive force for you later, but I have ten so far from  
3 this year.

4 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Do you have any kind of way  
5 of breaking down those complaints within the excessive  
6 force? Do you keep it that well defined that we would  
7 know it's beatings or ethnic intimidation or racial slurs  
8 or anything like that?

9 MR. FERRIS: It would be that well-defined.  
10 If its excessive force and it would entail the actual  
11 ability of someone or a complaint of someone saying that  
12 they were forcibly mistreated, either they were beaten or  
13 they were assaulted. As far as racial complaints, that  
14 would be a slur or anything of that nature, that would  
15 also be carried, but it wouldn't be carried under  
16 excessive force.

17 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: How would that be carried?

18 MR. FERRIS: It would be carried under a  
19 violation of the code. We have a manual of procedures and  
20 the manual of conduct, Code 9.3 that says that you will  
21 not use any racial remarks or refer to any people in a  
22 derogatory manner; be it a police officer, citizen or  
23 anywhere else. So, just by looking under the code we  
24 would be able to define, based on what we've had as far as

1 racial complaints, the committee had found through a  
2 review that was done a few years ago that outlined the  
3 total of complaints that were racially motivated or  
4 racially issued for a three year period, the number of  
5 actual complaints, both formal and informal which included  
6 allegations of racial misconduct as a primary or secondary  
7 feature was three percent. So, 11 of 438 formal  
8 complaints and 72 of 2,375 informal complaints for a three  
9 year period from 1993 through 1995 the number of officers  
10 who were accused of these activities was also at three  
11 percent or less.

12 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Now this was prior to your  
13 having your citizens advisory board, right?

14 MR. FERRIS: Yes, sir, it was.

15 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: In your opinion, do you  
16 feel that citizens that who perhaps would have encountered  
17 these kinds of actions on the part of the police officers  
18 would feel in this city that they could come forth and  
19 make those complaints? Are they pretty free to do that or  
20 do they know how to do that well?

21 MR. FERRIS: I think they know how to do that  
22 well, but I think they can learn how to do that even  
23 better. Once we produce something out there for them to  
24 see, I think that would present to them an even further

1 picture of it. I think now that with the civilian appeals  
2 board in progress and people are aware of it, that they  
3 know that that is also another factor that they can  
4 utilize. So far this year we've had three complaints that  
5 have gone to the civilian appeals board for review and of  
6 those three complaints, the disposition of the internal  
7 affairs unit was affirmed by that board after a complete  
8 review.

9 MS. HA-AJLUNI: What sort of informal power  
10 does the civilian appeals board have in terms of either  
11 overturning the decision by the internal affairs? Do they  
12 have the right to suspend a police officer for the  
13 misconduct or do they have the right to withhold that  
14 police officer from permanent, the police officer, for the  
15 misconduct? What sort of enforcement powers do the  
16 appeals board have?

17 MR. FERRIS: At this point their enforcement  
18 powers are limited to the review of the actual complaint  
19 itself. If they affirm the decision that has already been  
20 made by the internal affairs unit, then that decision will  
21 stand. If they feel that it is not the proper decision  
22 and they either want to reverse it or change it, they can  
23 do that. They have the power to do that and they also  
24 have the power to send that back to the labor relations

1 board for additional review. If they feel that internal  
2 affairs investigation here, we don't want to exactly turn  
3 it over yet, but we'd like more information, they can  
4 either send it back to internal affairs to look at it or  
5 send it to the labor relations department for review. If  
6 they reverse the decision that the internal affairs unit  
7 has made it, not that board, that would have the power to  
8 make the determination as to what the discipline would be  
9 that would go back to the police department through the  
10 chief of police and city manager.

11 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: Sue, I just want to ask  
12 Lieutenant Harold did you intend to or if not can you  
13 leave a copy of the statistics that you read to us? I'm  
14 not sure.

15 MR. HAROLD: I don't have an extra one with  
16 me, but I can get you one.

17 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: I'm talking about the  
18 form that you read to us in terms of the makeup of the  
19 police department?

20 MR. HAROLD: I have just one. I can get you  
21 one.

22 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: Okay. We'd appreciate  
23 that, thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Make sure that Peter

1 Minarik from our regional office receives it.

2 MR. MINARIK: I've got it.

3 MR. BULKOWSKI: A question for Lieutenant  
4 Ferris. You had mentioned that co-workers and  
5 supervisors can make complaints. How many complaints have  
6 arisen via that route, not from citizens concerning police  
7 conduct?

8 MR. FERRIS: I would say the majority of the  
9 complaints would be from an internal generated  
10 investigation. Those would be complaints of tardiness,  
11 failure to complete their duties in an appropriate manner,  
12 all of the internal types; the failure to appear for  
13 court, incidents of that nature and those are things that  
14 would come out daily that can be generated on quite a  
15 regular basis.

16 MR. BULKOWSKI: But of the complaints that  
17 are of excessive force or ethnic or racial in origin, very  
18 many come from fellow officers or from supervisors or are  
19 those for the most part coming from the citizens?

20 MR. FERRIS: Those for the most part are  
21 coming from citizens.

22 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: We thank you very much. We  
23 probably have some additional questions, but we will write  
24 those if we do. Thank you.

1 MR. FERRIS: Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: One of our members who is  
3 just arriving, Noel, would you like to introduce yourself  
4 very quickly before we go to break?

5 MR. SALEH: Let me apologize for running so  
6 late. I apologize. My name is Noel Saleh. I'm from  
7 Detroit. I'm an attorney. I've been a member of the  
8 Commission for four years now and in Detroit I have a  
9 private practice of law which focuses primarily on  
10 immigration.

11 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Thank you. We're going to  
12 take about a five minute break so we can get warm and  
13 those of you that have phone calls to make -- ten minutes.

14 (A brief recess was taken.)

15 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Thank you. We are ready to  
16 get started again. And we will begin this next series of  
17 panelists with comments from Michael Dettmer, United  
18 States Attorney, Western District of Michigan.

19 MICHAEL DETTMER

20 United States Attorney, Western District of Michigan

21 Thank you, Madam Chairman. My name is  
22 Michael Dettmer, I am the United States Attorney for the  
23 Western District of Michigan and I appreciate the  
24 opportunity on behalf of all of us to appear here and

1 discuss this topic with you. I was asked to give an  
2 overview of really what our office does initially and I  
3 will just take a few minutes to do that. I am the Chief  
4 Federal Prosecutor for the Western district. The Western  
5 District of Michigan constitutes 49 of Michigan's 83  
6 counties. We obviously prosecute all federal related  
7 crime in those 49 counties. My counterpart, Saul Green in  
8 the Eastern District of Michigan does likewise for the  
9 eastern half of Michigan. As part of that role, the  
10 justice department looks upon me as the chief federal law  
11 enforcement officer for federal issues in our district.  
12 And we have serious jurisdiction on a number of federal  
13 statutes that you are interested in and the people of  
14 western Michigan are interested in. And we obviously work  
15 with the FBI, DEA, ATF and the myriad of federal agencies,  
16 but we also work with state pros prosecutors, state  
17 agencies, state and local law enforcement when it is  
18 appropriate in terms of task force and the things like  
19 that. One example being the church arson task force which  
20 it was originally started by my counterpart, Saul Green  
21 and it really is a statewide task force that he is ready  
22 to react to church-related arson if that situation  
23 happened.

24 There's a lot of pre planning involved

1 with that where under the FBI, ATF and state police, state  
2 arson investigators, for instance, there is already  
3 planning and crises reaction planning going on and has  
4 been going on probably for the last year. I will defer to  
5 the brutality statutes to agent Smith from the FBI, but I  
6 would like to raise a few of the other statutes that are  
7 important in what we do and one is just administrative and  
8 that is trying to keep track of hate crimes statistics.  
9 And as you may know, there is the Hate Crime Statistics  
10 Act of 1990 and that act requires the Department of  
11 Justice to acquire data on crime which manifests prejudice  
12 based upon race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity  
13 or disability. To date in the seven years or so that that  
14 statute has been on the books, only about 60 percent of  
15 law enforcement agencies nationwide comply with it. There  
16 is a continuing increase in compliance over the period of  
17 the statute, but in Michigan for instance, in 1995 the  
18 last statistic I have, 480 local law enforcement agencies  
19 reported under the Act and they reported 405 hate crimes  
20 or crimes that would fall under the definition of that  
21 statute.

22 Other statutes that are important as  
23 relating to the race, religion, sexual orientation,  
24 ethnicity and disability which the federal government

1 broadly defines as the spectrum of hate crimes is the Hate  
2 Crime Sentencing Enhancement Act which says under the  
3 federal sentencing guidelines if a defendant is convicted  
4 of a crime that involves intent relating to these issues,  
5 there is a three step enhancement and basically for all of  
6 you the guidelines basically is a matrix and a judge is  
7 required to look across and determine the level of the  
8 crime as defined by the sentencing guidelines, the  
9 background of the defendant, and a number of issues and  
10 reach a point literally and say this person is a step 16,  
11 a step 17, and those steps then define how many months or  
12 years a person would be incarcerated. Well, under this  
13 Act there is an automatic not less than three step  
14 increase and that is a major increase enhancement of the  
15 sentencing. So we deal with that issue. We deal with the  
16 Violence Against Women Act, 42 USC 1398. Again, a fairly  
17 recent act that provides authority for domestic violence  
18 and rape center education and provides us the right to  
19 prosecute for domestic violence situations if a person  
20 crosses state lines either to flee or to seek coming back  
21 across the state line to commit an act of domestic  
22 violence. That is now a federal crime. We talk about the  
23 Church Arson Prevention Act. We have a major role that  
24 has been very under utilized by our office and I think by

1 the community in housing discrimination. I saw the  
2 article by you, sir, in Monday's paper and all I thought  
3 was, boy, we're doing a poor job of educating the  
4 community that we have a role both in civil and criminal  
5 penalties for housing discrimination. We have just  
6 brought, and I've been working to do this, our first  
7 housing discrimination case in Grand Rapids probably about  
8 six months ago now that is now pending and we certainly  
9 have a role that we want to play in that area. Other  
10 issues, other areas that we work in educational  
11 opportunities under Title VI and Title VIII. We work  
12 under employment issues, Title VII. We have a role in the  
13 Americans with Disabilities Act. We have a role and we  
14 are in a number of situations in this district litigating  
15 on the civil side disability issues in terms of physical  
16 facilities and we welcome those kinds of issues.

17 So, I think to sum up and not take a  
18 lot of time, I think we have a role in a lot of areas and  
19 we like every other law firm look to figure out how do we  
20 get business and we get business by educating the  
21 community that we're here, that we're available, and that  
22 we are responsive and in the office. There are 30  
23 lawyers, all of high quality, academic credentials and  
24 high integrity people who are blind to issues other than

1 justice and that has been the approach that I have  
2 attempted to take since I've been in this office and I  
3 welcome anything we can do on your behalf and on behalf of  
4 the City of Grand Rapids and the Western District of  
5 Michigan. Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Thank you. I'd be  
7 happy to turn it over to Agent --

8 MR. SMITH: Smith.

9 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Yes, we'll hear now from  
10 Agent Rick Smith, Special Agent, FBI.

11 RICK SMITH

12 Special Agent, FBI

13 I'm standing in for my boss, Charles  
14 Goodwin who got called out of town today. So I'll give a  
15 short presentation as to what our responsibilities are in  
16 the Western District of Michigan. We have our office here  
17 in Grand Rapids which is a satellite office of the Detroit  
18 division. Out of Grand Rapids my boss supervises the  
19 Kalamazoo and St. Joseph Michigan offices. In Grand  
20 Rapids alone we have eight agents who have investigative  
21 responsibility over hundreds of federal violations. As  
22 far as the civil rights violations go, we have a strict  
23 set policy from our headquarters as to how these  
24 investigations are to be conducted. These investigations

1 come in from a variety of areas. Sometimes we get them  
2 from the U.S. Attorney's Office. Sometimes we get them  
3 from a complainant who is a victim. Other times we get  
4 them from family members of the victims. It can come in  
5 from a variety of different areas. Once we get a  
6 complaint, our responsibility is, to depending on the type  
7 of complaint, is to open up an investigation and do what  
8 we call a preliminary investigation. When we do that  
9 preliminary investigation, we gather documents, review  
10 those documents, send them over to our headquarters in  
11 Washington as well as to the Department of Justice Civil  
12 Rights Division in Washington D.C. A copy also goes to  
13 Mr. Dettmer in his office for review. Once that's turned  
14 over to Washington, they're the ones who make the  
15 decisions as to where this case will proceed; whether  
16 further investigation or inquiry is necessary, or whether  
17 the case will be declined for prosecution. If, in fact,  
18 it is determined that prosecution will continue, then we  
19 do a substantial investigation and go back and start  
20 interviewing witnesses. Going to the scene of the crime  
21 or where the allegations took place and take photographs,  
22 do additional record searches, find out information about  
23 the person who made the allegations; maybe whether it be a  
24 criminal record search, a job history search. Also we do

1 background investigations on, if it's a police brutality  
2 type case, we would go and do background investigation to  
3 a certain extent, criminal record searches, other  
4 historical searches on the officer or officers who the  
5 allegations were made against. Once that report or all  
6 those reports are gathered together, we take that what we  
7 call prosecutor report, again turn it over to Mr.  
8 Dettmer's office as well as another set goes to Washington  
9 to both the Civil Rights Department of the DOJ and to FBI  
10 headquarters, Civil Rights Unit. That portion of the  
11 investigation again is made, the decision is made to  
12 further prosecute by the individuals who have that  
13 responsibility in FBI headquarters or at the Department of  
14 Justice, not by anybody in our office, not by anybody in  
15 Mr. Dettmer's office.

16           Some of the areas that we get involved  
17 in for having the crime of these types of civil rights  
18 violations are the following: We investigate hate  
19 crimes, racial and religious discrimination. Those are  
20 about 28 percent of the crimes that come into not just our  
21 office, but nation wide. We have 56 field offices and the  
22 last statistic I read was I think we have approximately  
23 156 agents who are responsible for civil rights violations  
24 and civil rights violations are under the umbrella of all

1 these other investigations are under the umbrella of civil  
2 rights violations. Another area is housing  
3 discrimination. As Mr. Dettmer mentioned, his office is  
4 in the process of pursuing a violation of that as we  
5 speak. We also look at cases of involuntary servitude or  
6 slavery which could be related to, for instance migrant  
7 workers who come up from Mexico and they are railroaded to  
8 work at very low or minimum, below minimum wage and kind  
9 of are enslaved because they only make enough to pay for  
10 their rent and pay for just the very little subsistence  
11 that they have where they're working for the person or  
12 person farmers that they're working for. And lastly, we  
13 investigate crimes involving or actually two more,  
14 violence against reproductive clinic, abortion clinics,  
15 access to those clinics. We would investigate crimes of  
16 that nature; and finally, violations of under color of  
17 law, excessive force or misconduct and those are about  
18 approximately 71 percent of our investigations come under  
19 that category. And when we do investigate those types of  
20 crimes, we go through the process I mentioned a little  
21 earlier with respect to the investigations that we would  
22 conduct. In those types of investigations there's the  
23 particular statute that we would investigate under is  
24 Title 18, Section 242 and as far as discussion of a

1 specific cases that have come into our office. I can't  
2 really go into any of those areas, but as an investigative  
3 agency and our responsibilities as such when a complaint  
4 comes in, it's our duty to take that complaint and my  
5 supervisor would assign it to one of the agents in the  
6 office and they would, according to our policies, follow  
7 the steps necessary to gather the evidence and turn it in.  
8 As an example, when a complaint does come in, we are  
9 required within 21 days to have at least a preliminary  
10 investigation conducted and sent to headquarters for them  
11 to make the determination. So we don't -- our  
12 headquarters and Department of Justice, Civil Rights  
13 Division, take these allegations seriously. As you can  
14 tell by requiring us to respond as quickly as possible and  
15 as efficiently as possible to any allegations that come  
16 into our office.

17 I don't have anything more. I don't  
18 know if, Jeff, you want to go on.

19 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: We will go to Mr. Davis at  
20 this time and then we'll come back and see if any of the  
21 committee members have specific questions for you.

22 JEFFERY DAVIS

23 Assistant U.S. Attorney, Western District of Michigan

24 Thank you, Chair, members of the

1 Commission, I'll be very brief. My position with the U.S.  
2 Attorney's Office is I am the liaison between the office  
3 and the federally recognized tribes in the western  
4 district and with the Native Indian community in the  
5 greater Grand Rapids area.

6 With that said, I think from my  
7 perspective working in the western district in this office  
8 I would agree we have with the U.S. Attorney that we do  
9 have 30 assistants with the greatest integrity and that  
10 focuses on providing justice. The only comment that I  
11 would have of those 30 assistants, I think we have three  
12 that would be considered of another, possibly another  
13 race. We have one African American in the civil division,  
14 we have another assistant in the criminal division that is  
15 of Hawaiian decent and myself. And the reason why I point  
16 that out is because I think I myself grew up on a  
17 reservation in North Central North Dakota and working with  
18 the tribes in Michigan, I think I bring that perspective to  
19 my job that others can't and I think that is important and  
20 critical to when we're working with communities, we need  
21 to have a diverse group of people who -- and we all have  
22 integrity, I don't argue with that -- I just suggest and  
23 point out that we need more people from other races in our  
24 offices. And I'm not saying anything to my U.S. Attorney,

1 of course, because he brought me here and I think I'm one  
2 of the first. I think I may be the first American Indian  
3 to be in this office and we're making great strides and  
4 inroads in the native American community. One of the  
5 primary functions of the Department of Justice is to  
6 investigate and prosecute major crimes in the Indian  
7 country and historically that has been lacking and with  
8 the new focus of the Department of Justice and the U.S.  
9 Attorney's office, we have been changing that and its  
10 slowly changing, but its changing for the better because I  
11 know growing up in my community on the reservation we  
12 like, we don't like crime any more than anyone else and we  
13 want justice to be done. So with that said, I would open  
14 it for questions.

15 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Thank you, all three of  
16 you for appearing here this morning.

17 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: Maybe I can start off  
18 the questions or --

19 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: I just wondered if, I  
20 believe it's Mr. Smith from the FBI. Since you're charged  
21 with the keeping of the statistics on hate crimes and  
22 crimes of ethnic and racial intimidation, can you explain  
23 the process? Do you get these numbers from local police  
24 departments, which we've already been told here this

1 morning that the Grand Rapids Police Department does not  
2 keep the statistics in that way. How successful are you  
3 in western Michigan in getting those newspapers and do you  
4 have statistics, things that indicate that the problems  
5 that we are seeing or hearing of are increasing or  
6 decreasing, Mr. Smith?

7 MR. SMITH: I don't have any statistics on  
8 western Michigan itself, but you can say that the  
9 statistics are only as good as the reporting. As Mr.  
10 Dettmer mentioned, the reporting is not as good as it  
11 could be, even though they're mandated by the new statute  
12 to report to the FBI so that we can compile these. We  
13 don't always get the information that's necessary, so  
14 there's nothing other than to go back and from the FBI's  
15 perspective and contact the agencies that aren't  
16 reporting. There's not much else that can be done. The  
17 statute is pretty clear about reporting and these agencies  
18 don't report, we're limited as to how accurate the  
19 statistics are going to be.

20 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: In your opinion, has there  
21 been an increase in incidents of this nature that you are  
22 aware of in this area?

23 MR. SMITH: Specifically with allegations of  
24 discrimination and racial --

1 MS. THOMAS: Those are hate crimes.

2 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Hate crimes and racial and  
3 ethnic intimidation.

4 MR. SMITH: I've been in this office two and  
5 a half years. In the two and a half years I have been  
6 here, I would say as far as allegations coming into our  
7 office, no, and whether that's because people don't report  
8 them, I don't know or if its because that hasn't been an  
9 increase, I can't answer the question as to why, but you  
10 can say the allegations coming into our office have not  
11 increased at all.

12 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Do people know that they  
13 can contact your office? Do they know, for example, Mr.  
14 Dettmer, that they can contact the Attorney General's  
15 office?

16 MR. DETTMER: I've been in this job three and  
17 a half years and I think we are attempting to make an  
18 effort, an increasing effort to educate and expose  
19 ourselves in terms of we are here. I know the FBI has, in  
20 my tenure, put on annual a civil rights seminars for the  
21 community and its done out of the Detroit division. They  
22 bring in not only the agent who is charged with civil  
23 rights responsibility in Detroit, but people out of  
24 Washington who come in and hold these in Detroit and last

1 year in our district it was held in Lansing and Grand  
2 Rapids and its an educational issue from the community  
3 side. From the law enforcement side, let me indicate that  
4 our office also has a what we call a law enforcement  
5 coordinator, Ms. Kay Hooker, whose job it is to work with  
6 local law enforcement, state law enforcement and its very  
7 important, I can't stress this enough, that the federal  
8 government have an invited role, an invited role as  
9 opposed to an imposed role in communities and having  
10 relationships with local law enforcement and state law  
11 enforcement. And we work very hard to try to develop that  
12 coordinated working relationship with law enforcement  
13 agencies across the 49 counties and we have a wonderful  
14 group of federal law enforcement residents, agents,  
15 supervisors who, along with our office understand that we  
16 are charged with a responsibility of stepping out and  
17 trying to develop these relationships that hopefully are  
18 to the benefit of the citizens of western Michigan. Sue?

19 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: Yes. Mr. Dettmer, I'm  
20 not sure I understood you correctly. Did you say that  
21 you're prosecuting your first case in housing  
22 discrimination?

23 MR. DETTMER: Yes, ma'am.

24 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: Earlier this morning we

1 heard from a Ms. Weber who is Executive Director of the  
2 Fair Housing Center, who reported that this year they ran  
3 300 less cases on housing discrimination and 1 out of 3  
4 incidents, they found discrimination, so I was wondering  
5 is there no linkage between her office and your office and  
6 why her numbers would be so high compared to yours?

7 MR. DETTMER: You're absolutely right. There  
8 needs to be a better linkage, better knowledge that we are  
9 here to and as the prosecuting attorney on those kinds of  
10 cases we need to go out and find the cases, but we can't  
11 find them ourselves, we need the Grand Rapids Fair Housing  
12 Commission to come into our office and provide and develop  
13 that linkage because I think we can provide a service that  
14 hopefully benefits the community.

15 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: I have one other question  
16 of Agent Smith. You said there are eight agents in this  
17 office.

18 MR. SMITH: In Grand Rapids, that's correct.

19 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: Are there any agents that  
20 are not of European decent? Any agents of color.

21 MR. SMITH: No they're not.

22 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: Is there any effort to  
23 try to fix that, to be a little more similar to what Mr.  
24 Davis said, to be a little more diverse in terms of the

1 staff?

2 MR. SMITH: I think there is from our office  
3 in Detroit. Since its such a small office up, until  
4 recently there had not been a lot of turnover in our  
5 office and the front office management has tried to  
6 resolve that, but they make the decisions and we take who  
7 we can get when they send them out here, so.

8 MR. DETTMER: I think you also have to  
9 realize, at least FBI hiring is all done through  
10 Washington and then there's just a rotation of agents and  
11 Lansing, Bob Montero is of African American decent, he is  
12 in charge of that office.

13 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: So it appears that we need  
15 to encourage some career awareness that there are jobs in  
16 your agencies.

17 MR. SMITH: Absolutely.

18 MR. DETTMER: And while we're on that  
19 subject, I only echo what jeff has said about our office  
20 and I do have the hiring power in this district and we  
21 have a merit hiring committee that we've established of  
22 assistants and we do make a conscious effort to seek  
23 minority representation in our office.

24 MR. SMITH: We do the same. We aggressively

1 go out recruit the same, whether it be here in Grand  
2 Rapids or out of our office in Detroit. People come into  
3 our office on a daily basis to find out about job  
4 opportunities and we're more than willing to go wherever  
5 we're asked to talk to those people that are interested in  
6 a career with the FBI.

7 MR. HOLLIDAY: Mr. Dettmer, under your watch  
8 you say you've been there three years?

9 MR. DETTMER: Three and a half years.

10 MR. HOLLIDAY: Have you had any convictions  
11 with respect to hate crimes or intimidation and/or do you  
12 have any cases pending?

13 MR. DETTMER: The answer to both is no, not  
14 to my knowledge. We probably have in our office at any  
15 one time about 600 pending cases and we generate probably  
16 400 convictions a year and I am not aware of a conviction  
17 that we've had in the last year.

18 MS. HA-AJLUNI: How many of those hate crime  
19 cases were pursued by your department?

20 MR. DETTMER: Well, I guess the question is  
21 are there and let me try to speak to what Agent Smith was  
22 saying. If there is a police brutality allegation, they  
23 have the responsibility within 21 days to investigate that  
24 and send it to the civil rights department of the

1 Department of Justice who then makes the second  
2 determination and the final determination. And so I know  
3 there are cases that have gone up there. I can think of  
4 two immediately in the Lansing district, both jail,  
5 alleged jail brutality cases that the Department has  
6 turned down in the last month. So there is a stream that  
7 go up there. I suggest for discussion that there was a  
8 historic reason why the civil rights division took  
9 responsibility for making these decisions, but that at the  
10 same time taking that decision away from the local United  
11 States Attorney's Office and there are 94 of us in the  
12 country, takes away some of the ability for the community  
13 to make that decision through community prosecutors. I am  
14 a resident of Michigan. I am a resident of this district  
15 and I believe I have some autonomy from Washington. So  
16 its a two way street. I don't get to make the decisions  
17 on brutality cases that happen in western Michigan. I  
18 think historically there was good reason for that because  
19 there was a feeling because all these prosecutors and law  
20 enforcement people are if bed together, so we're going to  
21 get a whitewash. Well, I strongly suggest otherwise. I  
22 think I can make very independent decisions and I haven't  
23 looked at the facts so I'm not trying to dodge the  
24 question, I'm just saying we don't get to look at the facts

1 of these. I can read the report, but I don't get to  
2 involve myself. I just take orders from Washington when  
3 they come down.

4 MS. HA-AJLUNI: Other than brutality cases,  
5 what about other hate crimes and ethnic intimidation  
6 cases?

7 MR. DETTMER: We've had a few hate crimes,  
8 abortion clinic investigations. We've had a number of  
9 potential arson, church arson cases, none of which we  
10 thought fell under the statute. We have involved  
11 ourselves and want to involve ourselves in ethnic  
12 intimidation cases. There have been crosses burned on  
13 people's lawns in Holland. We oversee those crimes and  
14 one of the things we don't want to do is come in, as you  
15 know the federal presence, and try to take cases that are  
16 being handled with great ability and integrity by local  
17 law enforcement agencies. So if the Ottawa County sheriff  
18 and the Ottawa County prosecutor are addressing the  
19 problem, they can address the problem better than we can.  
20 They have the resources and so we are there to help, but  
21 we take a secondary role versus primary role. I give you  
22 the best example, just if I can and its the traditional,  
23 now traditional example is the O.J. Simpson case and  
24 excuse me, the Rodney King case and its retrial. The

1 federal government stayed out of that case in the  
2 preliminary trial, did not intercede until they thought  
3 they needed to intercede and we would play the same role  
4 in this district. We would like to demur as much as  
5 possible to local law enforcement on these issues, but  
6 we're there if we think an injustice has been done and it  
7 has not been addressed.

8 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Let me just recap what I  
9 think I'm hearing this morning that is that people don't  
10 know you exist to do the things that you do well and  
11 you're capable of doing?

12 MR. DETTMER: That can be good and bad.

13 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: And speaking with the local  
14 law enforcement officer here, either you don't have any of  
15 these incidents or you don't know about them or they are  
16 not being brought to your attention. Are we to understand  
17 that they don't exist in this area?

18 MR. DETTMER: No, absolutely not.

19 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: That it is just the  
20 perception of the citizens that these things happen in  
21 Grand Rapids.

22 MR. DETTMER: No, I don't think that's true,  
23 no. Talking specifically about Grand Rapids, we have  
24 looked at cases in our job, as Agent Smith has said, is to

1 try to take the emotion out of them. Take the, you know,  
2 somebody told me they said they heard somebody else say  
3 that this happened and get down to the nitty gritty and  
4 look at the case and then decide secondly, all right, this  
5 here are the facts, here are the facts versus the hearsay  
6 and make a decision. But that decision is made by  
7 Washington on one level and it may not even get to that  
8 point if we believe that local law enforcement is  
9 adequately addressing it. There are procedures set forth  
10 in the Grand Rapids Police Department, I know there's been  
11 a blot in the paper about a civilian review board. If  
12 there is citizen input, then we should exercise discretion  
13 not to become involved, so.

14 MS. THOMAS: I think I'm confused. Who is  
15 supposed to bring the problem to you, the local police or  
16 the individual who suffers?

17 MR. DETTMER: There is no specific person.

18 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: I have had referrals from  
19 police chiefs when they hear that one of their officers  
20 has been accused of brutality issues because they don't  
21 feel they have the internal mechanism to deal with it.  
22 For instance, in a small town, village, you know, northern  
23 Michigan village they feel like it had to be addressed,  
24 but they don't have the resources, they don't have the

1 responsibility with the community. They don't want to  
2 test their credibility with the community, so they will  
3 send it to the FBI or on the other hand you may have a  
4 victim who says this happened to me. I suggest we had an  
5 Assistant United States Attorney, African American from  
6 the Eastern District of Michigan who was driving through a  
7 Northern Michigan village and was stopped for no apparent  
8 reason, handcuffed, thrown in the back of a police car and  
9 held there for an hour. You know that I got a call from  
10 that Assistant United States attorney saying what are you  
11 going to do about this and so he was a victim. He  
12 perceived himself as a victim. There was an investigation  
13 done of that. In that case before we had an opportunity  
14 to do something, the local police department, the local  
15 police chief released that police officer and so we  
16 decided not to prosecute because he was gone. And so  
17 there are a lot of ways this --

18 MS. THOMAS: I guess the confusing part to me  
19 is that I would think that if a person was afraid of the  
20 local police that they're not going to come over to you  
21 because they're not going to have any more confidence in  
22 you than they have in those persons, am I correct? So I  
23 would feel --

24 MR. DETTMER: In perception you are

1 correct, yes.

2 MS. THOMAS: I would feel that the FBI and  
3 the local police department would have a better way of  
4 communicating with each other of knowing what's going on.  
5 For some crazy reason I've always put the FBI up a little  
6 higher and maybe I'm wrong there.

7 MR. DETTMER: I don't understand. I guess  
8 I'm a little confused.

9 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: There is a gap that exists  
10 here between what is happening or not happening and how  
11 you get that report and how you get the issue addressed or  
12 remedied even against citizens. You gave, for example,  
13 Mr. Dettmer, an example of a sophisticated person who was  
14 locked up or thrown in --

15 MR. DETTMER: Detained.

16 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: He knew his civil rights.  
17 He understood what to do or how to do it once he got his  
18 one phone call. The average citizen that is an under  
19 class or who does not have the sophistication really would  
20 not understand where to go and very often I don't go back  
21 to the source. If you have been brutalized by someone,  
22 you don't call that someone. We had a hearing on hate  
23 crimes in Detroit about two years ago and we found that  
24 the FBI was very supportive because the local police that

1 were being called were actually the perpetrators of the  
2 crime and so the same sergeants and the same lieutenants  
3 came back and beat them some more. So you have to  
4 understand that for us we're trying to find a clear  
5 pattern of incidents, incident reporting and solutions to  
6 those incidents and we're just trying to find out whose  
7 job it is and we heard this morning from the police that  
8 they do have community policing and they do have some new  
9 things in place, but I guess what Larrain is confused  
10 about is how does the average citizen access that and who  
11 is reporting it?

12 MR. DETTMER: I do agree with you,  
13 absolutely.

14 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Joel?

15 MR. SALEH: Joan was before me.

16 MS. WEBKAMIGAD: I have two things I want to  
17 say. One, I want to commend you for bringing Mr. Davis  
18 into Michigan. I've seen him at community events and I  
19 know the Indian community is very appreciative that he is  
20 here. The second, I wanted to ask Mr. Smith, last year a  
21 woman whose son had been beaten by the police asked me  
22 where do I go? So I sent her to the Detroit office, but  
23 she was from Cadillac. She should have called your office  
24 or Traverse City.

1           MR. SMITH: We have an office in Traverse  
2 City. It's not run out of here, it's out of Lansing, but  
3 that would have been where she could have gone. Detroit  
4 was fine. They probably referred her back to Traverse  
5 City.

6           MS. WEBKAMIGAD: Because that's the only  
7 office I knew of except our little office in Lansing, and  
8 so I told her, call Detroit.

9           MR. SMITH: Generally even if you went to the  
10 wrong office, the person that responds to you there is  
11 going to tell you that you're better off going to the  
12 particular location closest to where the incident happened  
13 where we do have an office.

14          MS. WEBKAMIGAD: Thank you.

15          CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: We're going to take one  
16 more question.

17          MR. SALEH: I, too, I was intrigued that you  
18 have Mr. Davis here and specifically as a liaison with the  
19 Native community and I'm glad that Joan has very positive  
20 experiences.

21          MS. WEBKAMIGAD: Indian.

22          MR. SALEH: I'm curious, do you have similar  
23 liaisons and outreach and can you tell us a little bit  
24 more in term of how does this liaison thing work and if

1 you don't very similar liaison or outreach with the  
2 Hispanic community, with the Asian community, African  
3 American community, then I would be curious as to why not?

4 MR. DETTMER: I'll let Jeff explain the  
5 liaison function. I think he can best articulate that,  
6 but I can tell you why and again right or wrong, my  
7 immediate boss, Ms. Reno, when she came into the job,  
8 given her life experiences, she felt that the Department  
9 of Justice did not address Native American problems, given  
10 that the Department of Justice has a special trust  
11 relationship with the tribes that we don't have with other  
12 ethnic communities. We have a responsibility to prosecute  
13 federal crime on reservation. We have the responsibility  
14 to defend the tribes in certain situations, so  
15 historically and by statute and common law there is a  
16 different more direct relationship with this segments of  
17 America and so she decided that we had to redouble our  
18 efforts to try to be a good trustee of that trust  
19 relationship and part of that was asking the United States  
20 Attorneys to go out and develop this liaison position,  
21 seek qualified lawyers who could fill it. And I will only  
22 say by luck we did it early and well and we got one of the  
23 finest Indian law legal minds I think in the country in  
24 our office and I am really proud that we were able to hire

1 Heff and he provides a great service to the federally  
2 recognized tribes in the western district of Michigan, but  
3 I'll let him explain it.

4 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Mr. Davis, I'm going to  
5 have to ask, because of our very tight schedule that the  
6 liaison function be given to us in writing.

7 MR. DAVIS: Okay. I'll do that.

8 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: That you define it for us.

9 We have one additional question and  
10 then we're going to have to go to our next sets of  
11 panelists. If, again, there are committee members that  
12 have further questions, we'd be happy to have you turn  
13 them in and Peter will follow up and get specific answers.

14 MR. DETTMER: Before the question let me only  
15 say that we are willing to meet with any of you privately  
16 or publicly and any members of the community. We've been  
17 attempting to make those jumps into the community and we  
18 welcome the opportunity to continue to do that.

19 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: I see a great opportunity  
20 for that here. Marylou?

21 MS. OLIVAREZ-MASON: My question to you is  
22 where is Kay Hooker at your office?

23 MR. DETTMER: Yes.

24 MS. OLIVAREZ-MASON; and is her role as a

1 community individual, is her role to go out into the  
2 community and work, request the organizations to let us  
3 know what role you have and --

4 MR. DETTMER: Yes.

5 MS. OLIVAREZ-MASON: And is this organization,  
6 is she willing to work with organizations so that we can  
7 disseminate this information where its necessary?

8 MR. DETTMER: Absolutely and by way of  
9 example, our office spearheaded four programs called Read  
10 and Speed Program. There's a community-based strategies.  
11 One of which is on the west sides of Grand Rapids,  
12 Holland, Benton Harbor and Muskegeon and she plays a  
13 integral role in that. I would also say we're in the  
14 process, this may happen, with the reinvention of  
15 government, but OJP, Office of Justice Programs, which the  
16 sub committee I chair, they are talking about bringing  
17 community development people out into the field out of  
18 Washington, send them out here where we'll really need  
19 them, where they can do their best. So we'd work on  
20 that project as well.

21 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: I'd like to thank the three  
22 of you for coming this morning and providing the  
23 information to us. Again, if there are additional  
24 questions or information that you can leave with us,

1 please feel free to give those to Peter and the follow up  
2 questions, the role of the liaison and how you operate, I  
3 would also ask that you provide to Peter Minarik. Thank  
4 you.

5 MR. DETTMER: Thank you for the opportunity.

6 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: We have a series of  
7 speakers. I'd like to see how many people are here. Is  
8 Mr. Wood and Rabbi Lewis and Reverend Greidanus? I don't  
9 see Pastor Smith yet.

10 Let me begin by saying that I know that  
11 we have all three illustrious ministers here and that you  
12 are very good at what you do, so if I could ask you to  
13 hold your comments to about five minutes each, it will  
14 leave us some time for probably an enriched question and  
15 answer period. We can begin with Rabbi Lewis, is it?

16 RABBI ALBERT LEWIS

17 TEMPLE EMANUEL

18 Good morning. If I understood what I  
19 was asked of -- what was asked of me was to talk about  
20 experiences or perceptions of racism in this area. Having  
21 lived in the Grand Rapids area now for a little over 25  
22 years, its sometimes not clear to me what is racism? What  
23 is the denial of reality? What is pure insensitivity and  
24 what is irresponsibility? What is clear to me is that the

1 final effort or the final effect is the same on the  
2 persons against whom or upon whom these actions are  
3 perpetrated. My concerns in the area are the way in which  
4 the press report some of the news. I don't know that its  
5 unique to the Grand Rapids press, but it bothers me. It  
6 has bothered me for 25 years and I have related my  
7 concerns to the press and that is that when a crime occurs  
8 or some incident occurs where there has been a beating or  
9 a shooting or robbery, the press is very quick to tell us  
10 exactly the house number, the street number and the  
11 neighborhood. Now this happens across the board, except  
12 that I feel that if there is already a latent sense of  
13 racism, this only intensifies it and heightens it and  
14 makes us more insensitive to what's going on in a given  
15 area of the community. That's true whether it happens in  
16 the area that is still known as the ghetto or whether it  
17 happens out in some of the almost lily white suburbs.

18 I had an incident a number of years ago  
19 where a women was murdered in her business and the press  
20 found it necessary to publish her address, which only  
21 resulted in all kinds of people driving by to see where  
22 did the women live and all kinds of other people trying to  
23 figure out when can we get into that house and a whole  
24 bunch of other people trying to send all kinds of

1 literature; now that your wife is dead, would you like to  
2 buy a headstone from us. That's one concern that I have.  
3 A second concern I have is about the Grand Rapids area  
4 transit authority. And that is that as western Michigan  
5 continues to grow and to expand and we are experiencing a  
6 tremendous growth and will experience a tremendous growth  
7 over the next seven to ten years, the population of the  
8 area will become much more diversified. We will have an  
9 increasing number of minorities in the area. People will  
10 need more and more public transportation. Public  
11 transportation is not being increased, public  
12 transportation is being decreased, fees are being  
13 increased. People on welfare are required to go out and  
14 to seek jobs, but if they don't have transportation, then  
15 we simply perpetuate an underclass of people. We do not  
16 see a sensitivity in the area dealing with those issues.

17 At the same time, I am heartened when I  
18 watch what's happening through the Kent Intermediate  
19 School district which has overall responsibility for all  
20 of the school districts in this area and they now have a  
21 diversity council. We are in the process now of hiring a  
22 diversity council coordinator and they are aware that  
23 there will be increasing numbers of Asian people, Hispanic  
24 people, African American people, Native American people

1 coming into the area and that we need to be proactive in  
2 being sensitive to the needs of those people; their  
3 students, their families and how we respond to this  
4 increased and diversified population. So these are the  
5 incidents I see and I kept it short.

6 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: All right, Michael Wood of  
7 the Catholic Diocese of Grand Rapids.

8 MICHAEL WOOD

9 Catholic Diocese of Grand Rapids

10 I've been wondering and debating and  
11 rehearsing what I would say today for weeks and the sense  
12 that I had initially was that it was kind of a reporting  
13 out process and in truth I would find great comfort in  
14 doing that and that's exactly not what I'm going to do.  
15 And I'm not going to do it because of the experience I've  
16 had in the last three years in facilitating dialogues on  
17 the healing of racism through our outreach into  
18 collaboration with other area churches. Instead, what I  
19 decided would be more honest and appropriate would be to  
20 speak out of my own personal experience and that means  
21 that the testimony I'm going to offer the panel this  
22 morning is one of a racist.

23 Ten years go if somebody asked me if I  
24 were a racist, I would have said, with some indignation,

1 no. I'm convinced at this moment that if we were to ask a  
2 thousand white folks if they were racist, they could be  
3 attached to a lie detector, say no and pass. And I think  
4 that's a part of the real problem. A part of the real  
5 problem is the denial and the ignorance that helps to  
6 perpetuate racism.

7 I'm not speaking out of any sense of  
8 righteousness. I would probably be as apathetic and as  
9 uninformed as I was ten years ago if it weren't for my  
10 youngest daughter developing a friendship and a  
11 relationship with an African American male that produced  
12 two grandchildren. I love James and Jasmine. One of my  
13 co-workers in the office shared with me that he and his  
14 wife are just frightened by the prospect of having their  
15 daughter experience what our daughter did and the rage  
16 that I felt at having my grandchildren described as  
17 somebody else's worse nightmare is a part of the reasoning  
18 that I began to understand what racism is, how it wounds,  
19 how it destroys the very soul of the innocent. I believe  
20 that racism is an illness. Its a pathology. I don't  
21 remember making a conscious decision to be a racist. I  
22 think some of the socioeconomic, psychological viruses  
23 that I came in contact with through my parents and my  
24 schools and my teachers and Michigan coaches and my

1 ministers left me with prejudices and ignorance and  
2 insensitivity that wounded others by my indifference and  
3 ignorance and apathy.

4 I don't think that its particularly  
5 noble that because I don't want my grandchildren now to  
6 suffer what others have been suffering for hundreds of  
7 years that that's praise worthy. Its not in the least,  
8 but it is a compelling reality and I find it totally  
9 adequate motivation to get involved, to say that I have  
10 been wounded and have wounded others through the  
11 perpetration of the sign and the pathology and disease of  
12 racism.

13 I commend this Commission because I now  
14 am beginning to understand just how grievous and  
15 widespread and deep a problem it is. I deeply appreciate  
16 your work and your aims and your ambitions and I share  
17 them.

18 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Thank you. Mr. Greidanus?

19 MORRIS GREIDANUS

20 Grand Rapids Area Center for Ecumenism

21 I'm Morris Greidanus, I will be brief  
22 after these fine words we heard. It is -- I have cousins  
23 who are biracial and I had an incident once too where at  
24 our cottage one of my -- I always get this wrong -- its a

1 nephew and he walked through somebody's yard and that  
2 person said this black kid walked through their and I was  
3 happy to be able to say that's my cousin and interesting  
4 how his face fell and, you know how that put him -- that  
5 stopped him. But I'm here for GRACE, Grand Rapids Area  
6 Center for Ecumenism. I'm one of their board members.  
7 I'm also a paster of the First Christian Reform Church  
8 which is in that area which Rabbi Lewis doesn't like to  
9 read about in the paper and you know we always hear about  
10 Franklin and Eastern and like he says, the houses are  
11 identified so much so that people are very scared to come  
12 to our church, at least white people, even though most of  
13 our members are of Dutch background and we are a  
14 congregation that wants to be diverse, but the realities  
15 are we're not at this point.

16 I've lived in Grand Rapids seven years  
17 when I studied here earlier and now twelve years as a  
18 minister of this congregation and I served previously in  
19 Canada there between English and French people would talk  
20 about the solitude, you know, that people were just living  
21 in their own world and I feel that in Grand Rapids very  
22 much too there are some people that never come to our part  
23 of town and their are kids living in our part of town that  
24 never get as far as Redrock because they know the East

1 Grand Rapids police would somehow make it kind of hard for  
2 them to go through there. So, we kind of move in our own  
3 areas, shop in our own stores. I happen to shop at  
4 Meyers, sorry Bob, but also at D & W, but when you shop at  
5 Meyers, Thrifty Acres, that's probably the most diverse  
6 store even to you Mr. Goodwin works very hard at it and I  
7 really appreciate his work. So I think there is racial  
8 tension, it just waits for an incident like a police  
9 matter, you know, a police violence or a personnel matter  
10 at the school board, then it can flare up. But so far  
11 summer's been pretty good, but we're all kind of  
12 wondering. I know when the verdict comes down like O.J.s  
13 and Rodney King, everybody is tense and GRACE has  
14 developed, with community aid, racial justice institutes  
15 also support these healing racism workshops and I've been  
16 a part of them with other clergy. We have some  
17 partnerships between what we then call -- I don't like to  
18 use the terms black and white churches. I don't really  
19 think that church has a color, but at least predominantly  
20 black and predominantly white churches and my own  
21 congregation has a very close partnership with Zion  
22 Missionary Baptist. And I think what we were trying to  
23 avoid was to kind of come in like foreign aid, like we  
24 have the money and we have the know how and its been great

1 to learn from my friends at Zion Missionary Baptist about  
2 life and ministry together. So those are very good things  
3 and we're thankful for them in this community. I think  
4 there's been some initiatives, also from Promise Keepers,  
5 kind of unexpected corner, you know, being so male  
6 oriented, but there's the racial reconciliation component  
7 has certainly been very powerful and it's given some new  
8 energy. But like Rabbi Lewis, the geography just works  
9 against us. Michigan National Bank in our area is  
10 planning to close up in the Boston Street area which they  
11 say everybody uses ATMs and phone nowadays, but for many  
12 of our neighbors, that's not the case at all. In fact,  
13 they hate ATMs and they think they cost a lot of money and  
14 often, you know, the phone is very confusing for the  
15 elderly. Then the welfare office, if I may use the old  
16 name, is in our area, but if you want to find a job, you  
17 have to have transportation to go to the outskirts of  
18 town. So, it doesn't make sense, does it? Then you say  
19 why don't they get work? But it's very hard to find. So  
20 we're living in those the solitudes wondering what's going  
21 to happen? We kind of hang back. We do these  
22 partnerships. We try to work on racism in ourselves and  
23 with others, but when we did the session this past session  
24 with black and white clergy, attendance wasn't great also,

1 not from black clergy. So, probably there's some  
2 resentment on their part. There's loss of hope, that's  
3 obvious, and I was just on a study leave in Switzerland  
4 and I worked with a professor who did a lot of study in  
5 South Africa and she said have you thought about a truth  
6 and reconciliation committee and I think that's what our  
7 community needs. We need to hear each other's stories and  
8 we need to get them down and then we need to move ahead.  
9 Nelson Mandella said you've got to put the past behind you  
10 and the President has been talking about an apology. I  
11 think that's probably too fast, but we need to hear how  
12 people have been mistreated by the police or by a car  
13 dealer or by an automobile superintendent and we need to  
14 hear that pain and we need to help them to work past it  
15 and find solutions. So that's what I'd like to be working  
16 on.

17 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Okay, thank you very much.  
18 Are there questions?

19 MR. BULKOWSKI: I have one. Not to change  
20 the subject from a race-based one though, but my question  
21 for Rabbi Lewis. Grand Rapids is not only is a very white  
22 community with -- irrespective from the outside, but its  
23 also a very christian community and what kind of  
24 experience is in Grand Rapids for the Jewish community in

1 the acceptance of you in this community?

2 RABBI LEWIS: For the most part the Jewish  
3 community in Grand Rapids has a wonderful working  
4 relationship and a cooperative relationship with the  
5 Catholic community partly because both my wife and I are  
6 professors at Aquinas College (phonetic) and because we've  
7 done a lot of outreach and dialogue within the Catholic  
8 community. Outside of the Catholic community its minimal.  
9 Again, the Jewish community and the African American  
10 community, it's almost non-existent. We have made  
11 attempts at various times. We've been unsuccessful.  
12 We're not followed up. About 25 years ago the Flint  
13 Journal carried an article that was reported by a young  
14 reporter who had infiltrated an anti African American,  
15 anti tax, anti Jew, anti  
16 just-about-everybody-that-could-line-up hate group in the  
17 flint area and published three or four lengthy articles  
18 about his findings. When I became aware of that, I sent  
19 an invitation to all African American clergy in our area  
20 to come together, we need to talk about this because we're  
21 all in the same boat. Some came. At that meeting I said  
22 this cannot be our first and last, but it was. It was  
23 very difficult pulling people back together. I think  
24 there is not attention between the Jewish community and

1 the African American community. There's just no  
2 relationship. You have to have some relationship in order  
3 to have attention. That doesn't exist.

4 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: How do you reach your  
5 various congregations and groups? It has to start  
6 somewhere, you know? Can you talk to the schools? They  
7 say its the responsibility of the family to teach respect  
8 for other races and the family will say its the  
9 responsibility of the church and we know not everybody  
10 goes to church. We go to our various organizations and  
11 everybody is saying something has to be done and their  
12 ready to blame the other for not doing something, but in  
13 your opinion, where does it need to start in Grand Rapids  
14 specifically? Do you have any opinions about that?

15 MR. WOOD: I think something that's very  
16 hopeful, at least in terms of my own experience really  
17 revolves around these dialogues on racism. Bob Woodrick  
18 was very instrumental in developing the dialogues,  
19 bringing in psychologists and others to structure  
20 them, developing specific strategies for members of the  
21 business community and members of the church community to  
22 collaborate. We're also involving the schools in terms of  
23 developing dialogues and facilitators and trained groups  
24 its with the idea that a geometric expansion of

1 facilitation and trainers are going to be able to bring  
2 about dialogues that help change and elevate our awareness  
3 of the nature of the problem and the possibilities of a  
4 solution. It really needs to be kind of a one on one kind  
5 of thing where these dialogues you have groups of about 12  
6 to 14 people meeting 3 hours at a time over a period of  
7 eight weeks and speak about their individual experiences  
8 of racism and the wounds and the suffering that's been a  
9 part of their personal experience and you can't hear those  
10 things and remain apathetic and indifferent and uncaring.  
11 It's not possible. See a part of the reason racism is  
12 able to perpetuate itself is the distances, is the absence  
13 of relationships, is the absence of dialogues of people  
14 not knowing each other and what the dialogues do is put  
15 people in front of each other in the same proximity that  
16 we are and I know you as an individual I know what your  
17 experience was. I know what happened to your father or  
18 your mother or your brother, your sister, and that changes  
19 reality and it can only happen one at a time. The  
20 dialogues on racism enable that one at a time to be  
21 multiplied by twelve and twelve at a time facilitation  
22 groups at a time, churches at a time will begin to get  
23 the message when they are in touch with the suffering  
24 that's a reality and the dangers and the costs that are a

1 part of racism and the injustice that's a part of racism  
2 and the poverty that's a part of racism.

3 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Larrain?

4 MS. THOMAS: I'm going to ask you a stupid  
5 question, Rabbi. I'm a Roman Catholic. I don't know what  
6 -- and I'm black and I don't know what the Catholic  
7 community is up here, however it sounds as though you are  
8 putting all Catholics as white. Now am I misunderstanding  
9 you?

10 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Yes, you are.

11 MS. THOMAS: Because he said he could deal  
12 with the Catholic community, but it seems as though the  
13 African American community was where the problem was and  
14 I'm just curious.

15 RABBI LEWIS: No, I misspoke. You're  
16 absolutely right. When I talk about the Catholic  
17 community, I'm really talking about my own experience with  
18 the Catholic community has been almost exclusively with  
19 whites in the Catholic community. So I misspoke.

20 MS. THOMAS: Rabbi, I came from southwest  
21 Louisiana, I couldn't be much of anything else, which is  
22 one of the largest Catholic communities. So, there's a  
23 lot of us in this country.

24 RABBI LEWIS: I was referring more

1 specifically to the churches that are labeled "black  
2 churches" and there I have not been successful. So I  
3 apologize for my ignorance. Thank you.

4 MS. THOMAS: No, it was probably mine.

5 MR. BULKOWSKI: I can take an opportunity to  
6 ask Deacon Wood what the diocese has been doing in the  
7 greater Grand Rapids area to make, I too am Roman Catholic  
8 and to make -- but to say, to make our pews more diverse  
9 because our churches are pretty white in Grand Rapids, at  
10 least the ones I've been to.

11 MR. WOODS: I don't think there's -- the  
12 Catholic church at least in my own experience, isn't  
13 famous for its prophetizing or its recruiting. We really  
14 aren't good at it and we don't seem to have an agenda item  
15 like that and I think that's probably okay. I think the  
16 reality, you know, from my own perspective and the ways,  
17 the constructive ways that our diocese is addressing those  
18 issues are to celebrate the ethnicity within our west  
19 Michigan diocese. To build liturgies around that  
20 diversity. To make it a form of prayer and worship that  
21 gives expression to that reality in very concrete visual  
22 ways. And those are really very well attended  
23 celebrations. I think that the dialogues and the  
24 outreaches that are represented there is probably the most

1 effective an appropriate response to the issues that  
2 you're speaking to. Because I think the church's silence  
3 on the issues of racism apart from the multicultural task  
4 force and apart from the black Catholic group within our  
5 diocese needs to be broadened and it needs to be expanded.  
6 And I think those the resources will do precisely that or  
7 at least that's our hope.

8 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: It's really kind of a heavy  
9 question here today and we've heard a lot about denial and  
10 I guess we almost have to go back to the denial question  
11 is how do we get past the denial in Grand Rapids? And  
12 that's not an easy answer and I don't think that's an  
13 answer that we have to have responded to today, but I have  
14 just been here listening to your stories for a very short  
15 time and I think I see the problem and its a serious  
16 problem. With that, are there other questions?

17 Mr. Wood, one of the committee members  
18 would like to know your specific title within the diocese?

19 MR. WOOD: I'm the Chairman of the  
20 Multicultural Task Force and member of St. Mary Magnet  
21 Parish.

22 MR. GREIDANUS: I have an answer to your  
23 question, where do we start? I think GRACE, that's the  
24 Grand Rapids Area Center for Ecumenism, has this racial

1 justice institute, but what we've found helpful, what I  
2 found personally helpful is to start where I am. So I'm  
3 a minister and I relate to the minister down the street and  
4 our congregations are getting to know each other. We've  
5 worshiped together a lot, but now lately we've had  
6 diversity training just like a business and that just  
7 showed that we're just at the tip of the iceberg. It's  
8 when we heard stories from people that we've worshiped  
9 with and that tell us about now the car dealer that gives  
10 them much less of a trade in value than their white  
11 friends. You know this lady sits right with you. It's  
12 much more convincing than seeing it on 20/20 and we're  
13 just trying to enlarge opportunities for people of  
14 different races to get to know each other and become  
15 friends and share their stories.

16 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: I'm just curious. Is there  
17 a urban coalition of business labor operating in Grand  
18 Rapids very much like where we come from? We have Detroit  
19 Renaissance and that's all the business, major  
20 corporations and we have New Detroit where all of the  
21 major corporations sit with their Chairmen, sit on board,  
22 an urban coalition board where these issues are brought to  
23 the forefront and they've dealt with it, always a work in  
24 progress. But at least its put up on a list of

1 priorities, along with making money, its saving citizens  
2 and making our schools better and doing all of those  
3 things and I'm just wondering do you have such an  
4 organization here in Grand Rapids?

5 RABBI LEWIS: I don't know.

6 MR. BULKOWSKI: I think--

7 MR. WOOD: I think the Grand Rapids Chamber  
8 of Commerce is beginning to look at the kinds of issues  
9 talking about. The last luncheon the Grand Rapids Chamber  
10 of Commerce was addressed by Nathan Runstein on the issues  
11 of racism and its institutionalization and cultural biases  
12 that helped to perpetuate it and Nathan received a  
13 standing ovation from those present on the chamber that  
14 day and his presence really came from Bob Woodrick's  
15 invitation and Bob's work with these dialogues and helping  
16 to promote those. So there are members of the chamber and  
17 I think they're listening and they're beginning to pay  
18 attention to some of the messages that are there. It's  
19 coming from the black members of the chamber and again I  
20 think this dialogue and some of the work that Bob's been  
21 doing is giving them a contact and a safe place to be able  
22 to bring these things forward and not have it be seen as  
23 simply black folks who are a little overly sensitive.

24 MR. BULKOWSKI: One question or comment.

1 Again, we're focusing on race up to now, but there's also  
2 the ethnic issue of being a Polish Catholic in western  
3 Michigan. My father moved to Gunnison, of all places, in  
4 the early '60s and wasn't welcome with open arms. You  
5 know what kinds of things are happening between some of  
6 the Protestant churches, Catholic churches and those kinds  
7 of issues as well. Not to put light on those, if any,  
8 because not is all well within the white community.

9 MR. GREIDANUS: I'm of Dutch background, as  
10 you can probably notice. I have this, you know, but  
11 anyway the Dutch men are not really the majority in this  
12 town and protestants weren't either, so but the Grand  
13 Rapids Area for Ecumenism is a totally -- it's the best  
14 ecumenical group I've ever seen in a city where I've  
15 served and I partially served in Canada and then here and  
16 its Catholic are very active in it and protestants and so  
17 that is one place where we do work together a lot and have  
18 a lot of ecumenical things going on. So I think on that  
19 level it's pretty good, but I don't live on the west side  
20 myself, but now -- so there are some differences, but I  
21 think I the cooperation is very good ethnically.

22 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Thank you. We are going to  
23 break for lunch at this time. We really, really  
24 appreciate your taking the time out of your busy schedule

1 today to come before us as a group. I think that as we  
2 continue in the afternoon, I'm still trying to figure out  
3 what the problem is since its not documented or recorded  
4 yet and maybe by the end of the day we will come to some  
5 conclusions. But certainly your testimony today has  
6 helped greatly in understanding better the problem as it  
7 sits. Thank you.

8 ( A luncheon recess was taken.)

9 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: The afternoon session is  
10 called to order. Welcome back for those of you who were  
11 here with us this morning and for newcomers and again we  
12 are the state advisory committee to the U.S. Commission on  
13 Civil Rights and we're holding this forum today on the  
14 very important issues to your area, specifically, race and  
15 ethnic tensions in Grand Rapids and with that I think we  
16 are ready to begin with Mr. Bob Woodrick.

17 BOB WOODRICK

18 D & W FOOD CENTERS

19 Good afternoon and I too am honored and  
20 pleased to be here to share with you my perspectives as  
21 they pertain to the subject of racism or race tensions and  
22 needless to say they are my own perspectives and I have  
23 generated those perspectives for networking this community  
24 for and perhaps I could say focusing on this issue in the

1 last five years. I am the Chairman of D & W Food Centers.  
2 We are a 24 store chain here in western Michigan employing  
3 approximately a thousand associates. I can start by  
4 saying I don't, from what I know about the subject that  
5 Grand Rapids is probably no better or no worse than  
6 probably a lot of other cities, villages and townships in  
7 this country. I would assume its just a matter of degree  
8 or level as it pertains to the subject of racism. But,  
9 this morning the term denial was used quite a bit and I  
10 totally agree with every individual that stated that there  
11 is a strong sense of denial right here in Grand Rapid.  
12 Perhaps another way to put it is that there is most white  
13 people are very unconscious about these issues. And the  
14 real tragedy of that is that this unaware racism is among  
15 many whites of good will. There is no open, honest, and  
16 meaningful dialogue on this subject. From my experience  
17 every time the term racism comes up, people run for cover.  
18 And they go to great lengths sometimes to avoid using the  
19 word racism. I personally feel that's part of the problem  
20 that we have here in Grand Rapids and probably the problem  
21 that we have in the total country. I also feel that the  
22 leadership here in Grand Rapids, whether it be political,  
23 corporate, educational, and religious. If they can  
24 regulate this issue to the bottom half of the agenda,

1 that's where they'll put it. And I personally feel  
2 there's very little effort being made by our leaders to  
3 acknowledge this and even less effort in trying to  
4 eradicate it or develop programs dealing with the issue.  
5 I feel that the community, the black and the white  
6 community here in Grand Rapids are the separate  
7 communities totally. You can go to social and cultural  
8 functions in this city, even supporting events,  
9 restaurants and you see very few people of color at any of  
10 these events.

11 I was at a function three weeks  
12 ago, probably one of the largest social events, the young  
13 ballpark zoo party put on and it was 1,500 individuals  
14 there and I did not see one black face. In fact, I look  
15 at the Grand Rapids press every now and then and I find it  
16 of interest you turn to the engagement wedding page and  
17 there's never a face of color in there. So, as I say, it  
18 just kind of validates what I feel there is little or no  
19 engagement in this community between the community and its  
20 probably because I would imagine its a lot of mistrust,  
21 uncomfortable. People of color are probably uncomfortable  
22 or they're never invited. I do know in 1996 during a  
23 school board election there was bumper stickers and lawn  
24 signs that appeared that were, had a racially charged

1 message and it was stated, "Vote Right Vote White". And  
2 one of our African American school board members made this  
3 statement, now, if any issues are looked at by the Grand  
4 Rapids School Board without viewing them through what is  
5 called a racial lens. Now I know for a fact that there  
6 are certain efforts by the academic community here dealing  
7 with the diversity. But I question its geared primarily  
8 towards students and I'm not sure how much of it is  
9 centered around the administration; teachers and parents.  
10 And I question if you're going to really ever accomplish  
11 anything if you don't deal with the adults as well as the  
12 children. In fact, sometimes within my own company we  
13 feel that if by addressing just diversity and not the  
14 racism, you're never going to get the job done. I think  
15 Texaco is a classic example. In fact, we have a saying in  
16 our company is advocating diversity without acknowledging  
17 racism is like embracing religion without faith,. You  
18 absolutely have to deal with the racist issue if we're  
19 ever going to get to where we, where this community or  
20 this country, this society should be. We have a very  
21 weak transportation system here and needless to say with  
22 the zoning regulations that go on in the suburbs and  
23 between the lack of transportation, a message could be  
24 sent that these outlying communities do not desire or want

1 people who are different. I'm not saying that is their  
2 intention, but that's the message that could be sent.  
3 From my own personal experience, within my own company I  
4 can definitely say that racism is alive and well and I say  
5 that because we have incidents where certain customers  
6 will not accept the change out of the hand of some of our  
7 cashiers who are of color and some of our store directors  
8 have been told that they do not want certain persons  
9 handling their food or packing their groceries. So we've  
10 had telephone calls that have said our stores are getting  
11 too dark. So it sends a message or a signal that we do  
12 have a problem in this community. As I said before, I  
13 think it happens in other communities. But on the other  
14 side I will say as was stated this morning, too, there are  
15 groups of individuals coming together to discuss the  
16 issues of racism and I know from personal experiences and  
17 by doing this, by having this dialogue, bringing these  
18 individuals together in a setting that is safe, that  
19 allows people to really express themselves, to share their  
20 feelings. I have actually seen some transformations go on  
21 and if the transformation doesn't take place, the  
22 consciousness of these individuals is raised to another  
23 level and that's the institute for the healing of racism  
24 which our company -- we have it within our company and we

1 have a couple of individuals in our company who probably  
2 spent half their time working in the community. We have  
3 gotten the institute started with the Aquinas County,  
4 Grand Valley State University, the Catholic and Episcopal  
5 diocese, approximately four high schools have used it and  
6 the chamber of commerce has started a program modeled  
7 after that and Lynn will elaborate on that program.  
8 That's why I can support and feel very good about  
9 President Clinton when he said what we need is a national  
10 dialogue and he's getting I think a bad rap for that. But  
11 I think in my experience that is what we need to do in  
12 this community, in this nation and I can say this, I know  
13 that the Mayor of Little Rock, Arkansas wrote to President  
14 Clinton encouraging him to look at the Institute for the  
15 Healing of Racism which was founded by Nathan Rustik.  
16 We've had him in town here three different times and I  
17 consider that than along with a Professor Joe Fagan as two  
18 of the foremost authorities on the issue of racism, the  
19 white people that probably have spent a good part of their  
20 life studying and trying to understand this issue. So, I  
21 can only say that I am involved in this issue because for  
22 a lot of reasons. I'm taking a public stand in this  
23 community, have spoken out numerous times, probably given  
24 50 speeches in the last five years and all on racism, but

1 I'd like Mike Wood, who I was very moved by his comments  
2 this morning, I too have a personal reason. I happen to  
3 have two grandchildren who are not northern European, but  
4 they are Asian and I know very well that they stand an  
5 excellent chance of being denigrated here in western  
6 Michigan, not because of some act on their part, but  
7 simply because of who they are. So, that is why I would  
8 assume why I'm here this afternoon sharing with you my  
9 perspective as a corporate leader of this community who  
10 happens to have some very strong feelings on this issue.  
11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Next we'll hear from Mary  
13 Jo Kuhlman and will you just state your position and your  
14 organization?

15 MARY JO KUHLMAN

16 Burger King of West Michigan

17 Yes, I certainly will. Good afternoon  
18 and I do appreciate being here this afternoon and  
19 addressing the Advisory Committee. I feel like Bob, its  
20 an honor and I also send regrets from Stewart Ray who is  
21 the president owner of Burger King. He would very much  
22 have liked to be here. My position in the organization  
23 has been organizational development. I've also worked  
24 with Stewart Ray in studying starting a charter school and

1 I continue to work with him on other projects relating  
2 back to the organization which will continue into the  
3 future. So its been primarily one of organizational  
4 development.

5 Each of us is born with a right to  
6 human dignity. But as I look around life I find myself  
7 asking where is that right for the African American, the  
8 Hispanic, the North American Indian and other non white  
9 groups? For racism we can create statistics. We see  
10 people experience it in their everyday lives and we can  
11 read it in our newspaper. Recently the editorial page  
12 printed a pictorial commentary that depicted a child  
13 carrying a decrepit brick building on his back. The  
14 building's name, inner city public schools. The caption  
15 to the picture, the black child's burden. As we visualize  
16 that picture, the building could easily have read your  
17 work place, health care, neighborhood, employment, it  
18 could be any one of us here today for we are not cognizant  
19 of our own racist behaviors. We are a burden to the  
20 future.

21 Burger King is an employer whose 2,500  
22 employee work force is predominantly young people with an  
23 average turn over rate of 100 percent out performing an  
24 industry average of 300 to 400 percent. Our work force

1 reflects a cross section of our community and typical of  
2 most businesses, its concerned with how do we sustain a  
3 business long term if we do not have a community that is  
4 healthy? So when I speak of racism, I see the effects it  
5 has to business and that our young people who do serve as  
6 indicators of tomorrow. And if you agree, then we must  
7 address our beliefs, practices, and infrastructure  
8 urgently today that re-enforce racism for tomorrow's  
9 promises broken in the eyes of our upcoming work force.

10 I've worked with young adults that are  
11 caught as a result of racism in a cycle of discrimination,  
12 minimum wage poverty, less education, disengaged from the  
13 larger society, with a presence of drugs and crime, in an  
14 absence of hope and no signs of belonging. Our systems  
15 are no longer effective for people to be self supporting  
16 and part of a larger community. Our youth are weary and  
17 restless from seeing a lack of response from the decision  
18 makers of today. As a business, Burger King has tried  
19 many ways and continues to explore what can we do to  
20 change. Some efforts have been on a small scale, some on  
21 a larger scale. One effort has been a charter high  
22 school. And I'm going to draw in this experience an  
23 anecdote that reflects those of all our young people. At  
24 the high school was a very bright 18 year old young man

1 whose name is James. His dream was to receive a high  
2 school diploma, get a job and have a family and I believe  
3 that most of us here today probably shared that very same  
4 dream at one time. James had been employed at Burger King  
5 at one time and had dropped out of high school. Through  
6 many conversations with him, I've learned the hatred he'd  
7 experienced from being a young black male and find -- and  
8 not being able to find employment beyond the minimum wage  
9 trap. His vulnerability in finding himself in gang  
10 activity and finally the plight of trying to get out of  
11 that strangle hold.

12 I don't have a happy ending to the  
13 story, but I don't think that's unusual when we look  
14 around the community of west Michigan and for that matter,  
15 across the state. After trying, a great deal of  
16 difficulty to find a support structure, James came to talk  
17 with me and unknown to me at that time, it would be his  
18 last day at school. That conversation ended with James  
19 crying for what seemed to me forever. The next  
20 time I saw him it was from a distance. It was on 28th  
21 Street in Kentwood and he was doing what he despised and  
22 hated the very most and that was selling drugs.

23 As a society we have failed. We cannot  
24 afford to lose our youth to the effects of racism. They

1 are our work force, our customers, our resource and most  
2 importantly they are our children. What hope can we  
3 offer? Breaking the racial strife should not be one of  
4 our youths burden. Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: We're going to hear  
6 comments now from Lynn Ferrell and after that we'll open  
7 it up for questions and answers from the committee.

8 LYNNETTE FERRELL

9 Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce

10 Thank you. I am Lynette Ferrell. I'm  
11 Vice President of Small Business at the Grand Rapids Area  
12 Chamber of Commerce. We appreciate the opportunity to  
13 share some of our thoughts and efforts on this issue of  
14 race. By way of background, we are a membership-based  
15 organization with approximately 3,500 members. We  
16 represent nearly 160,000 employees in the Grand Rapids  
17 metropolitan area. Two years ago we formed a diversity  
18 council made up of CEOs of major employers in our  
19 membership. The mission of diversity is to promote  
20 inclusive employee community. Our motivation for  
21 addressing the issue of diversity is our core value that  
22 it is absolutely the right thing to do. The diversity  
23 programs are based on the presumption that if a group in  
24 an organization does not feel empowered, that organization

1 will suffer. Well, a given organization may have a  
2 differing point that define diversity, race is the one we  
3 believe to be the priority. Our approach to this issue  
4 has the major components; one is the development of a  
5 diversity management system. This is a system of managing  
6 human resources that recognizes that this discipline is as  
7 equally as important a success indicator as traditional  
8 measures such as profitability and quality.

9           The second major component is the  
10 employer's Coalition for Healing Racism which Bob  
11 mentioned earlier. This is a small group activity that  
12 focuses on dialogue. The goal here is to develop  
13 relationships of trust and understanding among multi  
14 ethnic groups. We have recently completed one round of  
15 the dialogue groups and there is quite a bit of interest  
16 in continuing. We are encouraged by this level of support  
17 and participation and we look forward to continuing that  
18 endeavor. We have detailed information on the council,  
19 the diversity management system and the dialogue sessions  
20 for those who are interested. From my own personal  
21 perspective, as vice president of one of the divisions of  
22 the second largest chamber in the state, I am one of fewer  
23 than a dozen and the first in our organization of color to  
24 hold this position. Anecdotal information about things

1 that might lend to is an environment of distrust, I  
2 received a phone call from an individual who asked me  
3 after quite a bit of information about an individual that  
4 was African American, he said to me, Lynn -- obviously  
5 hadn't met me -- Lynn, what are we going to do about those  
6 people because they want to start businesses and get loans  
7 and be right next to us in the business world? And I  
8 said, you know, we probably ought to meet about that if  
9 you really want to talk to me about it. And you can  
10 imagine his surprise as I walked around that corner and he  
11 looked in my face and he was just absolutely stunned. I  
12 am just inundated daily with these types of comments, just  
13 an extreme level of mistrust. I am, by virtue of my  
14 position, my title, given a level of respect that is  
15 re-enforced by my employer, but without that I doubt that  
16 I would be given a level of respect at all.

17 I appreciate the opportunity to speak  
18 with you and again we have information on those three  
19 programs for anyone who might be interested in it.

20 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Thank you. Questions?  
21 Noel?

22 MR. SALEH: Yes, actually this is directed at  
23 any or all of the panel members. Thank you for coming  
24 out. It is nice to see that there's some recognition of

1 the problem and Ms. Ferrell specifically, I would be very  
2 interested in seeing what this diversity counsel program  
3 is doing and how far, but my question is how strongly has  
4 that really been adopted by the chamber as a whole in the  
5 business community in Grand Rapids as a whole?

6 MS. FERRELL: Well, I'll start and I'll turn  
7 it over to Bob because Bob was one of the co-founders of  
8 the Council. Your question about how strongly has it been  
9 embraced by our chamber, our chamber is 109 years old and  
10 from what we understand, this is the first time at an  
11 annual meeting that the subject of race has been the  
12 major focus. So I would say that we've one quite a long  
13 way to embracing the issue. We have dedicated resources  
14 both on the volunteer side and resources of the original  
15 issue. By forming the council and the level of people  
16 that are involved in the council, we've just dedicated a  
17 tremendous amount of resources and time to the issue. I  
18 think the level of support to the council is really driven  
19 by the people that are involved and we did take by design.  
20 We went out and got the major employers in the Grand  
21 Rapids area because when they talked, people listened and  
22 when Bob Woodrick and Stewart Ray and Fred Meyer and the  
23 heads of banks and heads of universities and those types  
24 of people come to the table, people sit up and listen. We

1 did that for two reasons; one, we could harness the  
2 community support that we felt we needed. Two, we really  
3 felt this was a peer to peer activity. It was wonderful  
4 to have Lynn Ferrell telling people that they needed to be  
5 more sensitive, but it was really important, important to  
6 have peer to peer support when it came to making systemic  
7 changes within an organization as it relates to race.

8 I will turn it over to Bob.

9 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Before we go to him I would  
10 just ask a question of you because I'm not sure you've  
11 mentioned that it is been over a hundred years the  
12 organization has been in existence.

13 MS. FERRELL: I haven't been there that  
14 long.

15 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: I know. What prompted the  
16 need for this kind of intervention at this point in time?  
17 Why was -- why is it and is it an idea whose time has just  
18 come or were there some latent problems or were there some  
19 indicators that prompted you to do this at this point in  
20 time? Those are the kinds of things that I'd like to know  
21 and I'm sure this committee would like to know why now?

22 MR. WOODRICK: For myself personally and from  
23 what I tried to take to the chamber when we got started in  
24 the program was approximately four or five years ago, I

1 don't know if any of you heard about the Hudson Institute  
2 report, The Executive Summary 2000 which stated that by  
3 the year 2000 85 percent of the entry level work force  
4 will be comprised of minorities. Then in that same -- a  
5 year later I was in New York at a conference and the  
6 president of Agostino Supermarkets which is a chain in  
7 Manhattan, he gave a readout to the group of the  
8 demographics of his work force and it was 14 percent  
9 white, so the reality of it now this is a business reason  
10 is to get started in this, involved in this issue and I  
11 really feel that the only way this is going to work is if  
12 you prepare your present work force for the entry of  
13 minorities into your work force. You have to create the  
14 right culture, should I say, and so we started then back  
15 within our own council preparing. We have three programs  
16 that we have right now. We have "Living with Diversity",  
17 "Fish Out of Water" and then we bring them into the  
18 institute. And then I talked to Lee Nerowell who is  
19 president of the chamber and told him I think the time had  
20 come for the chamber to take a position on this issue.  
21 That's what I'm referring to the leadership of the  
22 community has to come forward and take a position and if  
23 they do that, it would -- I'm sure others would -- it  
24 makes it easier for others to get involved. As I said,

1 most people avoid this issue, even within the chamber  
2 we've got some, you know, we were talking two or three  
3 years before we finally got them to do something and it's  
4 a very volatile issue. There's fear, you know, and the  
5 more you get into it then all of a sudden you start  
6 realizing and you come -- people who want to educate  
7 themselves, they start realizing there are other reasons.  
8 I mention the moral issue which Mike Woods I think was  
9 alluding to, the importance of you realizing how egregious  
10 this is and if you are the type of a person with any  
11 feeling or any empathy, you come -- you've got to come  
12 help do something, you can't sit on the sidelines. And  
13 that's the problem we have, we have too many. Most white  
14 people, in my opinion, haven't the foggiest notion in the  
15 world what it's like to be black, black in America and  
16 from my experience, they don't want to know because if  
17 they did, there would be pain, shame and embarrassment.  
18 Personally I'm at a complete loss trying to understand how  
19 this society, in good conscious, could rationalize this  
20 disease for all these decades.

21 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: It's called power and  
22 money.

23 MS. FERRELL: The economic reasons are big.  
24 I understand there's an underlying thing, but my

1 contention is the economics and other would be resolved a  
2 lot easier if the hearts and minds were addressed and  
3 looked at. Any ways, I've talked to, but many were very  
4 receptive.

5 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: So you were the catalyst?

6 MR. WOODRICK: And we are the only chamber in  
7 this country that Nathan Rustik has told me that is  
8 dealing with the racism. Everybody's talking diversity,  
9 but we have a coalition for the healing of racism. In  
10 fact, at 3:30 this afternoon I have a meeting with a major  
11 employer. I want to talk about the program.

12 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Noel?

13 MR. SALEH: As a follow up, which it is, in  
14 the submitted material or further remarks, does this  
15 diversity program also focus not just on diversity and  
16 racism to the work force, but does it also address some  
17 standard for management, you know, not infusion from the  
18 bottom, but infusion at all levels of people of color into  
19 the work force.

20 MR. WOODRICK: Well, no, we don't. I don't  
21 think our program addresses that emphatically, but you  
22 mean whether or not how they diversify the work force, do  
23 they have programs, is that what you're referring to?

24 MR. SALEH: Yes, that there be, whether it's

1 quotas or goals or affirmative action, whatever  
2 terminology you want to use in this in terms of not just  
3 diversifying the work force at the entry level positions,  
4 but diversifying the work force in terms of management  
5 supervisory positions, you know, career path within your  
6 respective businesses. You know, Burger King has a  
7 hundred percent turn over. Well, there's got to be some  
8 persons in there that are groomed to become managers, you  
9 know, and is diversity factored into that? You have these  
10 stores, you know I presume you can't manage every one of  
11 them. Is there, again, a facility in this diversity  
12 program where you're grooming persons to become manager  
13 supervisors. And like I said, whether it's addressed now  
14 or whether it's addressed in terms of written submissions  
15 --

16 MS. FERRELL: We will get the written  
17 materials to you, but the idea surrounding the diversity  
18 management system is that, first of all, this type of  
19 issue has to be driven from the time so the CEO has to buy  
20 into the idea and push it down through the organization so  
21 it cannot be bottom up. We really went round and around  
22 about that and really felt the CEO had to be tied in. Two  
23 issues that drove the system; one the idea that Mary Jo  
24 touched on, the high turnover rates in the lower level

1 positions and; two, in the mid management positions in  
2 turnover rates not being able to keep, well what I would  
3 term middle class, mid managers of color in town. We  
4 could recruit them, but we couldn't keep them with any  
5 consistency. So the management system is designed at the  
6 CEO level, mid manager level, and at the lower level to  
7 embrace human resources as it relates to diversity as a  
8 quality indicator, as a success indicator, just like  
9 profits are a success indicator, just like quality is a  
10 success indicator, diversity has to be one of those  
11 success indicators as you move forward. But, again, we'll  
12 get that information to you. We are really still  
13 developing the protocol, but we plan to have it done in  
14 August. I thought your question related to the human  
15 resources application of diversity in terms of career path  
16 and tracks whether or not there was diversity throughout  
17 the organization or are a systematic plan to ensure that  
18 in coming years there would be diversity at all levels.

19 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: We have heard from people  
20 today and we've asked the question -- I don't want to pick  
21 on the police department again, but, you know, when you  
22 start talking about representation at the higher levels,  
23 there has to be a plan for that. It just doesn't happen.  
24 If you've had 50 years of doing it this way, somebody has

1 to sit down and very thoughtfully say, develop a plan to  
2 make sure that there is inclusion in all of it. And I  
3 think his question was, if I'm not mistaken, was one of  
4 planned inclusion at varying levels of management.

5 MS. FERRELL: Yes, but driven by the CEO.

6 MS. HA-AJLUNI: But as a follow up to that, I  
7 know that the chamber has taken a position in diversifying  
8 the work force in the various chamber chambers, but what  
9 sort of commitments are sought from the various -- I don't  
10 want to say organizations, but various businesses by the  
11 chamber?

12 MS. FERRELL: I'm not sure I understand.

13 MS. HA-AJLUNI: Other than saying yes, we  
14 will adopt that position, what type of commitment is the  
15 chamber seeking from the various businesses in terms of  
16 why everybody adopted to a unified plan of unified  
17 training program or --

18 MS. FERRELL: Ideally, once the system is  
19 developed, the diversity management system is designed as  
20 sort of a Baldrige quality award. Its something that you  
21 will have if you are a good company. So we're trying to  
22 position it in a way that companies will want to pursue it  
23 without it being exclusionary. And the other thing is the  
24 Institute we are looking for some commitment there. So we

1 think that the more companies that commit to that program,  
2 the more companies that can go through a program like  
3 that, we will have sort of a base of support as we move  
4 forward.

5 MR. WOODRICK: Bear in mind this is all  
6 relatively new for us. It would be nice if this is two  
7 years from today we could have some success stories for  
8 you, but as I said, it took us two or three years just  
9 talking a lot, coming together and now the action level,  
10 we'll have to see what happens. But what happens I'm  
11 convinced that if you get somebody that feels or knows and  
12 understands the issue, educate themselves and then they  
13 become introspective and they process. You're going to  
14 see something is going happen positive. If they are a  
15 person of good will, they will do something about this.  
16 So we're making an assumption already, I agree, but based  
17 on my own personal experience and the individuals I see  
18 have gone through it the first time we have one of the  
19 leading manufacturers, the head of one of our best,  
20 well-respected individuals was a different person today  
21 than he was a year ago and now, like he says, I haven't  
22 gone through a transportation but his consciousness is at  
23 another level on this issue and he's already starting some  
24 programs within his cost. So, I'm using that as an

1 example of what can happen when you get the wonderful  
2 thing of dialoguing of people. To share their innermost  
3 feelings and its amazing what can happen.

4 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Maybe at the end of each  
5 year or whenever you come together annually for an annual  
6 kind of thing, you might have someone share their plans of  
7 what they've done creatively for that year in almost a  
8 competitive manner and that might spark some interest.

9 MR. HOLLIDAY: Mr. Woodrick, personally I'd  
10 like to commend you for your interest. It seems as if  
11 you're way out in front of a number of your colleagues  
12 that should be right alongside you with this kind of  
13 activity. So, my question is, have you been able to  
14 recruit or link into another CEO type that has taken on  
15 the same kind of fire that you are portraying here today  
16 in terms of pushing for this type of program?

17 MR. WOODRICK: Over the last two or three  
18 years, needless to say there's been a cadre of individuals  
19 -- not a huge, but there is a core of individuals in the  
20 community who are, shall we say becoming more enlightened  
21 whether or not they're ready to -- how do I want to say it  
22 -- really take a strong, forward, outspoken leadership  
23 role, yet I can't say that because maybe they don't have  
24 the opportunity either.

1                   I mean you just don't call up the press  
2 and say, you know, I want to make a statement about this  
3 issue. And I can understand that more than sometime Let  
4 me just say this and I have to be careful how I say this,  
5 but what really disturbs me more than anything else or I  
6 find confusing is the religious leadership. If there's  
7 any component of our society who should be, as Dr. Martin  
8 Luther King, be a drum major for this issue, it should be  
9 the religious community. We have 650 churches in this  
10 community. I mean really we are a religious community and  
11 from a theological standpoint there's no differences on  
12 this issue and I'm at a complete loss there. They don't  
13 put as such emphasis on this as they do on homosexuality,  
14 abortion, and women in the clergy. You know exactly where  
15 they stand on that issue, no ifs ands or buts about it.  
16 They're vocal, they have organizations dealing with it,  
17 right to life. I mean, if they can only bring that zest  
18 and fire to this issue, we would be a lot further along  
19 than we are. And I have gone public on that, so I'm not  
20 saying anything here for the first time. Many, many  
21 people know how I feel about the religious and I say this  
22 as a whole, not individual.

23                   MS. HA--AJLUNI: I also would like to ask Ms.  
24 Kuhlman, maybe I didn't get it, but what does the charter

1 high school do as part of Burger King's Employment  
2 Program?

3 MS. KUHLMAN: Well, what we saw at Burger  
4 King is we could do whatever we wanted within our own  
5 structure, but if we didn't link this and draw into the  
6 community, we could just build another isolated entity  
7 that may address these issues, so and the other piece that  
8 we saw is when we work with our youth, we can see what's  
9 coming in the future far ahead of other organizations.  
10 So you can tend to see what's going to come up and when we  
11 saw those issues, we really saw the need of linking with  
12 high schools to take down some of the bureaucracy that was  
13 impeding the true learning. We really feel that they get  
14 less of an education in our inner city, in our core  
15 cities. Did I answer that question?

16 MS. HA-AJLUNI: I wanted to know what kinds of  
17 actions has Burger King taken? What is a charter high  
18 school?

19 MS. KUHLMAN: What is a charter high school?

20 MS. HA-AJLUNI: What does Burger King do for  
21 a charter high school?

22 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Or what is the operational  
23 aspect of the charter high school? You're preparing your  
24 work force essentially, but is it a commitment to set up a

1 charter school to address some of the inequities that you  
2 see in other --

3 MS. KUHLMAN: Yes, and those, the charter high  
4 school was the west Michigan Academy of Hospitality  
5 Sciences. It was that very broad perspective. They could  
6 also learn the human resource aspect, the accounting  
7 aspect, the legal aspects. It was really to help them  
8 identify what is their dream and prepare them for in next  
9 step in life.

10 When we work with youth, what we find  
11 is that what they're looking for is some kind of economic  
12 power, some kind of support structure and helping them get  
13 to the what's next in my life is what we see. And if we  
14 don't build those kinds of infrastructure, sure, our youth  
15 are caught in that cycle of the effects of racism.

16 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: As a part of your input on  
17 your charter schools, do you have, for example, a  
18 community advisory committee that makes a commitment to  
19 the school? That commitment, not only providing of  
20 additional resources, but finding slots for employment for  
21 these students as they graduate?

22 MS. KUHLMAN: Yes. One of the first aims of  
23 the students at the school was to be employed and the, a  
24 commitment to being a mentor for them as well as finding

1 their career path and identifying that career path very  
2 clearly.

3 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: If there are no further  
4 questions, we really want to thank you. We commend you  
5 for the work that you're doing and keep it up. We hope to  
6 have you come back two years from now and find all those  
7 successes.

8 Any materials that you'd like to share  
9 with us, please turn them in to Peter or forward them to  
10 Peter after today.

11 I'd like to get everybody's name, so  
12 this is Mr. Jorge Rivas, Mr. Paul Mayhue, W. Paul Mayhue,  
13 and Richard Garcia, Commission on Michigan Department of  
14 Civil Rights.

15 I guess we will begin with Mr. Rivas.

16 JORGE RIVAS

17 District Executive, Michigan Department of Civil Rights

18 My name is Jorge Rivas and I have been  
19 living and working in Grand Rapids for 20 years. I was an  
20 investigator and supervisor, now I am an executive for the  
21 Office of Community Services and in these 20 years I have  
22 had an opportunity to review the situation of race  
23 relations in Grand Rapids. I believe that there are still  
24 very significant problems, mainly in corporate America, as

1 I can see in my years as investigator, but also in public  
2 schools, colleges, universities and political departments.  
3 I believe these are very widespread kinds of problems,  
4 however; when you analyze what is happening in the last 20  
5 years I believe that there is some hope. I believe  
6 nothing that people like Bob Woodrick and some of the  
7 groups are doing what they are doing. The Department of  
8 Civil Rights has taken a very strong stance in race  
9 relations in my position along with Jim Vert, another  
10 person in our office of community services. We have been  
11 working very hard to address these issues in the schools,  
12 colleges and universities and police departments in the  
13 last 20 years that I have lived in Grand Rapids. I have  
14 seen in education, as an example, that for the first time  
15 there was a black superintendent a few years ago, Dr. John  
16 Dowl. Now a new person has been hired, Dr. Patricia  
17 Newby, also an African American superintendent of the  
18 public schools. So when I see back 20 years and I see now  
19 I can see some advance has been made, little by little;  
20 however, much more needs to be done. The Department has  
21 been followed carefully while this is happening regarding  
22 race relations and one of my year -- in the last years is  
23 the current activity of the Klu Klux Klan in Michigan as  
24 well as in Grand Rapids. In the last couple of years the

1 Klu Klux Klan has come four times to Michigan; one time to  
2 Grand Rapids and needless to say, when the KKK comes to  
3 town, there is tensions and there are problems and we have  
4 a lot of problems when these groups come to town.  
5 Although in addition to that, also there are some kind of  
6 activities that are very distressing and I would mention a  
7 couple of examples. Last year two vietnamese went to a  
8 local bar in Grand Rapids. One was sitting on a table and  
9 the other one was dancing on the floor. Without any  
10 provocation or any verbal argumentation, a white teenager  
11 came to the table where the vietnamese was sitting down,  
12 and without any provocation, again, he hit the vietnamese  
13 so hard that the vietnamese person fell down, hit his head  
14 on the cement, went into a deep coma right away and four  
15 hours later he died. Needless to say this is exactly what  
16 we call hate crimes that some people attack you only  
17 because of who you are. And it was, of course, extremely  
18 distressing for the community and mainly for the native  
19 American community. Recently also two schools; one from  
20 Sparta which is in Kane County and one from Wyoming went  
21 to a field trip in the Jumbolt Park Zoo here in Grand  
22 Rapids. One of the schools did not have any minorities  
23 enrolled in that group that came to the zoo. The other  
24 school had -- one school had two African Americans, the

1 other school did not have any minorities. When they  
2 converged into the zoo in the park, some of the white  
3 students started to call the African American students all  
4 kinds of names and eventually a fight started among all  
5 the students, not only the whites and African Americans,  
6 but everyone that was in from the schools participating in  
7 the fight. The teachers and administrators that were with  
8 the students could not control the situation and they  
9 eventually had to call the police department. Subsequent  
10 to that, some students were expelled and others who were  
11 suspended for a period of time because of the fight that  
12 occurred. In addition to that, working not only with the  
13 Grand Rapids community, but throughout western Michigan, I  
14 have seen also that Hispanics especially migrants have  
15 been suffering a lot because they come from another state,  
16 they are from another country many times, and when they  
17 come to work sometimes they are harassed. Recently a  
18 group of white teenagers went to the farm camps and broke  
19 the windshields and the windows of the peacock (phonetic)  
20 or the migrants. Obviously, we talked to the police. The  
21 police intervened and eventually that took care of the  
22 problem. More recently there were two incidents that are  
23 worthy to be mentioned. Earlier in the year there was a  
24 gay man that was teaching in one of the local public

1 schools. As far as we understand, he was an excellent  
2 teacher. Nobody knew for a long period of time that he  
3 was gay. Eventually the information came out that there  
4 was a gay teacher in a school system where there was no  
5 significant tolerance, I can say, for this kind of  
6 difference of opinion. Eventually the teacher was  
7 suspended and forced to resign only because he was gay,  
8 despite the fact that he had been teacher for many years  
9 and his students themselves, some of the students  
10 indicating that he was an excellent, excellent person.

11 Subsequently, he died, this teacher,  
12 and it was amazing to see the community united. Somehow  
13 they went to the church, over 500 people that so-called  
14 was on this person when he died came to the church because  
15 he was, besides being a gay person, he was an excellent  
16 teacher. And in Muskegeon, which is not far away from  
17 here, now there was an incident again of hate crime as we  
18 call it or is perceived to be that way. There was an  
19 African American that was driving his car. Eventually  
20 police officers came and after a series of incidents some  
21 police officers beat up this gentlemen. He ended up in  
22 the hospital and he was terrifying looking at his picture,  
23 how bad he was beat up. The state police department  
24 conducted an investigation and eventually one officer

1 charged with aggravated assault and now he is in court and  
2 has been terminated from his job.

3           Again, I believe that this gives you a  
4 synthesis of what is happening in Grand Rapids as well as  
5 Michigan. But I also wanted to say one final word about  
6 what the department is doing to address those issue. The  
7 Office of Community services has met already with 95  
8 percent of all the sheriffs and chiefs of police  
9 throughout western Michigan. We are training police  
10 departments to start departments in diversity and race  
11 relations and hate crimes. We are also training public  
12 schools, colleges and universities. My function, along  
13 with Jim Vert and some other employees on the department  
14 were to training and invited school police departments and  
15 in other places to accept this diversity training. I have  
16 to also mention finally that Channel 8, one of the local  
17 television programs had what I perceived to be an  
18 excellent program for a period of time. They have hat  
19 they call Education First and that was just a brief  
20 comment on Education First and let's write off prejudice  
21 in Grand Rapids. Its a civil rights we perceive. I saw  
22 that these kind of messages are what we need in our  
23 community to improve our race relations and I believe that  
24 the accident has been extremely aggressive in these

1 issues, not only taking complaints, but providing  
2 diversity training. And later on Commissioner Richard  
3 Garcia is going to talk about what else the Department is  
4 doing.

5 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Thank you.

6 W. PAUL MAYHUE

7 County Commissioner, Kent County

8 My name is W. Paul Mayhue, Kent County  
9 Commissioner, 17th District. I've been a commissioner in  
10 Kent County, a Kent County Commissioner for approximately  
11 ten years. Prior to that a community activist for ten  
12 years and with Acorn movement going back to the late early  
13 '70s and then prior to that well I began my life by my  
14 father being ran out of Arkansas by the Klu Klux Klan to  
15 White Cloud, Michigan and we stayed in White Cloud,  
16 Michigan and then moved subsequently to Grand Rapids after  
17 we had to leave all our property and stuff in Arkansas. I  
18 went to Franklin School and at Franklin School is the  
19 second incident where I began to really deal with this  
20 racist thing and this is my formative years, early years.  
21 We had a teacher that would be, I'd just say 3rd or 4th  
22 grade teacher that would come in and discipline us and  
23 would wash her hands and she'd wipe her door knob off  
24 because we touched the door knob and she would do little

1 weird things to us like pull our ears and then go and wash  
2 her hands to make sure she was clean. And as I began to  
3 evolve, then, you know, my other brush with racism again,  
4 you know, as a child in this community, I've been here in  
5 the community since I was about four or five years old and  
6 so as a child in the community I can remember, you know,  
7 not going out of my neighborhood and being called, you  
8 know, boogie nose, boogie and you get a lot of racial  
9 harassment for just walking out of our little area. And  
10 then I guess in my 20s, prior to going to the army, the  
11 thing that really began to soak in was at one time I had  
12 to go to court to defend my mother and because what  
13 happened is she had owed a bill to a plumber and the  
14 plumber she had paid the bill and she had evidence that  
15 she paid the bill. So I went to court with my mother and  
16 what really one of the things that really made me to  
17 connect this activity, this person that day is that the  
18 judge sit and laughed at us. As we tried to present our  
19 case to the judge, we were laughed at and so subsequently,  
20 you know, my mother had to pay the bill again. So, then I  
21 moved into this Acorn thing and done that and so I'm not  
22 going to get into all of that, but what I wanted to do is  
23 just give you a little picture of how I got to be who I  
24 am. And then I have some papers and some documents here

1 that I'm going to leave with you. In 1995 as we come back  
2 from the Million Man March, from Washington, come back  
3 with a group of people on the bus, it was really  
4 interested in trying to make a difference in our  
5 community. So we came back committed men, wanted to make  
6 a difference in our community. One of the problems that  
7 one of the situations that we kind of decided on the bus  
8 that we would work on is the situation of excessive force  
9 and police brutality. So, as we got back there were  
10 things happening in Grand Rapids and in western  
11 Michigan, the most prevalent at the time that we got back  
12 was an incident in Kalamazoo, Michigan where three Grand  
13 Rapids police officers went to Kalamazoo, Michigan and  
14 harassed some African American people in Kalamazoo,  
15 Michigan and subsequently they beat the guys up and  
16 subsequently they were acquitted, let go free, you know,  
17 because the press and everybody else highlighted that the  
18 people that were beat up had records. So, the three  
19 police officers got off. Those were -- and what  
20 interests me, I took time off of work to go to Kalamazoo  
21 and the interesting thing about what was happening in  
22 Kalamazoo at the time that this trial was going on is  
23 before myself and my contingent got there, it was a  
24 situation where it was all caucasians in the court room

1 and except for the attorneys for one of the police  
2 officers. When we got there as we walked in it was like  
3 Big Jack time, you know, everybody was laughing and having  
4 a good time, you know. And then so as we began this  
5 comedy scene there. The judge did begin to admonish the  
6 people, this is not a funny thing, let's get serious about  
7 this. So, but anyway that situation there propelled us in  
8 our communities to form a group called the West Michigan  
9 March Delegation. The West Michigan March Delegation at  
10 the present time took up the cross, took up the situation  
11 and began to work on the excessive force and police  
12 brutality issue in the community where those three  
13 officers, the same three officers that went to Kalamazoo  
14 and with the problems were the same three officers that  
15 worked right in my district and were doing harassment and  
16 brutalizing people in my district. In fact, two of those  
17 officers were officers that drove an automobile up on a  
18 curb and rammed into a young man that was suspected of  
19 dealing drugs. We objected vehemently to that, you know,  
20 but in a way to know avail because the chief did not see  
21 that as wrong. That he felt that it was okay for him to  
22 drive the car across the sidewalk and run into the person.  
23 So, we began to deal with this problem, with excessive  
24 force and police brutality and so as we maneuvered on, we

1 devised the idea that we wanted a citizen's review board.  
2 And we worked very diligently in trying to put this  
3 citizen's review board together. So, in January of --  
4 this happened in 1995, so in January of 1996 we went to  
5 the city Commission with the contingent of about 40 to 50  
6 people that had testimony about various atrocities that  
7 had happened in our community dealing with police  
8 behavior, not -- mind you, this is not all police, we have  
9 a respect for some of the police in our community and that  
10 all police in our community are not guilty of doing these  
11 types of things. But, as the documents that I will leave  
12 you that are dated January 23rd, 1996 will clearly show  
13 that these people did in fact say these atrocities  
14 happened to them. Such as you know people that were being  
15 stopped with handcuffs and their heads being banged on the  
16 sidewalk, people that were being kicked, you know, while  
17 handcuffed and just generally brutalized and cursed at.  
18 And just treated really in a real negative way while being  
19 handcuffed. So, we worked on this citizen's police review  
20 board for quite a while and finally from a political  
21 standpoint, the powers that be saw that the citizens  
22 review board there was a lot of public sentiment, even the  
23 press sided with us, which was unusual because the press  
24 hates Paul Mayhue's name, but even the press sided with us

1 in this fight for a citizen's review board and so finally  
2 the mayor and the three other Commissioners got together  
3 and they pushed it through with the opposition of three  
4 other commissioners, they pushed through a civilian  
5 appeals board which is a weak, watered down version of  
6 what we had initially went for; very weak, very watered  
7 down and is basically just window dressing because the  
8 police chief still has the last say on it and he can  
9 appeal and turn anything down that he wants. So basically  
10 its kind of window dressing for people but, still its  
11 something and its something better than nothing. So we  
12 got 15,000 people in this community, 15,000 signatures  
13 from different people in this community that forced a  
14 stronger citizen's review board. But the chief who is  
15 married to the city clerk, the city clerks' office they  
16 kind of pooh pooh'd our petitions, but that got pooh  
17 pooh'd, but sometimes we have their weak, watered down  
18 version of what's happened.

19 So then in tandem to that there was an  
20 attorney by the name of Joe Tooley who I happened to run  
21 into. Joe, in this situation, Joe had been working on a  
22 situation dealing with police seizure. I've got the  
23 article here that I'm going to leave with you and this was  
24 a 11-24-96. Now, in dealing with police seizure, we

1 identify such as we because people here felt like we are  
2 under siege and after I left this stuff and you kind of  
3 peruse it, you can see how we feel being under siege. But  
4 Joe, in his wisdom, was collecting data on what has  
5 happened to African Americans in the inner city of Grand  
6 Rapids. So the press had went out and did a study and  
7 about this here situation and they had found that out of  
8 87 people stopped within a certain time period is about a  
9 year, maybe a year, maybe a year, stopped and their  
10 property cited, their money taken, no arrests, but just  
11 people's property taken, the money seized, no arrests.  
12 Out 687 people they did that with, 84 was African  
13 American during this particular period of time. We felt  
14 that that was pretty racist so Joe then at that point  
15 initiated a suit against the city, you know, for that  
16 which judge -- and we also found that the police  
17 department in the seizure were guilty of a misdemeanor in  
18 that they were issued in court papers illegally. Now  
19 judge Sutz finally decided that well, we'll tell them to  
20 stop issuing the court papers illegally, so that's what  
21 happened with that. But anyway in a situation of  
22 excessive force and police brutality is a situation that  
23 kind of runs across the -- it centers on African  
24 Americans, but as you can see, it's a situation that's all

1 over the community. Now this is a cause case and male  
2 here that happened to in -- he's at Kent, Ward or Wyoming,  
3 but anyway, I'll leave this with you too. And I had a bus  
4 load of children and he was trying to control the children  
5 and all of a sudden he ends up getting beat up and then we  
6 can, we tried to redress his problem. You know, it was  
7 said that well, no you don't have a problem the police  
8 were right. Then also I have another clipping of  
9 something that happened in East Grand Rapids a where  
10 police officer was suspended for three days for harassing  
11 children as well. And we know in our community that when  
12 we ride through East Grand Rapids, driving while black.  
13 It's a very egregious situation because if you ride  
14 through east Grand Rapids and if you happen to look like a  
15 hippie or you're a black guy, you're going to get  
16 stopped; black male or female, you're going to get stopped.  
17 So that's the stuff on my police stuff and I'm leaving all  
18 of that. And so then I can't forget to mention my friend  
19 who happened to be my attorney and his picture is here.  
20 Now my friend's name is Anthony Green. Now he was an  
21 attorney -- know this is the weirdest thing that I've ever  
22 seen in my life -- Anthony was at his office one day and  
23 he was putting -- unloading his car. His car was parked  
24 in an alley at his offices. He's an attorney, so as he

1 goes into his office and he had been parked in the  
2 alley for a couple of hours, unloading his car, a police  
3 officer comes by and hauls his car in. Okay, then Anthony  
4 has to go down to the police station to get his car. Then  
5 he wonders why did they haul his car in? The most they  
6 probably should have did was give him a ticket. So  
7 Anthony goes down to the police station and all of a  
8 sudden they say well you got to pay \$300 to get your car  
9 out. So he's trying to figure out why does he have to  
10 pay \$300 to get his car out? Then he's talking and  
11 talking to this one police officer, this lieutenant and  
12 he's talking to this guy at the desk and the lieutenant  
13 says, come up and say, why are you talking to this guy at  
14 the desk like that? Obviously he's a little upset because  
15 he has to pay \$300 for what he didn't feel he should have  
16 to pay 4300 for. Well the next thing he knows is the  
17 lieutenant, he turns around, he said to the lieutenant,  
18 you're stupid for doing this, you know. You're stupid for  
19 bothering me like this. He turned around, the lieutenant  
20 sprays him in the face at point blank range with mace and  
21 he's on the floor and they drag him into the back and  
22 while the police chief is looking, they drag him into the  
23 back and he's got a bad heart, so he almost dies. And so  
24 he called me that night and let me know what was

1 happening, so this is being investigated.

2 Now, I talked to, I have her name,  
3 Janet Reno's chief of staff about these issues. I talked  
4 to Mr. Dettmer about these issues. Mr. Dettmer has got 87  
5 of these here police seizures. I gave him all of the  
6 copies of the police seizures that was erroneously done.  
7 Mr. Dettmer has those and I was, you know, and Mrs. Reno  
8 said that he was supposed to be getting back to me. I  
9 haven't heard back from Mr. Dettmer about what he's doing  
10 with these and I just kind of felt like what police do is  
11 confidential, so he wouldn't tell me, you know. So anyway  
12 that's what happening there.

13 Well, I'll leave this here, but I did  
14 want to say a couple more things about a couple more  
15 issues.

16 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Can I just ask you to let's  
17 here from the next person and as I think we're going to  
18 have enough time for us to have questions and answers and  
19 really get into this, but I want to get this testimony on  
20 record so that we can have ample time. We have about  
21 another fifteen minutes to go, so if we could hear from  
22 you then we can get back to your final statements as well  
23 as questions from the panel.

24 RICHARD GARCIA

1 Michigan Department of Civil Rights

2 Yes, good afternoon. My name is  
3 Richard Garcia and I'm speaking to you today on behalf of  
4 the Michigan Civil Rights Commission -- usually I don't  
5 have that problem, people are able to hear me, but I'll  
6 try again. I'm here on behalf of the Michigan civil  
7 Rights Commission and the Michigan Department of Civil  
8 Rights. Director Dr. Lynette Lee Reynolds. I am one of  
9 eight commissioners and I was appointed by Governor Engler  
10 to serve on the Michigan Civil Rights Commission. I'm the  
11 current Chair of its bias crime sub committee. On a  
12 personal, professional note, I'm civil rights attorney  
13 with Lynch, Gallagher, Lynch and Martino in Lansing,  
14 Michigan.

15 In April of 1994 Governor John Engler  
16 responded to reports of increased hates and violence by  
17 requesting the Michigan Civil Rights Commission and the  
18 Department of Civil Rights to establish a bias crime  
19 response task force. The current chairperson of our  
20 commission, Dr. Evelyn Krane, was appointed to co-chair  
21 this task force with the regional director of the anti  
22 defamation league, Richard H. Lovenal. Immediately  
23 following hear election in March of 1997 as chair of our  
24 Commission, Dr. Krane identified the implementation of the

1 bias crime response task force report as one of her top  
2 priorities and; therefore one of our Commission's top  
3 priorities. In the Governor's original charge to the  
4 Commission he listed seven objectives which included  
5 establishing a statewide network to deal with hate  
6 violence incidents, analyzing data collected from hate  
7 violence incidents to ascertain which gang trend,  
8 determining future educational and prevent strategies and  
9 developing appropriate evaluation tools. And working with  
10 the legislature and civil rights agencies to deal with  
11 issues raised by hate violence incidents and their  
12 perpetrators and to establish policies for preventative  
13 strategies.

14                   The bias crime response task force  
15 represented the broad-based statewide network of  
16 populations victimized by bias crime incidents. As well  
17 as agencies and governmental units which offered various  
18 related services. For the purposes of the task force, and  
19 for your information, the following definition of bias  
20 crime was: "Bias crime is any act of intimidation,  
21 harassment, physical force or threats of physical force  
22 directed against any person or family or any property or  
23 advocates motivated either in whole or in part by  
24 hostility because of race, color, ethnic background,

1 national origin, religion, and disability or sexual  
2 orientation, real or perceived, with the intent of causing  
3 fear and intimidation or of defining the free exercise or  
4 enjoyment of any rights or privileges secured by the  
5 Constitution or laws of the United States or the State of  
6 Michigan whether or not performed under color of law." It  
7 seems like it was drafted by a lawyer. In order to  
8 address the Governor's objectives for the task force,  
9 three standing committees were established; data  
10 collection and trend analysis, community response, and  
11 victim support. The focus of these three standing  
12 committees was to develop the best approach for Michigan  
13 to be more effective in combating hate crime incidents.  
14 The data collection and trend analysis committee  
15 determined that there was not an established uniform  
16 method for collection data on hate violence instances.  
17 The committee, response committee established a need for  
18 support to municipalities in the development of a  
19 community-based bias crime response system. And the  
20 victim support committee defined a support system for  
21 victims of such crimes.

22                   The task force went on to approach it  
23 at that time, particularly providing effective strategies  
24 and recommendations for Michigan communities to respond to

1 any incidents of hate and hate crimes. The task force  
2 report is currently being printed; however, I do have a  
3 copy to leave with you today. I will provide additional  
4 copies upon request. We are producing and distributing  
5 the task force report to the Board-based network of  
6 organizations and agencies that participated in the task  
7 force initiative as well as to local human relations  
8 agencies could and commissions. Its not just a report,  
9 its a tool and its a tool that we believe can assist this  
10 advisory committee in addressing the race and ethnic  
11 tensions in Grand Rapids. The Commission's bias crime  
12 subcommittee feels that it is more that the hate crime  
13 statistical data published by the Michigan State Police  
14 through its central record division, uniform reporting  
15 section to be shared with the task force and the network  
16 of human relation agencies. That the Department meets on  
17 a regular basis, met with on a regular basis. The  
18 Commission's bias crime subcommittee is currently  
19 exploring partnership opportunities such as with such  
20 organizations such as the Michigan Bar Association and the  
21 Michigan Prosecutor's Association and in presenting a  
22 training initiative for the legal judicial system with  
23 primary focus on the pre sentencing review of perpetrators  
24 of hate crimes. The report identifies bias crime

1 incidents as acts motivated by prejudice and hatred.  
2 These acts affect the fundamental rights of the victim as  
3 well as the group of which the victim is a member or  
4 perceived to be a member. These are acts of terrorism,  
5 designed to produce feelings of being violated,  
6 de-personalized and isolated and they deprive individuals  
7 of their sense of security and self worth. Bias crime  
8 incidents pose a unique danger to our society in Michigan  
9 where diversity is regarded as one of our greatest  
10 strengths, they act under minimum, the very fable of a  
11 pluralistic society and diminish our collective strength,  
12 bias crime incidents cannot be ignored, will not be  
13 condoned and must be vigorously prosecuted.

14 My colleague, Mr. Rivas from the  
15 Michigan Department of Civil Rights provided you with  
16 information regarding bias crime incidents occurring in  
17 Grand Rapids and southwest Michigan communities. The  
18 Michigan Civil Rights Commission and the Civil Rights  
19 Department urge government at every level, including the  
20 United States Civil Rights Commission to diligently  
21 investigate all reports of such conduct and vigorously  
22 enforce the laws against its perpetrators to ensure that  
23 the people of Michigan can live in an environment free of  
24 intimidation, violence, and prejudice. As an individual

1 commissioner, I must say that its a unique experience to  
2 sit on this side of the table providing you with the  
3 assistance as opposed to the other way around. I welcome  
4 the experience and I thank you for the opportunity. As an  
5 individual commissioner, I want everyone to be hopeful and  
6 optimistic, though there are many concerns voiced, I  
7 personally believed that the good work of this advisory  
8 commission, advisory committee, United States Civil Rights  
9 Commission, our Commission and the Michigan Department of  
10 Civil Rights as well as others, all other agencies and  
11 people committed; like the business people you heard from  
12 today. With all of our work, I think we've made real  
13 progress. I think that progress has been testified to by  
14 the commissioner here. His father was run out of town.  
15 He is a commissioner for the county. I think that kind of  
16 progress we all should be proud of and when we hear these  
17 kinds of stories, not only should we look to how we have  
18 to improve the patient, which Reverend Van, one of our  
19 fellow commissioners said at the last meeting that he felt  
20 that race relations was like a patient undergoing major  
21 surgery. I agreed with him, but I had a different  
22 perspective. Maybe 20 to 30 years ago that patient was in  
23 a coma, today I believe the patient is still critical, but  
24 at least in stable condition with a good work of people

1 like yourself. And I personally thank you and I thank you  
2 from my commission that which I'm proud to be a member of.

3 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Thank you very much. We  
4 have a limited time at this point to entertain questions.  
5 I also know that Mr. Mayhue had another point that he  
6 wanted to make for the record. Are any of these --

7 MR. MAYHUE: I can be short.

8 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: I'm going to ask you please  
9 to keep your remarks to no more than two minutes.

10 MR. MAYHUE: The other comment that I wanted  
11 to make is that there was a -- in our sheriff's  
12 department, the Kent County Commissioner, there was a  
13 person that died in jail the other day named Mr. Gillespie  
14 who had died because he just needed some attention for his  
15 ulcer or something like that. And it was not given any  
16 medical attention. That's being investigated by one of  
17 our local attorneys. There's been eight incidents within  
18 the past year and a half, people dying or hanging  
19 themselves in the Kent County jail and that needs to be  
20 looked into. Also, there's a de facto, the services in  
21 this community are de facto-ly segregated. So the inner  
22 city, if we look at services in the inner city, black  
23 children and Hispanic children, the services are moved  
24 away in the outlying areas away from them. So there's

1 people working trying to build youth centers and stuff,  
2 but they're running into roadblocks because that money  
3 don't flow like it really should. That's another issue  
4 and in this system, you know, as a commissioner we just  
5 recently brought up the fact that the whole county, in a  
6 whole county there's not one African American or Hispanic  
7 navigator in this system. That means a director or  
8 something like that and so we just -- it took me ten years  
9 to get this problem to the front burner and it just hit  
10 the newspaper about a couple of months ago, so that's  
11 another issue. And then in terms of banking. The South  
12 Side Bank was sabotaged by this community. South Side  
13 Bank is a community bank that had emphasis on black and  
14 Hispanic people. It was basically sabotaged and swooped  
15 away. So blacks want to try to empower them, black and  
16 Hispanic poor folks wanted to try to empower themselves  
17 through banks and that bank situation was sabotaged and  
18 then the president of the bank didn't really lend it a lot  
19 of credence too, so it kind of went under too.

20 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Thank you. Are there  
21 questions for either of the three speakers? Sue.

22 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: I have a question for  
23 Mr. Rivas. Earlier this morning we had the opportunity to  
24 hear testimony from the FBI and from the United States

1 Attorneys Office of the Western District. The impression  
2 that they gave is that they were not receiving cases of  
3 racial intimidation or harassment or that local districts  
4 were handling those cases so effectively that they did not  
5 feel the need to intervene or that those offices didn't  
6 feel the need to involve them. I was wondering if your  
7 office at the state level has any interaction with either  
8 of those federal departments because it sounds like you  
9 have several examples of crimes hate crimes that are not  
10 being effectively addressed?

11 MR. RIVAS: Yes, as a matter of fact, we have  
12 very close communication, both with the FBI as well as  
13 State Police Department and the local entities; either the  
14 sheriff as well as the police department, and every time  
15 that an incident happens, an incident of hate crime, cross  
16 burning, beating a person because of race or religion,  
17 whatever the case might be, the FBI is immediately  
18 contacted, either by the state police department, by the  
19 sheriff or by us, but they are aware, they are made aware  
20 that an incident happened and, as a matter of fact, in one  
21 incident in Three Oaks, which is by Indiana, the corner of  
22 Indiana, Michigan and Chicago, there was an incident of a  
23 hate crime. The first person that attended, the first  
24 official was the FBI agent in that locality. So they are

1 made aware again either by the state police department, by  
2 the sheriff or by ourselves.

3 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: Do you have a formal  
4 mechanism for alerting the FBI? Is there some paper  
5 process, tracking process because it seems maybe probably  
6 the most interesting thing for me in terms of sitting on  
7 the panel when we come into a jurisdiction is that its  
8 almost as I wish everybody that appeared before us could  
9 stay the entire day because I always feel like I'm finding  
10 out something that the person who gave testimony this  
11 morning doesn't know. Like there's just gaps in  
12 communication.

13 MR. RIVAS: As a matter of fact, as  
14 Commissioner Garcia indicated, there was no instrument  
15 before. Now from the report task force, from the hate  
16 crime task force, they developed the instrument that  
17 Commissioner Garcia was referring to and as a matter of  
18 fact was going to be implemented now and we had an  
19 appropriate system, the form to track exactly what is  
20 happening throughout Michigan.

21 MR. GARCIA: If I may add, I would like to  
22 note that the Federal Bureau of Investigation did send a  
23 delegate, a representative to the state task force and  
24 they served, the gentlemen served as part of the team that

1 dealt with the trend analysis and so the Commission as  
2 well as the Department does work closely, as closely as we  
3 can with the federal agencies, including the Federal  
4 Bureau of Investigation.

5           CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: You indicated that you  
6 were, as a part of your presentation, that your task force  
7 or subcommittee, you were currently analyzing hate crime  
8 data. Is that what you know said? And I guess my  
9 question is since we heard this morning that it is very  
10 difficult to get these incidents of hate crimes and bias  
11 reporting through the local law enforcement authority, it  
12 seems to me that you must have a different way of getting  
13 it because by right its kept by the local police  
14 department. If they don't do a good job of keeping these  
15 records or if they choose not to keep the records or if  
16 they miss classify incidents and call it something that  
17 its not, how good is your data? How good will your  
18 statistics be?

19           MR. GARCIA: The statistics that we receive  
20 come directly from the Michigan State Police Department.  
21 The Michigan State Police collect their data from not only  
22 different Michigan State Police positions, I would  
23 imagine, but also local authority. You're right, one of  
24 the problems you have is local authority may not know what

1 a hate crime is and part of our task is to educate local  
2 authorities in identifying what a hate crime is and being  
3 able to report that information to the state police to  
4 address specifically your comments regarding availability  
5 of such data. It's surprisingly easy. You pick up the  
6 phone and you call the Michigan State Police Department.  
7 That particular division that I referenced in my remarks  
8 and they will fax it to you. That's how we get it. But  
9 what we found is that the state police was standing back  
10 and saying this is available to anyone who wants it. Our  
11 task is to get it, put some analysis with it and ship it  
12 out to people who may just be sitting by their desk  
13 thinking, boy I really wish I had this information. I  
14 just don't know where to get it. We're trying to at least  
15 be a conduit by which this information isn't just kept  
16 until it's asked for, but it's regularly requested for and  
17 disseminated and the best way we know how to disseminate  
18 it is through the representatives, through the task force.

19 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: I want to be clear on what  
20 I'm asking and what you're responding. What I'm hearing  
21 and I want, I really want to get to the bottom of this in  
22 terms of clarification. I am hearing that local law  
23 enforcement authority at will can or cannot choose to  
24 forward this data to the state police, the FBI or anyone

1 else and so I am questioning perhaps the accuracy of those  
2 statistics that you may be receiving in that I don't see  
3 anywhere along the line anyone that has any law  
4 enforcement or any enforcement capable to force anybody  
5 out there to tell them what they're doing. And I think  
6 your observations are very astute and accurate.

7 MR. GARCIA: I believe that the local  
8 agencies are under no obligation to do that. Our hope is  
9 by educating the local agencies they'll be encouraged to  
10 do that. You're right, the data we probably received from  
11 the Michigan State Police may not be complete. The extra  
12 ordinary job of getting complete data is one of the things  
13 that we focused on in terms of one of our tasks. Its one  
14 third of what it is we identified the problem to be. The  
15 problem is three-fold the way we see it. The first part  
16 of the problem is getting the data, understanding what the  
17 problem is. The second is getting the community to  
18 respond to the problem, and the third is dealing with the  
19 victim and providing care for these victims once they're  
20 victimized. Superimposed on top of all of that, in our  
21 opinion, is the need to deter hate crimes through more  
22 stringent enforcement; identifying hate crimes, giving  
23 that as a extra tool for the prosecutor, but most  
24 importantly educating the judges and the judicial system

1 to utilize hate crime information to deal with that in  
2 terms of sentencing criminals. Someone may hit you and it  
3 will hurt and you will be bruised. That bruise will go  
4 away. If someone hits you because of who you are, that  
5 bruise may never go away. That makes that kind of crime  
6 is a more heinous crime and a crime that requires more, a  
7 higher sentencing. It requires it to be used in terms of  
8 factors of the sentencing guidelines and that's what we're  
9 going to try to work on in educating, not only judges and  
10 prosecutors, but people who write pre-sentence reports as  
11 well.

12 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: I think this body  
13 understands that very well. We've been dealing with this  
14 issue now for about three years. We've held hearings on  
15 hate crime in Michigan and back then the problem was the  
16 inability to get data from local law enforcement agencies.  
17 It still is a problem.

18 When you say that there is no way to  
19 get them to do it, its not really true in the sense that  
20 there is a law that comes from Washington, D.C. from the  
21 U.S. Department of Justice on hate crimes that says its  
22 the responsibility to collect this data now. Maybe these  
23 are unfunded mandates and no money went along with it and  
24 no teeth went along with it to do anything other than to

1 ask people to do it. But, clearly there's a law on the  
2 books that says this must be done and I guess my question  
3 was where are the teeth from the state of Michigan? Where  
4 are the teeth from the U.S. Attorney General's Office?  
5 We're trying to put this puzzle together so that three  
6 years from now we won't come back and we're still saying  
7 well, we're getting a little bit more data, but we still  
8 don't know and it's a statement really. I don't believe  
9 that you've got the answer to it. I know I don't.

10 MR. GARCIA: I don't know if I have the  
11 answer to it or not, but I can tell you that even though  
12 you cannot statistically say that you have every incident  
13 of a hate crime, one of the things you have to do is  
14 educate your local agencies; make sure your local  
15 authorities in and outside of government recognize them,  
16 report them and we get that information. But I think what  
17 we would to have through the Michigan State Police is a  
18 very good cross section. It may not be a statistically  
19 complete and completely accurate, but it's a good  
20 foundation from which he can work and do the jobs that we  
21 need done. And so I too commend the state police and the  
22 reporting that they have done and would suggest that while  
23 it is not complete, it may be adequate for purposes, at  
24 least at this point.

1 MS. HA-AJLUNI: Where does the state police  
2 get their statistics from?

3 MR. GARCIA: My understanding is that the  
4 state police gets the statistics from the reports that  
5 they take in and what is fed to them by the local  
6 agencies. Now in a local agency such as an agency here in  
7 Grand Rapids, is not filling out forms and is not doing  
8 what it is they're supposed to be do. They won't get that  
9 information, it's clear.

10 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Grand Rapids had three hate  
11 crimes on record.

12 MS. HA-AJLUNI: And if its not being  
13 reported?

14 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: And the last year --

15 MS. HA-AJLUNI: If I understand Commissioner  
16 Mayhue correct, I didn't mean to cut you off, you reported  
17 several incidents to the U.S. Attorney's Office and you  
18 got no response, is that correct.

19 MR. MAYHUE: Yes, correct. I've had people  
20 call the U.S. Attorney's office.

21 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: I'm just trying to  
22 understand.

23 MR. GARCIA: I think you have a full  
24 understanding of the exact problem.

1 MS. THOMAS: I don't.

2 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: I thank you very much.

3 We're going to have to go because I'm in the same shape  
4 she is. I think that we should have had the police and  
5 this gentlemen here this morning altogether because what  
6 you have said and what the police said somebody, it seemed  
7 like -- and I don't mean to be insulting, but it sounds  
8 like it was sugar-coated this morning and then you come in  
9 with things that you can present. So something is  
10 terribly wrong.

11 I'm sure that after we look at hard data and  
12 things that we can go back and trace we will be able to  
13 come up with a better picture of where the gap is, and I  
14 thank you.

15 We are almost on time. We can take a  
16 quick break if you'd like to talk to any of us, Peter  
17 Minarik will take care of that. I thank you very much.

18 (A brief recess was taken.)

19 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: We're ready to start up  
20 again. We're going to hear from a panel of three again  
21 and at this time we have only a 30 minute period for the  
22 presentations and let me begin by calling Mr. Lawrence  
23 Borom, President of Grand Rapids urban League.

24 LAWRENCE H. BOROM

1                   President, Grand Rapids Urban League

2                   I'm Lawrence Borom, I'm the President  
3 of the Grand Rapids Urban League and I don't have a  
4 prepared statement today. I am a newcomer in this city.  
5 I've been here for just a little under five months and I  
6 thought I would come and just share my observations over a  
7 short period of time and using whatever value of the  
8 history of the organization that I can share with you  
9 today in terms of the topic that you're considering;  
10 tension and race tension, conflict between the races in  
11 Grand Rapids and in Western Michigan. What I've  
12 discovered coming here is that this is a town with a great  
13 deal of tension between the races and the tension is both  
14 historic and widely perceived, sometimes perhaps more a  
15 belief than, in fact, a reality. But certainly there is a  
16 sense here of frustration and helplessness and  
17 powerlessness among African American people as I've talked  
18 to them about my plans for the Urban League in the  
19 immediate future, as I've talked to them about the factual  
20 situation that they find themselves in and that our  
21 community will have to deal with as we move forward. And  
22 I talk about the sense of powerlessness in terms of the  
23 location that we are in in the Urban league here in Grand  
24 Rapids is in a corner of the city, southwest corner of the

1 city -- south corner of the city actually that has had a  
2 great deal of gang activity, narcotics activity and has  
3 frequent brushes, young people particularly, with the  
4 police in the area. There's a very strong sentiment on  
5 the part of the many young people that I've had an  
6 opportunity to meet in the short time that I've been here  
7 that they are harassed and taken advantage of by the  
8 police. We have had several complaints ourselves as an  
9 agency whether we've turned into the police. There's a  
10 sense that jobs are not available, that the official  
11 organizations that are set to help solve problems that  
12 African American young people and for that matter families  
13 are not available to them. And so this sense of  
14 powerlessness pervades and the result of that is that you  
15 have a black community in Grand Rapids that feels that it  
16 is going nowhere in a hurry.

17                   There are obviously some African  
18 American people in this city and in the surrounding area  
19 that have done well for themselves, but there are a great  
20 number of other people who are African American who are in  
21 poverty. The poverty rates, the last one I saw were for  
22 1990, indicated an extremely high poverty rate,  
23 particularly among children and youth under 18. We've had  
24 a recent expose's of the double proportion of infant

1 mortality for black youngsters in Kent County with  
2 compared to other groups. One could search the corporate  
3 registers and find very few African Americans in some of  
4 the major firms in major positions. In other words, the  
5 African American community is isolated here. Has not  
6 progressed and prospered to the extent that other people  
7 in the community have prospered and I say this again on  
8 the basis of observation, on the basis of looking at the  
9 data that I've had an opportunity to review and preview in  
10 the five months I've been here and I see it as a very  
11 serious situation in terms of race relations, in terms of  
12 tension between the races in Grand Rapids and one that  
13 needs much work; and particularly I think as has been  
14 discussed here earlier today by the official agencies that  
15 are responsible to see to it that employment  
16 discrimination doesn't happen, that police abuse does not  
17 happen, that services and accessibility to services are  
18 equal; et cetera.

19 HAZEL R. LEWIS

20 President, NAACP, Grand Rapids Branch

21 My name is Hazel Lewis and I'm the  
22 President of the Greater Grand Rapids Branch of the NAACP.  
23 I do not have anything written for you today because I was  
24 not sure as to what you wanted. I can tell you that

1 racism in the city is great. I have calls everyday in  
2 regard to jobs, in regard to schools, mostly schools,  
3 sometimes in regards to home owners and what the police  
4 are doing to somebody in front of their door or this type  
5 of thing. But the NAACP works just a little different  
6 from what maybe some other organization work. We don't  
7 just go out and investigate at that point because our by  
8 laws and constitution doesn't let me walk over and take  
9 over and carry a sign and do a lot of dealing with issues  
10 have to come to me. You have to give me just the facts  
11 ma'am. I have to know that you want us there. You have  
12 to invite me to take your case. You have to come and  
13 write everything down. You have to tell me why you was  
14 discriminated against. And that's probably a little bit  
15 of a problem there where we are misrepresented is because  
16 we don't always be out there at that moment. But my  
17 primary job is if you have this discrimination problem,  
18 you come and talk to me because with the NAACP you have to  
19 investigate. I have to spend days investigating that  
20 problem; find out the cause and the whys and the whens and  
21 the who's before I can go out and talk because the NAACP  
22 is a large organization. I have to be very careful what I  
23 say, when I say it and to whom I say it to and I have to  
24 also talk to a lawyer before I say it because I have to

1 worry about if I'm going to be sued and it has to go all  
2 the way up to the top.

3           Everybody has a problem with the NAACP  
4 because we don't intimidate. Some people are angry  
5 because I won't call the job and demand that their job is  
6 back, but that's not what I do. We call that  
7 intimidation. I don't do that because I think it may be  
8 against the law. Whenever I research a case, I have  
9 a legal redress committee in which I talk to first before  
10 I take it any farther because there's always that threat  
11 of NAACP having to go to court about something that a  
12 branch president say. So, we're very careful. But then  
13 I'm also a black women. I've been out in the work force  
14 in this town. I've lived here all my life. I went to  
15 school here from Franklin to Grand Rapids Central to Grand  
16 Rapids Community College when it was just plain old Grand  
17 Rapids College down there. It wasn't community junior  
18 college, they changed it to Aquinas College on to  
19 Davenport Institute. It was very hard. You never got  
20 called on if you raised your hand in your English class,  
21 but of course I was the only black in my English class in  
22 Central High School and I never had a black teacher. So  
23 you can understand that some of the problems that I have  
24 gone through, even at Franklin School we didn't have black

1 teachers at those schools at the time I went to school and  
2 somebody sitting in here saying my goodness, when was  
3 that? I'm not going to tell you when that was because it  
4 was a long time ago when we didn't have middle schools.  
5 In fact, we went from the grade school right into the high  
6 school. So, I've always known what prejudice is. You can  
7 go into a store and I'll call the name because I can do  
8 that, I'm the president of the NAACP and I'm not paid by  
9 anybody, so when I want to say something, I will call your  
10 name. I was in a Suden Store, which was Meyers and a  
11 person followed me up and down the aisle and followed me  
12 up and down the aisle until I got what I wanted and then  
13 they followed to make sure I got to the counter. Where I  
14 went to another store, they didn't bother me at all. Now  
15 there was other people, they did not follow them. But I  
16 have been followed so much at Hudsons or at Jacobsons  
17 where I shop regularly because if I don't shop there, I  
18 don't shop anywhere, let's talk about it, we don't. So I  
19 just don't worry about it anymore and now its something  
20 more subtle than it use used be. But in the last few  
21 weeks its getting out of hand, truly its getting out of  
22 hand. In fact, I have written a complaint for Socrates.  
23 I wrote that complaint because I was not happy with the  
24 services. I served downtown. I don't have a problem with

1 telling you about that, so I made out a complaint, a  
2 written complaint about it. So this is still happening  
3 and I think we all know its happening. Its not something  
4 that is in a book and somebody did not read and it will be  
5 happening, that's why we don't have a captain in the  
6 police department. I don't know why. Somebody should  
7 tell me why. But we have qualified policemen down there,  
8 somebody could be a captain, I'm sure. But what  
9 happened, what is the problem? I don't know what the  
10 problem is. Somebody knows the answer and I just want to  
11 know what some of those answers are. And I can't -- the  
12 NAACP is not a panacea and that's what I'd like to say  
13 about the NAACP. We cover our territory, but we can't  
14 handle everything for everybody. Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: And now we have Walter  
16 Mathis.

17 WALTER MATHIS

18 President, Take Pride Community Newspaper

19 Good afternoon, Madam Chairman. I  
20 wasn't supposed to be here, but I'm taking the place of  
21 Pat Pulliam.

22 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: What is your paper?

23 MR. MATHIS: My organization, I'm President  
24 and CEO of Take Pride Community, a weekly newspaper that

1 focuses on the Afro American community. We are certified  
2 by ABC Audit Bureau of Circulations and we are a member of  
3 the Michigan Press Association. The same credentials that  
4 the Grand Rapids press have. We're the only two on the  
5 west side of the state that has the same credentials.

6 First I want to tell you a little bit  
7 about myself. I came here when I was three years old.  
8 I've been in Grand Rapids for 54 years. My father brought  
9 us up here at the age of 3, along with my other seven  
10 brothers and sisters. He brought us here so we could  
11 have a better education, which he was very successful in  
12 doing because we're all educated and we're all in business  
13 and everything and I myself, I'm a realtor. I've been a  
14 realtor for 25 years and I'm a notary. I've been a county  
15 commissioner for four years. I ran a liquor store for 23  
16 years. I've been married for 34 years. I have four  
17 children. So its nothing that anyone can find wrong with  
18 me except I run my mouth too much. And everybody in the  
19 neighborhood knows that, but I'm an advocate. There are a  
20 lot of people out there who can't do this because the  
21 first thing I always tell a person when you check with a  
22 person or you go talk to a person, first read their job  
23 description. If they're a killer, you'd better get out  
24 their way because that's what they get paid to do, kill.

1 If they are a blocker, that's what they're supposed to do.  
2 So what I'm saying is that if you check back to your old  
3 times when you had plantations, you had the slaves, you  
4 had the straw boss and you had the plantation owner.  
5 Every time one of the slaves would do something wrong,  
6 they run to the straw boss or the straw boss run to the  
7 master. Well that situation hasn't changed in society  
8 here. We have the community, we have our sharecroppers  
9 which we pay good money for, department heads, Afro  
10 Americans to keep us in check. Then we have the straw  
11 boss which is your corporations, every one of your  
12 corporations have an affirmative action person and who  
13 have no power or no guts or anything like that, but they  
14 pay, they're paid such a good salary that they cannot  
15 afford to take my side. In Grand Rapids right here alone  
16 you have attorneys here. You cannot hire a decent  
17 attorney to fight a civil rights case because they're on  
18 somebody's payroll. They're either representing the  
19 hospital, they represent the business, and when you come  
20 down there with poor Sam without a penny in your pocket,  
21 he's going to say you know that's your problem. It sounds  
22 like a personal problem to me because somebody else is  
23 paying my way and you have to wait until you get to that  
24 point where you can hire me and then I can listen to you.

1 It's -- one time when I was watching a movie one time and  
2 the Indian came to the white man, he says white man why  
3 every time that you make a movie Indians always lose. He  
4 said, I tell you when an Indian gets enough money to win,  
5 I make a movie, then they can win. So, that's what  
6 society's all about. It's all money driven. Now the only  
7 thing I'm bringing up, I'm getting to the point is the  
8 only --

9 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: I'd like for you to get to  
10 ethnic and racial intimidation.

11 MR. MATHIS: The only thing that helps the  
12 black man in the United States is the 1964 Civil Rights  
13 Act, Title 6. Title 6 is the only part of the law that  
14 speaks about economics, all the rest of them talk about  
15 harmony, racial and all that kind of stuff. You can't get  
16 along with anybody without any money. President Kennedy  
17 said it best, simple justice required that public funds to  
18 which all taxpayers of all races contribute not be spent  
19 in any fashion which encourage increases in subsidy or  
20 result of racial discrimination. That was said in 1963.  
21 All the businesses -- when I come to Grand Rapids here  
22 everybody was in Grand Rapids, but all the black people  
23 was on the outside of Grand Rapids because we had  
24 segregation. When we had integration, the first thing

1 they did -- we had one school that was in the City of  
2 Grand Rapids that you could call South High School and  
3 many of my colleagues went there. They closed that school  
4 up and put all the schools on the outskirts. So we have  
5 to be bused outside the city in order to get an education.  
6 Now, if I look at it, all our grocery stores are on the  
7 outside of the city. All of our theaters, all of our nice  
8 homes and everything is on the outside of the city. We  
9 have to go outside the city yet we've got to go across the  
10 crocodiles, rattle snakes to get out what I mean by being  
11 arrested, harassed or anything like that. So we don't  
12 have a tendency to go there. My main part is the  
13 newspaper. If the people in Grand Rapids had a newspaper  
14 on the west side of Michigan had a newspaper to complain  
15 to or write about or have it investigated as you did this  
16 morning, you had all kinds of news people in here, all of  
17 them was white. When they get through, they go out and  
18 write the story the way their editor tells them to write  
19 it. So everybody tell you, hey, look here, they said this  
20 about us in the paper. They said this about us in the  
21 paper. Where's our recourse, you know. It's supposed to  
22 be a way that we can voice our opinions to the public and  
23 let them decide and write. But the reason why we can't  
24 get that information to our people because they segregate

1 with their advertising dollars. Now when you get bid  
2 notices, when you get election notices, when you get all  
3 these kinds of things that the government is supposed to  
4 do, they supposed to treat everybody equally and put them  
5 in the paper of choice. I think the Civil Rights Act of  
6 1964 says that we're supposed to reach the people of  
7 choice, color of choice, and if you don't do that, you'll  
8 never know what goes on in any community if you cannot.  
9 If you look on TV you never wholeheartedly ever see black  
10 people in commercials or anything you look at. Radio, you  
11 don't hear anything. You look at your newspaper, you go  
12 through any given newspaper, its all full of European  
13 Americans, except when we create crime and once we create  
14 a crime, we get our picture on the front page. This is  
15 one of the things that has to be addressed and the only  
16 way you can address this is to have someone to be able to  
17 print it. I'm strictly for economics.

18 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: We cannot address that  
19 issue at this forum in that there is nothing within the  
20 purview of this Commission that would change the way  
21 advertising dollars are spent either in Grand Rapids or in  
22 this country at this point in time. We understand your  
23 advocacy position and that it is wrong and the balance of  
24 power should go some other way, but I'm hoping that you

1 have a specific recommendation or a specific complaints  
2 related to your inability to do whatever it is that you're  
3 attempting to do that shows that you've been discriminated  
4 against.

5 MR. MATHIS: Well, if you're running a  
6 business and you cannot get money from other people,  
7 aren't you discriminated against? If I have you take your  
8 job and take you away and don't pay your salary, wouldn't  
9 you be discriminated against?

10 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: I don't think in the clear  
11 sense that I would be discriminated against, but you have  
12 to show me discrimination in that instance.

13 MR. MATHIS: Okay. Anyway, what I'm trying  
14 to tell you, you're never going to straighten up a  
15 community in any kind of way unless you put money in it.  
16 Now we can quit talking about love and everything like  
17 that because love is not love. You have to have money and  
18 everybody, I don't care what kind of commission you go to,  
19 they don't want to talk about money, they talk about  
20 everything else. I don't care whether a person love me  
21 or what, just give me some money. And when you give me  
22 some money, I'll create love. You see O.J. Simpson, he  
23 had love because he had money and he could get a white  
24 woman because he had money. Anybody can get anything they

1 want in this world because they got money.

2 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: All right I appreciate your  
3 comments.

4 Are there questions please from the  
5 committee to any of our panelists?

6 MS. HA-AJLUNI: Based on your years of living  
7 here in the Grand Rapids area, my question is either to  
8 Ms. Lewis or Mr. Mathis. Do you feel that the hate crime  
9 level has risen over the years or do you feel that more  
10 preventative measures have been taken by the governmental  
11 institutions here locally?

12 MR. MATHIS: The government is the hate  
13 crime. You have to get to the source. Any time you have  
14 a city with 38,000 Afro Americans and you have every  
15 suburb sitting on the outside with less than of,000 or  
16 7,000 people and then you say that do you have a hate  
17 crime? People can see. I don't know how you people can  
18 sit there and say there's 38,000 Afro Americans in town  
19 and we don't even have a captain on the police force, but  
20 you can go to the smallest hick town village in this  
21 nation and you find a chief of police. Now if you can't  
22 see that, then we're wasting our time, we're wasting our  
23 government dollars and I think its just a shame that you  
24 can come here and shame us and go back and write a report

1 for the government and I just think its wrong. Only time  
2 the president is now acting to Title 9 is because he got  
3 his finger caught in the cookie jar and he got to give the  
4 women something because he got his finger caught in the  
5 cookie jar. So when you come here, come here as serious  
6 intentions of straightening up the problem. We are too  
7 much at a time, we're feather dusting. Everybody knows  
8 what the problem is. Any time you look at it 80 percent  
9 of the cities in the United States and all poverty and  
10 we're 33 million people in the United States that don't  
11 have bus fare to get home and then you come here all eight  
12 of you and ask me what is the problem. Where are you?

13 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: I didn't ask you what was  
14 the problem. The Commission didn't ask you what was the  
15 problem. What we asked you to do, the focus of today's  
16 hearing is to discuss racial and ethnic intimidation in  
17 the Grand Rapids area.

18 MR. MATHIS: Well, that's money.

19 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: No, that is not money.  
20 That's your interpretation of it, but it is not money, its  
21 a lot more specific than that and we can't reduce  
22 everything to money. Maybe you can, but we can't for  
23 purposes of this forum.

24 MR. MATHIS: The Bible says money answers

1 all things.

2 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Was there another question  
3 or response?

4 MS. LEWIS: I just wanted to respond to the  
5 young lady. My office gets many calls of their hate  
6 crimes. I'm called names or this type of thing, but I  
7 don't always call the police or something like that, I  
8 just deal with it. The position I'm in as president of  
9 the Greater Grand Rapids Branch NAACP, if a white boy  
10 calls me and he tells me he's going to come over and do  
11 whatever he wants to do, I usually say, okay, what are you  
12 waiting for? Just get on over here, and usually he'll  
13 hang up and go on and I'll go on with my day. Because I  
14 could be afraid, leave my office and get nothing done. So  
15 I wouldn't go in any time. But I'm not afraid and if  
16 that's what he wants to do, so be it.

17 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Do you keep any formal  
18 record of those kinds of incidents? You say you get calls  
19 all the time from citizens and complaints from people that  
20 their civil rights have been violated. Do you have any  
21 kind of system?

22 MS. LEWIS: That's what we do. I can do ten  
23 cases a day. We have files from way back. That's when  
24 you come and talk to me it's always about discrimination,

1 that's what we do, you know.

2 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: But specifically I'm asking  
3 you and I think we're trying to get a sense because you  
4 are right.

5 MS. LEWIS; If you're on a job, ma'am, and  
6 you did not get a promotion and you have the same  
7 credentials that someone else have, you feel you should  
8 get that promotion and you didn't, then if you come and  
9 make out a formal complaint to me, I will look into it  
10 with the highest of that company's person to find out why.  
11 If you came to work everyday, what was the reason why they  
12 did not choose to promote you and you had a really good  
13 record and educational background.

14 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: I guess what I'm asking is  
15 do you have, for example over the last year--

16 MS. LEWIS: Yes, ma'am.

17 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Recorded the number of  
18 incidents that people have called you complaining of  
19 discrimination and what was the nature of those calls?  
20 What were the discrimination complaints and what do you  
21 do? Do you try to resolve some of them in some instances?  
22 Perhaps you send it to another authority, another agency?

23 MS. LEWIS: Yes, ma'am.

24 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Would you have records in

1 recent years, in recent times say over the last two years?

2 MS. LEWIS: About six or seven hundred.

3 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Okay. Could we have access  
4 to those numbers; just the type of case and the number of  
5 cases that you have. We don't need to know the details of  
6 the case, but what is the type of incidents, how many  
7 numbers of those incidents?

8 MS. LEWIS: If I could have someone's card, I  
9 could send that package to you, if I get your card. I'll  
10 see that you get it within the next 15 days.

11 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: I'll have Peter Minarik who  
12 is our person from Chicago do that.

13 MS. LEWIS: Yes, ma'am.

14 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: We would appreciate that.  
15 Sue?

16 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: This question would be  
17 for Mr. is it Borom?

18 MR. BOROM: Yes.

19 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: In the conversations  
20 today it appears that the city has little opportunity for  
21 cross cultural communication linkages. Historically, we  
22 have the Urban League has played that role in many  
23 communities and I was wondering what your experiences were  
24 in the Urban League? Is the Urban League considered any

1 type of form? Is there a representation on the board of  
2 the disparate sectors of this community?

3 MR. BOROM: Yes. As in every case with the  
4 Urban League, we do have an interracial board of  
5 directors, an interracial staff. We have many activities  
6 that are involved in that. Many people from different  
7 parts of the community, you know, ethnically and otherwise  
8 together. Yes, there is an effort in Grand Rapids, there  
9 are people in Grand Rapids who are very dissatisfied, both  
10 white and black with the current status of race relations,  
11 the current status of the African American community and  
12 so people work at that. I think what is clear is that the  
13 efforts have been ineffective or have been overturned or  
14 have been overwhelmed by the enormity of the problem that  
15 the people are trying to face in Grand Rapids that have  
16 been the Urban League has been involved with a group of  
17 ministers doing what's they've been doing; race religion  
18 conferences up until a few years ago. So there's a  
19 history of activity.

20 Again, the problem is much longer than  
21 what one organization I think can do or can deal with and  
22 I think that beginning, one of the biggest problems is the  
23 problem of history and the recognition on the part of the  
24 people in the city that things are very hard to change.

1 So there's a good deal to fear in this city from them that  
2 I've talked to about even raising the issue about  
3 discrimination and about racial inequality in Grand Rapids  
4 and in western Michigan. There's a reality since that  
5 western Michigan is a very hostile place towards people of  
6 color and specifically towards black people.

7 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Thank you very much for  
8 that comment. We've been trying to get that statement all  
9 day. Thank you.

10 Are there other questions? If there  
11 are no further questions, then we will go to our next set  
12 of presenters. Thank you very much.

13 We have Attorney Michael C. Hyde.

14 MICHAEL C. HYDE

15 Madam Chairman, members of the  
16 Commission, I appreciate your allowing me five minutes  
17 given the fact that I can't stay until the public portion  
18 later, but I wanted to give you a sense of one family's  
19 experience of living in Grand Rapids. My family is an  
20 interracial family. I have children who are black, latino  
21 and european. I moved here seven years ago to work with  
22 the Michigan Legal Assistance Project. During that time  
23 there I prosecuted two anti pena (phonetic) cases on  
24 behalf of migrant farm workers. Because of that

1 experience and the experience of my children and my  
2 friends here in the original Grand Rapids area, I was one  
3 of the founders of the Institute for Healing Racism, which  
4 Bob Woodrick mentioned earlier in his talk. Our  
5 experience has been such that when we go out to the  
6 restaurant we are often refused service or not served or  
7 asked to sit by the back door or by the kitchen solely by  
8 reason of the fact that we are an interracial family. My  
9 children, my latino children have several times been  
10 stopped by the police, photographed, and fingerprinted on  
11 the street corners for no reason. One evening my children  
12 called me from a pay phone at a small convenience store if  
13 I would come and pick them up after playing basketball  
14 with friends and as I drove up, the police were there  
15 fingerprinting and photographing my children and when I  
16 asked what they had done, it was only because they were  
17 standing on the street corner. One of my -- one of those  
18 same children, while attending Union High School, was  
19 after school for a drivers education class and he found a  
20 baseball cap sitting on the floor, so he picked it up.  
21 About five minutes later two African American youths came  
22 up to him and asked for the hat. They didn't identify  
23 themselves or didn't say the hat was theirs, they just saw  
24 it in his hand and wanted it. It turns out it did belong

1 to one of them, we found out later. He refused to give it  
2 to them and one of the boys struck him from behind with a  
3 book knocking him to the floor. He was then kicked  
4 unconscious. When I complained to the school system about  
5 that, my son, who was expelled from school for starting a  
6 fight and picking up a hat that didn't belong to him,  
7 that's one of the experiences of the latino community.

8 My african children have repeatedly  
9 been stopped by the police, especially when they're  
10 driving their cars, for no reason. We live very close to  
11 East Grand Rapids. Actually we live in an all black  
12 neighborhood, very close to East Grand Rapids. When we  
13 shop, we often go into East Grand Rapids to the drug  
14 store, the cleaners because its the closest and most  
15 convenient place for us to go and I'm afraid to send my  
16 children there because they are almost always stopped by  
17 the East Grand Rapids police for made up reasons. Well,  
18 there was one screw missing from their license plate or  
19 the muffler was a little too loud or whatever. In terms  
20 of what goes on within our community, within our  
21 neighborhood, I've not had any problems with my immediate  
22 neighbors. I'm on very good terms with all of my  
23 immediate neighbors; however, I do live in an area where  
24 there's a lot of gang activity and on several occasions

1 we've had garbage strewn through our yard. At one time  
2 I've had animals, dead animals thrown in my yard. Grand  
3 Rapids, west Michigan is not always a nice place to live.  
4 There are a lot of difficulties that -- a lot of barriers  
5 to overcome, yet at the same time there are tremendous  
6 reasons for hope. Mr. Woodrick and Lynn Ferrell earlier  
7 this afternoon talked about the efforts of the business  
8 community to again addressing these issues. I've had  
9 several conversations with Mayor Loggia and Police Chief  
10 Haggerty on race issues, both professionally as an  
11 attorney because I do represent clients that have issues  
12 there, but also personally and I've addressed the city  
13 commission who worked with George Hartwell and other  
14 members of the commission. There is a movement within the  
15 religious community, communities, I should say, the  
16 Interfaith Dialogue Association, which comprises Muslims,  
17 Baptists, Jews Christians, Buddhists and Hindus is  
18 addressing some of the race issues as well. There's a  
19 great deal of hope, but that hope is fragile. The reality  
20 on the streets is that if you are young and latino or  
21 young and black, you are a danger to everyone around you  
22 and a danger to yourself and that's the myth that exists  
23 here in Grand Rapids and I know from personal experience  
24 that my children are not a danger to anyone. My

1 neighbor's children are not a danger to anyone. Their  
2 friends are not dangers to anyone. And that's the truth  
3 that we need to get out and if your Commission can promote  
4 that, I heartily support you every step of the way. Thank  
5 you.

6 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Thank you for your  
7 comments. Any questions? Okay, thank you very much. Mr.  
8 Malone, Mr. Espinoza, Ms. Sanchez.

9 Good afternoon. Thank you for taking  
10 the time out of your schedule to be with us today. I  
11 think we'll start as we have been from my left, Ms.  
12 Zoraida Sanchez.

13 ZORAIDA SANCHEZ

14 Director, Latin-American Services

15 Well, my name is Zoraida Sanchez, I'm  
16 here from -- here in Grand Rapids, Director of the  
17 Latin-American Services where we provide services to the  
18 Hispanic community of Kent County. I'm here to testify  
19 about the racial problems in Grand Rapids which are a  
20 problem. It's a great problem we have up there. The main  
21 problem I have found is that people do not meet, they  
22 don't want to believe. They don't want to say in public  
23 or admit that we do have a problem. Until this occasion  
24 comes where we have the opportunity to be in front of you

1 is when some people come out and say it. Most of the time  
2 we think about it and the people that do discriminate, the  
3 people that do provoke the things, do not realize that  
4 they are doing it. It will be when they admit that they  
5 have a problem with other people that the situation will  
6 improve or will start to improve. And as the gentlemen  
7 said before we have hope.

8           According my experience, the situation  
9 have improved within the last five years. Before it was  
10 very difficult. It was very difficult to find employment  
11 for Hispanics in this area. It was very difficult for  
12 Hispanics to be in a public or private place without being  
13 discriminated; the restaurant, even at church we are still  
14 today discriminated and we feel those things are for  
15 different people. It's my belief that the education, the  
16 public education can do something to improve the  
17 situation. I said before and I will say it again here  
18 that they should include in their curriculum racial  
19 relations since their children go to kindergarten or pre  
20 school that will help at least with those generations to  
21 come -- that will help lessen tensions that we have today.  
22 Everything starts at home and you know when people,  
23 families are having dinner and talking and if the adults  
24 are talking about not liking others, well that's what the

1 situation. I said before and I will say it again here  
2 that they should include in their curriculum racial  
3 relations since their children go to kindergarten or pre  
4 school that will help at least with those generations to  
5 come -- that will help with these tensions that we have  
6 today. Everything starts at home and you know when  
7 people, families are having dinner and talking and if the  
8 adults are talking about not liking others, well that's  
9 what the children are going to learn. What if at school  
10 something different is taught to them? They can even  
11 teach their parents. It's very difficult to change  
12 attitude when people are adults. It's different when they  
13 are children. They don't know what's going on around them  
14 and they can learn. They like each other when they go to  
15 kindergarten. They love each other, but when they become  
16 teenagers, they hate each other and they fight and they  
17 don't want to be together in the cafeteria at school.  
18 They don't remember those days in the kindergarten  
19 classroom when they played together and it's because what  
20 they are learning at home; mainly what changed those  
21 feelings. There is in this city Grand Rapids, I have  
22 found out that we do have good people, we have sensitive  
23 people. We have people in positive high positions that do  
24 mean well for others that do fight discrimination and we

1 have a good example of Mr. Bob Woodrick is a great example  
2 of what a white person wants for this community. But it  
3 doesn't mean that there is not discrimination at the D & W  
4 stores. It doesn't mean that when a person goes to a  
5 cashier and pays a minority persons is not treated equal  
6 as another person is. I have received the complaints, I  
7 have worked with it, so I means well, but others under his  
8 supervision or supervision of others are not following  
9 his example. So there's something to be done out there.  
10 And the political of the elected officials here are good.  
11 Most of them I will say 99 percent of them, county, city  
12 they are good people. They have good faith, they like to  
13 work together with us. They have proven they -- here in  
14 Grand Rapids they just passed a resolution opposing a bill  
15 that is in the Senate, state English only bill. Well the  
16 City of Grand Rapids just passed a resolution opposing  
17 that bill. That means something to us. That means that  
18 we are liked in the City of Grand Rapids that we are  
19 wanted here, that they want to work with us and to serve  
20 us. But it doesn't mean that these city employees follow  
21 that example. It doesn't mean that the information desk  
22 treats everybody the same when they go and ask for  
23 information. So, sensitivity training have to be provided  
24 and the example of these people elected officials or

1 administrators, corporate presidents, human resources,  
2 directors, you know, they have to come up with example,  
3 but also they have to come with training because the  
4 tensions actually do not start at the top levels, but at  
5 the lower levels and that's the problem we have here.

6 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Thank you, Ms. Sanchez.  
7 Next we'll hear from Richard Espinoza.

8 RICHARD ESPINOZA

9 Executive Director, Hispanic Center of Western Michigan

10 Thank you, I'm the Executive Director  
11 of Hispanic Center for Western Michigan and there we  
12 provide translating, interpreting services in 22 different  
13 languages. We also do information referral and employment  
14 and training. Unfortunately I've only been on the job six  
15 months and I can only go by history and by asking people  
16 as to what has happen in the past. The only thing I've  
17 had locally from my staff as far as asking them what's  
18 happened is that when we do interpreting in the court  
19 system, for instance, they see a lot of report or  
20 incidents where people are, young people are stopped,  
21 Hispanics in particular, are stopped for no reason at all  
22 and just checking them out and if somebody didn't have a  
23 drivers license on them or they might have been leaning  
24 against them for something, it was kind of a catch as

1 catch can and they will get a ticket. When they're in  
2 court, you know, they would say well if I hadn't been  
3 stopped for no reason at all, I'd have been merrily on my  
4 way, but I was in a rush and had left my wallet back and  
5 my drivers license and those kind of things, those are the  
6 only thing that really surfaced when speaking to staff and  
7 other people close to me. Other things that I can echo  
8 with Zoraida here are some of the things I was told about  
9 or asked to talk about racial tensions was the House Bill  
10 H-100. That was the only time a lot of things surfaced,  
11 came to the surface and that was the only thing that's  
12 locally right now. Other than that, I have not  
13 experienced anything. We haven't been receiving many  
14 calls for any type of, kind of discrimination. Perhaps  
15 that's because I'm new on the job there or I don't know  
16 what the reason is and Zoraida has been here a lot longer  
17 than I have and she's well known in the community. I'm  
18 sure she gets a lot of calls that maybe I will get in the  
19 future. So I can only support what she says and I'd be  
20 happy to entertain questions later.

21 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Thank you. Mr. Jaime  
22 Malone.

23 JAIME MALONE  
24 Publisher, El Hispano News

1 My name is Jaime Malone. Madam Chair  
2 Frazier, I publish the El Hispano. I've been in this city  
3 for nine years now. I've been involved in several things  
4 that has to do with racial relationship beginning from the  
5 public school issues that has to see what advocates  
6 continuously with things in the court system where I had  
7 to be translator more than one time for people who needed  
8 the help just because they didn't have nobody to help  
9 them. The expression of race relations is pretty -- is  
10 not vague, but it's pretty broad. It's broad like for us  
11 to talk about race relationship without having to go to  
12 particular aspect of the issue. Its like how can we set  
13 how race relationship in Grand Rapids because such and  
14 such beat up each other or how can we say its not because  
15 they don't do it. So it goes and become the main thing  
16 here for us to focus would be if we have any kind of  
17 racism or discrimination that can generate that race  
18 relation or create, bring some form of aspect related to  
19 that.

20 When I spoke to the gentlemen on the  
21 phone who invited me to this panel, I was explaining to  
22 him the racism that from my standpoint in the area, this  
23 west Michigan is a very strong one, very settled, very  
24 organized, very professional, very high, it's a kind of

1 racism where how to explain it. I explained to the  
2 gentleman that the kind of racism for me, drives from the  
3 big power that we have in this area. We have big and  
4 powerful person who we don't have to go money, money like  
5 the guy before, but who have a lot of money, who really  
6 create a surrounding power, surrounding those people that  
7 make racism about Native Indians. What we can see  
8 normally of not allowing you to get into the restaurant or  
9 whatever, but very professional and subtle. So I think we  
10 leave that kind of thing. I think that the race  
11 relationship between black and white is not good at all.  
12 I believe that for some instance we have a lot of good  
13 white people, the same for black people. But the bottom  
14 line between the relationship is like some people does  
15 hide through masks with a smile or something and not the  
16 real feeling of how they feel about black, blue or brown.  
17 But I would like to say something just on that same line.  
18 I believe that also in this community and the honest to  
19 God is a situation where the race relationship between  
20 latino and black is being threatened is being threatened  
21 because as we speak about diversity, most of the black or  
22 white take black and white and they already have  
23 diversity. We had a Spartan store where it was a  
24 situation where there was an accused by blacks of racism

1 and other things of Klu Klux Klan and a lot of things.  
2 What happened after that situation was that that store  
3 started to place ads in the Afro American community  
4 looking for minorities for jobs, yet they didn't lend no  
5 support to the Spanish community programs neither. They  
6 didn't place it in Spanish newspapers. So, the idea was,  
7 okay, we want to be diverse, let's get some blacks, now we  
8 are diverse. Okay, so then what is happening is, the  
9 bottom line is they created a situation where black and  
10 Hispanic will be sometimes somewhere having to fight for  
11 the same one, if you want to put it that way, the same  
12 crumb or whatever you want to call it. So the situation  
13 is its not happening now, but its a progressive thing that  
14 is happening. Speaking about the same, this same report  
15 just gives me an idea about the same situation; what I just  
16 explained it.

17 This report on page number 83 have a  
18 Michigan Public School enrollment by district, by race and  
19 they have white, 1 million whatever, black, 275,000. I  
20 don't know what the other one means, Asian, another amount  
21 and other, then they have Hispanic and anybody who make as  
22 table like those know that other is the last one, but  
23 Hispanic is the last one here right now. But not only  
24 that, as you look for the numbers, Hispanic is the third

1 group. There is each group here and Hispanic is in the  
2 last column. So, just look at expressions of things  
3 that's happening where we don't count, we don't count. I  
4 think we have an expression in Spanish say the baby don't  
5 cry don't get to suck baby mom, whatever. What we are  
6 saying here is that maybe because Hispanic don't make no  
7 noise, because Hispanic don't scream, kick, do all those  
8 things, we are not being heard, we're not taken care of,  
9 we're not put in enough attention. So basically that's  
10 the situation that I see that can double up tomorrow in  
11 race relationships where black and Hispanic will be at the  
12 bottom of the table fighting for this crumb just because  
13 it was the way it was meant to be.

14 The last thing I would say here is that  
15 we as human being have all kinds of people; good, bad,  
16 worse and whatever. So we find that same situation in  
17 whites and in blacks. So the racial relationship has to  
18 see with how those who are in power and again I am going  
19 to use the example of, yes, who sits here economically,  
20 politically empowered or any other kind of power who is,  
21 those who are empowered use the power to create a real  
22 harmony among those who are not in power. Oh, sometime  
23 even Zoraida say they want to work with us, but I am  
24 sitting at this end of the table and Zoraida, one of my

1 best friends. I know that they put a lot of good face to  
2 work with us, but the bottom line is that they really  
3 don't work with us. Thanks.

4 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Are there questions from  
5 committee members?

6 MS. HA-AJLUNI: I have a question. Coming  
7 from an Asian background, I share some of the sentiment  
8 regarding race relations, but do you have this similar  
9 type of problem, and that is that people in the  
10 Hispanic-speaking group, do they not report ethnic  
11 intimidation crimes against themselves because they fear  
12 that they're raising troubles against the present  
13 governmental entities and do you feel that people are not  
14 reporting those problems or do those problems not exist?

15 MS. SANCHEZ: The problem exists and the  
16 problems are being reported. Now, before as you said they  
17 were scared. Sometimes the language barrier avoided, you  
18 know, stopped someone from coming forward and saying what  
19 happened to them, but that's no longer the case. We are  
20 as an advocate agency, we advocate for our people what  
21 they can't do, we do for them. I have been hand to hand  
22 with my people to the police, to the court to the city  
23 hall Grand Rapids public schools, you know, counselors,  
24 principals, all over the City of Grand Rapids trying to

1 solve problems that they are facing, their children are  
2 facing. There is a lot of discrimination in the schools.  
3 There's a lot of discrimination at the city level, police.  
4 The problems are common that come in to us. There are  
5 some people that already know the language that had been  
6 informed of because we published. It was a one page flyer  
7 informing the community what to do in the event that they  
8 are abused by the police or that they feel they have been  
9 abused by the police. If they speak English, we have a  
10 number for them to call, if they don't, we have the number  
11 for them to call. So, every one of them will have the  
12 opportunity to report what has happened to them. And,  
13 yes, we do have some complaints. The Department of Civil  
14 Rights have received a lot of complaints; the Fair Housing  
15 Center, when we deal with discrimination against housing,  
16 apartments, they're being taken away the right of housing  
17 from our people, they have the complaints and I personally  
18 work with the corporations in town and think that I know  
19 most of the owners of the corporations in this area in  
20 trying to help my people. In many instances, the cases  
21 don't go to civil rights because when I threaten them,  
22 they stop what they are doing or they do what they have to  
23 do. And I am a fighter, I mean I am not in my office  
24 looking at my walls. I am a fighter and I fight and I

1 know the rights of my people, I defend those rights.  
2 Sometimes I don't even call the Department of Civil Rights  
3 because I do it myself and I defend my people. I'm not an  
4 attorney. I know what to do and I know the law. So I'm  
5 there to defend them and if they're being abused.

6 MR. MALONE: So I take care of everyone,  
7 Zoraida take care of everyone, go into their office and  
8 that for me would be 20 percent of the real problem and  
9 she really take care of. So I'm not trying to put  
10 whatever she do down, but I just want to say that I think  
11 that 80 percent is not being reported. I think that  
12 people fear a larger idea because of a lady who lived next  
13 to a white man that used to drive in his car through her  
14 driveway to get to his garage, 20 minutes, an hour, and  
15 she called his attention to it. She called the police,  
16 nothing happened. She speak with a stronger accent than  
17 mine, so imagine. So we talking about that, that just was  
18 not taken care of at all and she just had to cool down and  
19 let it go. I know cases of a Wyoming police which for me  
20 that's one of the tough, if you want to put it that way, I  
21 went up to the chief of police three months ago and I  
22 asked him about why I see so many Hispanic pulled over in  
23 front of my office because division between the city lines  
24 is just close to my office and he explained to me that at

1 that time they were looking for some guys who was robbing  
2 a bank and they were supposedly Hispanic and that's why  
3 they were pulling over so many Hispanics. The bottom line  
4 is I think that 80 percent just don't get beyond the  
5 problem, they meet in the same neighborhood or they get up  
6 to the police and the police just, you know, what can I  
7 do, just like that.

8 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Sue?

9 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: I would really like to  
10 know the answer of this from all of you and again it  
11 relates to earlier testimony that we received today.  
12 There seems to be, at least everybody that appears before  
13 us seems anxious to assist as it relates to hate crime,  
14 but kind of give us the impression that such crimes are  
15 not reported to them and that they then admit that maybe  
16 people aren't aware that they can provide service in that  
17 area. If someone was to come to your office, Ms. Sanchez,  
18 and report a crime that you would define as a hate crime,  
19 what would your tendencies be to call the Grand Rapids  
20 Police Department to call the FBI, to call the States  
21 Attorney, State Attorney General, to call the Civil Rights  
22 Department. It's a multiple choice question.

23 MS. SANCHEZ: Oh, yeah. A lot of choices,  
24 but in many instances I do things myself without calling

1 anyone, but the Department of Civil Rights, it depends on  
2 what kind of crime. You know, it could be many things  
3 could be involved in a hate, you know, crime.

4 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: Have you ever called the  
5 FBI or the State U.S. Attorney General?

6 MS. SANCHEZ: No, no, I have not. I have  
7 dealt locally with the Department of Civil Rights and  
8 other agencies that have solved the problem. If the  
9 occasion I called the Department of Justice once, I'm  
10 sorry, yes, I -- we brought the Department of Justice here  
11 to Grand Rapids from Detroit and that was in the case with  
12 the Grand Rapids police abuse, abusive force, and we  
13 entered into an agreement with the chief of police and the  
14 Hispanic community. We have a signed agreement and where  
15 they're committing to many things, including the training  
16 sensitivity and direct training that they are providing on  
17 a yearly basis at the Hispanic Center that does include  
18 them in that agreement that we signed with the chief of  
19 police.

20 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Did you ask for any  
21 increased hiring of Hispanics as a part of that agreement?

22 MS. SANCHEZ: Yeah, that's the first thing on  
23 the list hiring of Hispanic police officers and shortly  
24 after that two were hired; one is still on the force, the

1 other one, I don't know where he went. I think that we  
2 have eight at the present time, but we are in need of a  
3 lot more and we already met with the City of Grand Rapids  
4 to that effect and we're working towards increasing the  
5 amount of police officers on the force. But, you know, we  
6 use any resources that are available and if it has to be  
7 the FBI, well, we will call the FBI.

8 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: I guess part of the  
9 question might be how familiar are you with that? After,  
10 I mean when we spoke with them this morning, they made it  
11 very clear that this is a part of their jurisdiction.  
12 They're here to serve the people. You don't have to go to  
13 the Civil Rights Commission. You don't even have to go to  
14 the local law enforcement office. You can go directly to  
15 them and yet they admitted that there was a problem in  
16 that people were not educated to their role and they  
17 didn't really understand and I guess we'd like to know do  
18 you understand that as being an avenue?

19 MS. SANCHEZ: It's an avenue, but it's not an  
20 avenue that is always available because many instances  
21 what they say and I have called them, is that it's none  
22 of our business. It's none of our business.

23 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: Did Mr. Malone answer  
24 that question?

1           MR. MALONE:   Basically one of the things that  
2 happen is that position of community don't know that at  
3 all, number one.   Number two, some people don't know how  
4 to differentiate hate crime in the course of you're going  
5 to dispute some of that, whatever.   That's the kind of  
6 curse.   So that's one thing.   The other thing is that we  
7 find that really, and I mean really in this area its a  
8 very sophisticated way how to discriminate.   People aren't  
9 learning.   They learn how to really make you feel a piece  
10 of what you don't want to feel yourself without saying it  
11 and it depends on you how to react and then it's like  
12 something happened to me recently.   I was explaining to  
13 Zoraida this morning.   I call up my city commissioner.   I  
14 have a neighbor who happen to be white and he have a  
15 garage.   He have a lot of things in that area.   Its an  
16 area not for business, but he is doing a lot of repair or  
17 whatever, even in the street.   I have a white neighbor who  
18 called the police across and called the city.   I do the  
19 same thing.   So two Sundays ago 1:00 o'clock in the  
20 morning, five of his guys pay call to my house, knocking  
21 on the door.   One of them was screaming that the other  
22 four was beating him up and wanted to help him.   So he  
23 wanted me to open my door.   So they was pounding on the  
24 door and pounding on the door and I didn't open the door.

1 So they walk off of my porch and then they come back  
2 again, the same rampage again, running again. So I told  
3 the guy I just called the police, the police supposed to  
4 be here any time. So the guy walk off of my porch and  
5 went to the other four who was supposedly betting him up  
6 and told the to leave, the police is coming. So, okay,  
7 its not racial, I can't put it in a racial crime, a hate  
8 crime, but I can't put it nowhere neither because its done  
9 pretty professional. The police came and he was there  
10 with one of those who was supposedly beating him up. But  
11 at that time they was together, they give police  
12 explanation that was far away from my home. I was in  
13 underwear, the lights was off, but the thing is that it  
14 was not possible for me to catch what happened with the  
15 police, but neither it was possible for me to have  
16 something tangible for management. Its well done.

17 MR. HOLLIDAY: Mr. Malone, since you have a  
18 newspaper, you are a publisher of a newspaper, would it be  
19 of any value to interview and publish comments from the  
20 attorney of the U.S. Attorney because he made it clear  
21 that he was available to express his views and make  
22 provisions to be available to the citizens of western  
23 Michigan and it would seem a real profitable way to fifth  
24 information to the community would be through your

1 newspaper.

2 MR. MALONE: Definitely. I will be real  
3 happy.

4 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: We'll put you in touch with  
5 him.

6 MS. SMITH: On the same subject. I guess  
7 it's primarily between communication when these entities  
8 and your community, both the U.S. -- I don't know why I  
9 can't say the U.S. Attorney's Office and the FBI gave us  
10 numbers that were not very impressive in term of their own  
11 staff of the U.S. Attorney's Office. There are 30  
12 attorneys and only three are people of color. The FBI's  
13 office there are 9 agents, there are no people of color,  
14 both the entities suggested that they were trying  
15 desperately to recruit more people that would be more  
16 reflective of the community that they serve. And so I was  
17 wondering if you've had any of those conversations with  
18 either of those entities since you hold leadership  
19 capacity in your community, that would lead you to believe  
20 that they're interested in recruiting?

21 MS. SANCHEZ: I personally haven't seen any  
22 interest on their part. I haven't seen any interest on  
23 their part to hiring or to do any effort in hiring  
24 minorities. They only -- other than FBI and U.S.

1 Attorneys Office, Office of the Federal Court hired a  
2 Hispanic not too long ago and then two months after he was  
3 fired. I don't know why they did that, but I mean that  
4 was the only Hispanic working at the federal level here.  
5 The state police have made efforts in trying to recruit  
6 Hispanic. They have personally come to my office, to try  
7 to, you know, to give me all the information they need and  
8 when they are recruiting, they send me the notifications,  
9 some of that, but not for -- not federal agencies. No  
10 federal entity has ever contacted us. I did not say for  
11 me I have had the police chief of Kentwood and police  
12 chief Haggerty asked me if I could refer people to them.  
13 I spoke to the police chief association a long time ago  
14 and a while ago and they all expressed the same thing,  
15 too.

16 MR. MALONE: Number one, America is a  
17 beautiful country. This is a country where we play  
18 legally the cat and mouse game. They say one thing and  
19 they do another thing. FBI was here to meet with the  
20 community and some of these people here was at that  
21 meeting. They have a black guy here, so they didn't have  
22 no black person here, but that day they knew they were  
23 going to have black speaking, they had a black person, so  
24 they see a black face. So, hey, anyway they think the

1 chief of police meet with me and him at that meeting and  
2 he explained something. He explained that they was doing  
3 an academy for young kids in high school to go through so  
4 they can find out exactly what is the police so they can,  
5 you know, want to be in the police. Okay, so then you go  
6 up to the academy, you find 60 kids and you find one  
7 Hispanic, not one black and hey, we really want them. Now  
8 how you want them, you don't even try to get them. It's  
9 like why you didn't make sure that the composition of this  
10 group of 60 you had 20 blacks, five Hispanic or, you know,  
11 I'm not asking you for so much, five Hispanics and then  
12 all the other whites you want? But it was not done. So  
13 the truth is its some where down in the woods.

14 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: Again, you are a  
15 publisher of this community, you've never been contacted  
16 by either of the federal entities about recruitment?

17 MR. MALONE: I don't think they're serious  
18 about what they said. It's like the reality of things is  
19 that it looks good to say it, but again let's work with  
20 them, really, let's see the black won't stand over from me  
21 or whatever and that's the hard part. Most of them don't  
22 want to try.

23 MS. HA-AJLUNI: You think that the powers to  
24 be, the people who have money and the authority to do,

1 actually to heal the wounds of racism? You think they're  
2 just paying lip services of saying racism is bad, but  
3 they're not doing anything about it? But is that what  
4 you're saying?

5 MR. MALONE: That's a tough one. I really  
6 don't want to be in jail, my dear, I just give my opinion.  
7 I believe that they have honest people; Bob Woodrick and I  
8 really believe it from the bottom of my heart, he believes  
9 that the status quo is pretty comfortable for a lot of  
10 people. So the bottom line here is that even Bob can say  
11 what he said and even a colleague who have a few million  
12 next to him and this colleague don't give a big one for  
13 whatever he is saying. So its like the reality is far  
14 away from and they will accept Bob -- its me who saying  
15 who don't have even close to a thousand dollars. I  
16 maybe kicked off from the room or I may be called a rebel.  
17 So its Bob, so what the heck its Bob. The point is its  
18 difficult. Its the way it's done and this is America and  
19 by the way, I love it.

20 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: I just want to make one  
21 closing statement and that is for Ms. Sanchez, Bob did  
22 begin his statements by saying that there are still a lot  
23 of problems present in his organization. Gave specific  
24 examples of discrimination against minority people, not

1 wanting to touch them and give them money and he really, I  
2 think, was pretty honest in saying that he still has a long  
3 way to go in his organization. I wanted you to know that.

4 MS. SANCHEZ: I'm happy to hear that. I just  
5 want to finalize with one personal experience and one of  
6 the reasons that I am this very anxious to help my people  
7 is because of the experiences that I have been through  
8 since I came to this city 20 years ago and from being  
9 asked not to speak Spanish or leave a restaurant, to being  
10 asked to move by neighbor when I moved to the  
11 neighborhood. They asked me to move because they didn't  
12 want me there. I just came here, you been here a long  
13 time, you move. I stay, so they left. Two months after I  
14 moved there, they left and a counselor at the school,  
15 Grand Rapids Public School Central High, to identify the  
16 source who told my daughter, who was an honor student, top  
17 ten student, National Honor Society, when she went to ask  
18 for the application to University of Michigan, he told her  
19 that she shouldn't be wasting her time filling that  
20 application because she should either go to community  
21 college or to a factory and that was a very strong  
22 statement, you know, and that happened eight years ago,  
23 eight years ago. Well, the counselor just lasted three  
24 months there after that happened and you know I fight the

1 system. I know how to fight the system. I know the law.  
2 I know who to contact. I know how to go to the  
3 superintendent and knock on his door and say here I am, I  
4 need to talk to you. You get rid of that son of a good  
5 mother that is there or I'm going to do something else.  
6 See, but what about those other people that are there that  
7 don't know where to go; who to see and that's happening  
8 everyday in our schools, in church. As I said before,  
9 where two weeks ago I think that I thought you heard me  
10 about this. A guy came, I was entering the church because  
11 I belong to the Social Justice Committee. I was going to  
12 a meeting and here come this guy and tell me, hey, I'm  
13 starting to like you people. I look at him and say what  
14 you talking about? He said well, I starting to like  
15 Hispanics now. I said well thank you for your comment,  
16 but you sure think why you are. And then he said well,  
17 but I cannot stand being by close to an African American.  
18 I said well you have a lot to work on. You should go and  
19 talk to the priest. Thank you, I'm late to a meeting.  
20 See, I'm still thinking and I still see that guy's face.  
21 I'm haven't forgotten about that face since that happened.  
22 So we have to handle that on a daily basis here. It's  
23 hard, hard to live with it, but maybe you can help us.

24 MR. MALONE: If you guys can only remember to

1 include us and be more diverse, to includes us and be more  
2 diverse when we talk about diversity, please. I study  
3 economy, so I saw its face. Please give us our little  
4 whatever and consider us part of this country because like  
5 how she said he has to move out because he was there  
6 longer. She came to stay and that's what happening in her  
7 neighborhood. We don't expect none of you guys to, but we  
8 came to stay. So, hey, let's share this land. Thank you  
9 very much.

10 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: We're ready to begin. Rev.  
11 Luke or is it Mr. Rickert?

12 LEVI A. RICKERT

13 Exec. Dir., North American Indian Center of Grand Rapids

14 Good afternoon, my name is Levi Rickert  
15 and I am the Executive Director of the North American  
16 Indian Center of Grand Rapids. I am a member of the  
17 Prairie Van Patowatami Nation. I am also a member of the  
18 Grand Rapids City Community Relations Commission which  
19 Ingrid Scott-Weekley is our person we serve under.

20 I guess I want to start by saying that  
21 when I heard that President Clinton was going to make a  
22 major speech on race relations, I waited with great  
23 anticipation because I thought finally we would have an  
24 U.S. President that was going to do something about racism

1 in America. His speech was being touted as being a major  
2 event because he wants to leave a legacy for his  
3 presidency. I took note of part of his speech that said  
4 he wanted to begin a candid conversation on the state of  
5 race relations in the United States and I, quite frankly,  
6 I was quite disappointed in the speech. He wanted a  
7 candid conversation, I would argue they started a long  
8 time ago. I happen to be an American Indian. That I  
9 don't have along hair -- when I had long hair in Grand  
10 Rapids I couldn't raise any money for the Indian Center,  
11 so I got my hair cut, put the blue blazer on so I raise  
12 money now for the Indian Center to point -- to just look  
13 at me you may not know I am a native person, so because of  
14 my uniqueness, I've been able to in a sense get by in two  
15 or three different worlds, maybe four different worlds,  
16 and I'll explain that. I grew up in Wyoming, Michigan and  
17 I was obviously American Indian and we used to have eggs  
18 thrown at our house because we were the Indians on the  
19 block. I attended church that is probably 60 percent  
20 African American Pentecostal. So I'm very well acquainted  
21 with African Americans and I dated the former director of  
22 the Hispanic Center for three years, so I'm very well  
23 acquainted with the latino community. Given the fact that  
24 I grew up in Wyoming, Michigan, which was probably at that

1 time 85, maybe 90 percent white, I was pretty well  
2 accepted by many people, albeit we did have our house  
3 egged and what have you, but for the most part if I wanted  
4 to talk about being Indian, I was okay. The white boys  
5 and white girls got along with me fairly well. And  
6 because of my uniqueness, I listened to all communities  
7 talk about racial relations in Grand Rapids and Kent  
8 County and I hear what they have to say. So the President  
9 wants candid talk, I've been hearing candid talk my entire  
10 life and candid talk really is not real pleasant talk when  
11 you talk about racial relations. White people, as some of  
12 the comments on the previous panel indicated, they still  
13 don't want to be around black people. Sometimes the black  
14 people, quite frankly, appear to be just as racist as the  
15 white people because they don't want to be around white  
16 people. They have so much hatred about what's happening  
17 and as an Indian person I have to say that I probably  
18 check myself daily and I look about the world what I have  
19 to do and what I want to do for my community and I  
20 definitely have to survive in the world. And as I said,  
21 it's easy, it would be easy for me in one sense to never  
22 mention the fact that I'm a native person, but I can't do  
23 that. I have to work very hard for my people.

24 I want to make a comment about an

1 American I want to allude to Andre Hackert's book,  
2 probably most of you read that in '92 it was on the New  
3 York Times best sellers list, Two Nations where Hackert  
4 argues that in America we only have two colors, black and  
5 white and that the American Indian population is so small,  
6 which it is like .8 in Kent County .8 percent of the  
7 population translates down to about 5,000 native people.  
8 But we are so insignificant, it doesn't really matter. We  
9 don't fit into the racial mix. Now I have to say that in  
10 that sense that really compounds things for Indians  
11 because we have been referred to as the forgotten minority  
12 in this country and we have been many times excluded and  
13 also as an American Indian its something that we have that  
14 most other people don't have and it gets real confusing.  
15 It gets real complex because most people, quite frankly,  
16 don't understand it becomes the issue of treaties and  
17 sovereign rights that we have as, if you notice during my  
18 introduction, I introduced myself as a member of the  
19 Prairie Band Pottowattame Nation. I made testimony before  
20 a sub committee, Senate sub committee hearing here in  
21 Michigan on gambling and introduced myself as a member of  
22 the Prairie Band Pottowattame Nation and one of the state  
23 Senators called me back as I was leaving the podium. He  
24 said, do you consider yourself an American citizen and he

1     apparently took offense to the fact that I was proud of my  
2     Pottowattome heritage. But I had to respond by telling  
3     him -- I'm kind of quick on my feet -- I know the IRS  
4     considers me an American citizen. And so it is with that,  
5     you know, we enjoy dual citizenship and that's very  
6     significant. And if you talk to most Indians, they'll be  
7     very proud. The homeless Indian on the street, citizens  
8     of Grand Rapids are extremely proud of who they are as  
9     Indian people. They may not even know all the reasons  
10    why, but they're very proud as Indian people because this  
11    was our land.

12                   Now I want to talk a little bit about  
13    some racism that we have in -- it did not only begin with  
14    a hundred years plus of oppression, which is all true, but  
15    we did suffer the loss of our land, but one of the most  
16    significant things that happened to Indian people, even up  
17    to perhaps 15, 20 years ago were the fact that our kid  
18    were literally snatched out of homes and put into boarding  
19    school because the American government wanted to have the  
20    -- they had the philosophy they were going to Americanize  
21    the Indians. They were going to take the Indian out of  
22    the Indian body and you probably can imagine what would be  
23    if you were at home and somebody with a clipboard showed  
24    up at your door and said your kids have to go with me and

1 I may even represent a church of some sort. Certainly I  
2 have the authority by the government to take these  
3 children. Their parents were left with very lonely  
4 feelings. The kids were left with very lonely  
5 feelings. Some people argue that the high rate of  
6 alcoholism in this country as it relates to Indian people  
7 can be directly attributed to the boarding school  
8 experiences. But what it did, it really did a lot to  
9 diminish the whole family structure of Indians. So I have  
10 to say that as an agency director, I deal with some of  
11 those remnants that we are a scarred community and I say  
12 this, I would say this, we have a lot of pride in our  
13 heritage, pride in who we are, as I mentioned, but its  
14 kind of a double edge sword here because we live with  
15 these things every single day.

16 Now, the forms of racism that exist,  
17 you know, the sports teams nationwide that use Indian  
18 character as mascots and I have been told hundreds and  
19 hundreds of times that that is an honor. I don't see a  
20 white man dressed as an Indian with paint on his face, has  
21 no idea what the significance of that paint may have been  
22 to an Indian person spiritually or in terms of war. Has  
23 no understanding of that. I see no honor bestowed upon  
24 Indian people with the tomahawk chop. It's a form of

1 racism. The lack of funds that go to -- that do not come  
2 to American Indians because the Supreme Court has deemed  
3 that if I think its less than two percent, you don't  
4 really qualify as a category that you really have to pay  
5 any attention to, but the loss of funds because of that,  
6 that's a form of racism. That's what Indians live with  
7 every single day. And now we have in this state we have  
8 the notion that we have special interest groups. You are  
9 in a special interest group. Levi, why does the Indian  
10 Center even exist, it's a special interest group and just  
11 forget about, all about anything else. You are an  
12 American and I hear that kind of talk over and over and  
13 over again. I think that's a form of racism. And if we  
14 argue as a panel that makes advice and gives advice to the  
15 Commission of Civil Rights, don't call these people in  
16 check not only to talk about what political parties it's  
17 really prevalent in, but if you don't call these people in  
18 check, we stand to lose more as Indian people and you can  
19 take it into the latino communities Asian communities,  
20 African American communities because I hear this talk. I  
21 sat in the office last year of a national committee women  
22 for the Republican party and she said, Levi, I'm just so  
23 sick and tired of all these hyphenated Americans. Why  
24 can't we just all be Americans? But if we get caught in

1 that, if we allow them to do it to us, we will stand to  
2 lose more and more and more and more. And any gains that  
3 we think we've made during the last 30 years since Rosa  
4 Parks or 40 years I should say since Rosa Parks would not  
5 be to give up that bus seat. Any gains that we think  
6 we've made as a result of Dennis Banks and the Indian  
7 community, Belcor who fought for Indian rights, any of  
8 those gains we have made, we stand to lose more if we  
9 allow them to do it. For I read with interest Newt  
10 Gingrich's response to President Clinton calling for the  
11 conversation on race relations. If we allow them to do  
12 that, we're going to lose, lose, lose. So I guess I have  
13 to say this, as an American Indian I've lived with racism  
14 in Grand Rapids and Kent County as a little boy and I deal  
15 with it every single day of my life now. When I sit in  
16 restaurants sometimes I overhear people, as I said if you  
17 just looked at me, I may not appear to be an American  
18 Indian. Actually most people think I'm member of the  
19 Italian mafia because the way I look. People come up to  
20 me constantly tell me that. But that's okay. But the  
21 reality is I, because of the uniqueness of what I look  
22 like and who I am and how I've been brought up, I get to  
23 listen to all sides of this big complex puzzle called  
24 America and we cannot allow certain groups to take away

1 any of the gains that we have made in the last few  
2 decades. Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Thank you. Reverend Alfred  
4 S. Luke is --

5 SALVAN RAGJAN

6  
7 No, Salvan Ragjan. I am an Asian  
8 Indian and if you think Native Americans are invisible,  
9 Asian Indians are even more invisible. The reason why my  
10 brother waste identified as American Indian was because  
11 Columbus lost his way and so that's a whole different  
12 story. But I'm glad to know that you also are a believer  
13 and I am convinced that the religious community has a  
14 strong role to play in race relations. I accepted the  
15 appointment after serving the parish's ethnic committee  
16 and reform denominations to become race relations  
17 director. Originally I used to think that we can talk  
18 about race relations without addressing the concerns of  
19 our African American brothers and sisters, but as I engage  
20 the conversation and do my research, I am convinced that  
21 no amount of race relations in America will go forward  
22 without understanding the history, understanding the  
23 losses, and understanding the duplicity not only in terms  
24 of our relationship with African Americans, native

1 Americans and also as American Americans.

2 It was only last year that I discovered  
3 the difference between Ellis Island and Angel Island. I  
4 know many of my colleagues who loved the Lord Jesus, who  
5 know nothing about Angel Island, but we have Chinese  
6 believers in the Christian Reform Church. I wanted to  
7 alert you to the fact in the Grand Rapids Community  
8 Citizens League put out a little booklet in 1996 with the  
9 title "Listen, Learn, and Act". And I want to tell you  
10 that I am hopeful of the impetus that the President has  
11 given for conversation. Like Cornell West, I think that  
12 the public square is silent and because it is silent and  
13 when there's no discussion, then the denial can go on.

14 I choose to wear this little button on  
15 my lapel that I discovered as I was working through the  
16 Internet and found a fellow by the name of John McKenzie  
17 who was willing to sell these things. It says, I'm a  
18 recovering racist. And I wasn't born in America but I grew  
19 to be a racist. And I still struggle everyday with what  
20 it means not to be a racist. But the race that I was  
21 prejudiced against was the Japanese who killed my  
22 grandfather and I also was schooled in western thinking,  
23 western philosophy, and western theology and I was  
24 prejudiced against African Americans. And I asked myself,

1 where does that come from and what am I doing? And it's  
2 precisely because of me coming into terms with what I am  
3 and where my journey is taking me that I'm saying that we  
4 have to have honest conversations, but it can't just end  
5 there. And when I talk about honest conversations, I'm  
6 not just talking about people talking, I want to know if  
7 stories, and I don't need persons of color to have to  
8 defend their stories. I want to hear the stories, enter  
9 into the stories, and I want to learn and then I want to  
10 act together. And I think its those three pieces that  
11 have to come together. I have a story that's both  
12 humorous and painful, but, I think spells for us what our  
13 task is. Benjamin Logan is a judge here in Grand Rapids  
14 and his wife is a doctor. They live in an upward middle  
15 class neighborhood, predominantly white. One summer he,  
16 Judge Logan, dressed in shorts and tennis shoes and hoped  
17 on his riding lawnmower to cut his acres of grass. A  
18 short time later, a well dressed woman drove by in her  
19 Cadillac. She slowed and called to the judge, could you  
20 come over a minute and do my lawn, please? And the judge  
21 turned off the lawnmower, walked to the edge of his  
22 property. The woman smiled, you seem to be doing a good  
23 job there. She says, how much do you charge for  
24 lawnmowing? Logan recalled, I fought back all those

1 feelings, instead I said, well the lady that lives here  
2 lets me sleep with her. The woman drove off disgusted and  
3 confused. Some of us have to learn to be ingenious when we  
4 confront those kinds of situations because sometimes you  
5 either laugh and you cry and I am not going to let  
6 somebody see those tears when they treat me like that.

7 I live in a neighborhood that is fairly  
8 affluent with the, near the Ottawa Heights High School. I  
9 have good neighbors on either side and one across, but  
10 about three houses down I have neighbors that don't want  
11 to look at me, don't want to talk to me, don't want to  
12 have anything to do with me, want to pretend that I don't  
13 exist. That's precisely why we have to talk. We don't  
14 have the luxury of ignoring each other because if we don't  
15 protect each other, we will destroy each other and there  
16 will be no future for anyone. Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Thank you very much.  
18 Questions? A powerful statement. Mr. Bulkowski?

19 MR. BULKOWSKI: I guess a question for Levi.  
20 The specific experiences of American Indians in the Grand  
21 Rapids area today, is it getting, better is it getting  
22 worse from the perspective of police harassment,  
23 employment opportunities?

24 MR. RICKERT: I think that it is, as Reverend

1 here alludes to, if there's no conversation in the public  
2 square, I think there's a certain amount of denial.  
3 There's vast denial and I'll say this, that people want to  
4 romanticize the Indian and they like to tell people  
5 recently I had somebody from Stilkey's (phonetic) walk  
6 into my office. Levi, I just took over this position. He  
7 was vice president. He said my H.R. Department tells me  
8 you get our announcements and they work with you  
9 everyday or not every day, but on an ongoing basis. And I  
10 said, you know, I've never had any correspondence with  
11 anybody from your H.R. department. And what happens so  
12 many times, people in corporations may have had one  
13 meeting 15, 20 years ago with one Indian someplace and  
14 they feel as if they've made that same thing for life and  
15 its not going on. I will say this about the police  
16 harassment, that there is a gang in Grand Rapids called  
17 the Nish Nob Monk (phonetic) and some of the members come  
18 to me and tell me that they occasionally get pulled behind  
19 the supermarket over on the west side where the Indians  
20 live and they get harassed. I'll say this, that since  
21 I've been on the community relations commission, anything  
22 that I would feel fit, I would work through the Community  
23 Relations Commission to deal with those types of  
24 situations. I think that I'll say this, as somebody in

1 the Indian community, sometimes we hesitate to call our  
2 leaders because sometimes our elders have to really make  
3 us leaders, so I almost hesitate to use that term, but I  
4 know that I run an agency that helps Indians and I know  
5 that as that person's agency director, I have worked  
6 extremely hard to establish working relationships with  
7 chief of police, other people in this community, the  
8 superintendent of schools at various schools because its  
9 very important that we have that dialogue that I can pick  
10 up the phone and talk to them, but I have to say this,  
11 that I also am getting to the point where I can see  
12 through those courtesy meetings where they give us 15, 20  
13 minutes of their time or an hour of their time, think  
14 everything is great. We know how to call them in check.

15 MR. BULKOWSKI: Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN FRAZIER: Are there other questions?  
17 If there are no further questions, we thank you.

18 We are going to go into our open forum.  
19 Than is an opportunity for persons who have not been on  
20 our formal agenda today to make comments. Please sign up  
21 with Peter Minarik if you have not already done so, so he  
22 has a record of your name and we are going to take five  
23 and go into the open session in five minutes.

24 PUBLIC SESSION

1                   CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: We'd like to get started  
2 again. The public session of the Michigan Advisory  
3 Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is now  
4 open. At this time individuals that have signed up that  
5 have asked to speak to the Committee are Mr. LaDue -- if I  
6 misspeak the name, please help me. Mr. LaDue, Mr. Flores,  
7 Mr. Jones, Mr. Pembleton, Ms. Pembleton -- I just want to  
8 recognize who you are -- Mr. Arthur Hartfield, Rodney  
9 Brown, Ms. Harrison, Ms. Sharpwell, Mr. Knight and Ms.  
10 McNair. Are there any others that have not signed up that  
11 would like to speak before the Commission? Okay if there  
12 are any others who desire to speak, we ask that you  
13 contact Mr. Minarik over here. He'll be over by the door  
14 and will put your name on the agenda.

15                   The rules for the public session are as  
16 follows: Because in recognizing we've been here all day,  
17 we're trying to get as much on the record as possible,  
18 comments may not be defamatory or degrading. That's very  
19 important. Time for the opening statement is five  
20 minutes. Time for the follow up Committee questions is  
21 five minutes. If additional time is needed, you are  
22 advised to provide written comments or questions to Mr.  
23 Minarik or to the regional office in Chicago. Any  
24 questions?

1                   Okay. So at this time we'll hear from  
2 Mr. LeDue. I think Mr. LeDue is not here, so we'll hear  
3 from Mr. Flores.

4                   DR. FLORES

5                   You know, I'm the son of migrant farm  
6 workers and recently earned my Doctorate Degree. I'm  
7 generally referred to as Dr. Flores.

8                   CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: I'm sorry, apologize. Let  
9 the record reflect, Dr. Flores.

10                  DR. FLORES: Thank you very much. As I  
11 stated in 1956 my family came to Grand Rapids as migrant  
12 farm workers. We were not immigrants to this country, but  
13 rather migrant from a place called Texas. You know,  
14 people like to call that the lone star republic and  
15 oftentimes a different country, but coming to Grand Rapids  
16 and experiencing most of my up bringing in Grand Rapids,  
17 my education in the Grand Rapids public schools, I've  
18 learned very well what racism is and racism is when an  
19 organization exerts a power or an influence over you such  
20 as to place you in a disadvantage or to place you at a  
21 disparate level of academic achievement or economic  
22 well-being or political status. That's reality that we  
23 experience in Grand Rapids. I'm sorry that six minutes or  
24 five minutes, as you said Mr. Holliday, but in that

1 five minutes we are barely beginning to establish the  
2 currents in Grand Rapids that attest to the fact that  
3 racism is alive and well.

4 I take you back to a comment that Mr.  
5 Rogers on the television used to say, it's a wonderful day  
6 in the neighborhood. But I've been saying its not such a  
7 wonderful day in the neighborhood. I live in the inner  
8 city in my neighborhood in the neighborhood that is  
9 predominantly Hispanic American and in a neighborhood  
10 that's basically blighted and perhaps on its way to  
11 redevelopment. But in a neighborhood that is specifically  
12 outlined or designated for our community where we're  
13 welcome, where there's a community. I as a claim about  
14 the ranks in the educational administration unit of the  
15 Grand Rapids public schools where I'm an employee  
16 currently on suspension, interestingly enough, and I began  
17 to gain a little but more economic security. I tried to  
18 move onto the west side of town, which is predominantly  
19 white. In fact, less than five percent of the residents  
20 west of the Grand River were, in fact, minority at that  
21 time and was faced with housing discrimination. Had to be  
22 screened by an informal neighborhood association which is  
23 not one of the official associations. So, I'm very  
24 familiar with the psycho-drama racism that we had in Grand

1 Rapids, not only in our community, but with our police  
2 encounters and with our educational system and with city  
3 hall. We have a system that needs to be changed here if,  
4 in fact, the experiment of democracy is to work. This  
5 democracy we call America. We cannot continue to allow  
6 the educational system to fail our children miserably.  
7 Minority children in Grand Rapids and in the environment  
8 for the most achieve at half the rate that white students  
9 achieve at and they drop out or are pushed out or  
10 suspended or expelled from schools at twice the rate. The  
11 reality is we might be gaining one quarter of the benefit  
12 of an identification that we call a public education that  
13 is entitled to all U.S. citizens. That's a travesty that  
14 we're going to have to address. The racial achievement  
15 gap, the gap that exists between groups as you disaggregate  
16 data for those districts that report data accurately, most  
17 of them are in the business to re-inventing the data to  
18 disguise the disparity that exists or changing the  
19 definition of what a drop out is or changing the rules in  
20 mid stream so that some students are listed as if, in  
21 fact, they appear to be enrolled and achieving when, in  
22 fact, they are not achieving. We have to make sure that  
23 the educational system provides equality in the treatment  
24 of students. We have to make sure that there's, in fact,

1 advancement in educational gains if, in fact, we're to  
2 succeed. And let me tell you another thing that's  
3 happening, not only in Grand Rapids, but I see across the  
4 country. I am an ex-convicted felon. In 1973 I, along  
5 with probably President Clinton and the others were -- I  
6 was part of the group that was inhaling at the time and I  
7 got into trouble. But in spite of that -- I was a  
8 freshman in college -- finished my college years and I  
9 earned my degree and I went on to become a teacher and  
10 then I went on to get my Masters, earning a Masters and  
11 then I earned a Doctorate and I am, in fact, someone my  
12 parents can be proud of and contributed to my community  
13 and I am highly educated. But I am constantly marked by  
14 the fact that I am a convicted felon because I  
15 experimented with that psychedelic drug that Timothy Leary  
16 was so fascinated with. And it marked me for life. I  
17 continue to have these problems with police, with  
18 institutions that continue, rather than look at me for the  
19 achievements that I've achieved or the good that I've  
20 contributed to my community, its always the negative. And  
21 I say to you that as we put more police on the street, the  
22 likelihood of minorities being stopped and incarcerated  
23 having, you know, an encounter with the system that's a  
24 negative encounter. A juvenile record now in the State of

1 Michigan we passed a new law that says that you cannot  
2 work for a public institution in education if, in fact,  
3 you have a record. What we're doing is we're scarring the  
4 minorities in this nation, in the state, in this community  
5 and not enabling them to become employees of one of the  
6 biggest and, in fact, the largest employer in Grand Rapids  
7 Metropolitan area. The largest employer now has an excuse  
8 not to hire minorities, if they have juvenile records or  
9 if they have adult records. And not just felons, but  
10 misdemeanors. You have to look at this inequity that  
11 exists in a system that says if you're a sinner you can be  
12 saved, doesn't matter what sin, you can be saved. But if  
13 you are at all involved with the law, with any kind of  
14 incarceration you are marked for life. You know that to  
15 me is a perpetration of inequality that needs to be  
16 challenged, needs to be part of your report. If that's  
17 five minutes, I thank you, sir.

18 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Well now you have five  
19 minutes and are there any questions by any of the  
20 Commissioners?

21 MS. THOMAS: Did you say you were on  
22 suspension?

23 DR. FLORES: Yes, ma'am. I'm currently on  
24 suspension for some false allegations made against me by

1 three of my disgruntled employees; one of them happens to  
2 be white, so I guess they have a lot of white privilege  
3 that goes with being white and being a subordinate of a  
4 minority supervisor. The allegations are completely  
5 unfounded and I know that I will prevail.

6 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: If you have any exhibits  
7 that you might want to share with the Commission--

8 DR. FLORES: I do not at this time. I think  
9 that I've made my points and for what its worth, thank  
10 you.

11 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: We certainly appreciate  
12 you taking the time.

13 MR. MINARIK: If he has statistics that he  
14 quoted about the disproportionate drop out rate,  
15 disproportionate educational achievement, if he could make  
16 those available, we will be appreciative.

17 DR. FLORES: I'll be happy to provide that  
18 data.

19 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Would you be kind enough  
20 to touch base with Peter to make sure that he retrieves  
21 that information from you?

22 DR. FLORES; Absolutely. Thank you very  
23 much.

24 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Mr. Jones?

1                                   WALTER JONES, III

2                                   Mr. Chairman, distinguished panel, its  
3 a pleasure to be here this afternoon. I guess the mission  
4 is none, but at least there's a possibility of some things  
5 happening. My name is Walter Jones, III and I am  
6 political action officer for the Michigan State Conference  
7 of this district's black caucus which takes in that part  
8 of western Michigan, Benton Harbor, Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo  
9 County, Cass County, VanBuren County and Barien County.  
10 Its pretty much the 6th District.

11                                   I'd just like to mention some of  
12 problems that are taking place in that part of  
13 southwestern Michigan, I guess. For openers, we have a  
14 school system, a parchment school system which is just  
15 outside of Kalamazoo, Barton School system, has a history  
16 of racism. Several months ago a child was beaten by seven  
17 white students. A black child was beaten by seven white  
18 students. It sort of was the tip of the iceberg in the  
19 parchment school system. I might add that the Civil  
20 Rights Commission has been called in on that incident in  
21 Kalamazoo. The NAACP and others are trying to figure out  
22 avenues to go to see what we can do as far as  
23 institutional racism is concerned in the parchment school  
24 system. It's only a 16 percent black school system, but

1 its so closely tied to Kalamazoo, which is probably about  
2 35 percent Afro American that we kind of cross lines and I  
3 feel some obligation to those citizens that are out on the  
4 outskirts. Certainly I know that an injustice to one of  
5 us anywhere is an injustice to all of us everywhere and  
6 that sort of is what's happening in the parchement school  
7 system.

8 I was scout master for quite awhile in  
9 the Kalamazoo area, from Eagle scout and on and during  
10 that time worked with the parchement boy scouts. We went  
11 to camp and that kind of thing together. And this is  
12 almost 20, 25 years ago and during that time we  
13 experienced racial slurs out in camp from those larger  
14 units, as we still do in the Kalamazoo area. A job  
15 discrimination at the parchement school system seems to be  
16 very clear. They only have one black employee in the  
17 entire system. So we would hope, I guess, that that  
18 system be looked at and some recommendations be made to  
19 parchement school system in Kalamazoo proper. The City of  
20 Kalamazoo, we have just done a study in the City of  
21 Kalamazoo. It was done by part of the City of Kalamazoo  
22 and it proved discrimination in hiring policies and  
23 promotion policies within the city itself. I don't know  
24 exactly what's going to happen in the City of Kalamazoo,

1 but promotions -- we have a city council of seven white  
2 councilmen. We have a white city manager and justice is  
3 not being served too well in the Kalamazoo area with  
4 institutional racism. We've had threats on our branch  
5 line for church burnings in the Kalamazoo area and we did  
6 call in the Department of Justice and I heard sort of  
7 through grapevine that they tracked, traced those phone  
8 calls down. But this is just to give you a feel for some  
9 of the problems in the Kalamazoo area. Minority business  
10 being stifled and development is very slow. Most banks in  
11 our area are not really adhering to the Community  
12 Reinvestment Act or the policies of community  
13 reinvestment. We have no specific contract compliance in  
14 Kalamazoo. Other contractors are -- minority contractors  
15 and women-owned businesses are not getting a fair part of  
16 the business and there's not enough assistance taking  
17 place in the areas of women-owned business and minority  
18 businesses in those areas that are, some are mandated by  
19 federal law. The courts have been very unkind to us as a  
20 people and I think that has a very direct bearing on  
21 what's taking place and the attitude among the majority to  
22 the problems that we have. I would hope some day that  
23 under John Conyer's bill, Afro Americans will, in fact,  
24 receive reparations from the federal government, not what

1 is happening now as far as the welfare problem and the  
2 pressure that is bringing on our society. I think that  
3 something must be done very soon because we're in a  
4 boiling pot situation with there's no jobs, no decent  
5 jobs, affirmative action is dying on the vine, people  
6 aren't working and being forced to find jobs that aren't  
7 there, put in a position of scratching and laughing when  
8 there's nothing funny. I think that the civil rights is  
9 going to have to move and move fast before we find  
10 ourselves maybe in a position of economic race war, you  
11 know, not just with the economic disparity in America, and  
12 very specifically in Kalamazoo County. In Kalamazoo  
13 County we have the highest death rate among children in  
14 the United States among Afro American babies. We're  
15 losing 30 per 1,000 and I'm not getting any answers at all  
16 from at home, that's why I come from afar to testify here.  
17 I see what's happening in our area and the Kalamazoo  
18 County area as almost being criminal. That's my five  
19 minutes. I could have used some more time. Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Well, by the same token,  
21 if there are questions by the Commission members, we will  
22 entertain those questions at this point and if you have  
23 additional information that you did not get presented, you  
24 can present it to us here in writing and it will be

1 entered into the record, thank you.

2 MR. MINARIK: Mr. Chair, he referred to a study done by  
3 the NAACP that proves discrimination.

4 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: We'd like to have copies  
5 of that.

6 MR. JONES: That was done by the City of  
7 Kalamazoo, by the city manager, so we'd have to get it out  
8 of his office and we have copies of it.

9 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Could you direct us to  
10 that and we will make arrangements for it?

11 MR. JONES: I will.

12 MR. MINARIK: And he also made a comment  
13 About the highest death rate in the county of  
14 African American children. Can you provide us with that  
15 evidence?

16 MR. JONES: I certainly can. That was the  
17 figure through the Kalamazoo County Health Department.

18 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Okay. All right, Ms.  
19 Pembleton?

20 MS. PEMBLETON

21 Good afternoon. I don't know where to  
22 start, there's so much to talk about today. When I you  
23 were here, I wanted to come to share a few things that  
24 might help us make this situation a little better. It's

1 almost like I'm up here begging to be a human being and  
2 its really shameful that in 1997 we're still back wher4e  
3 we were a long, long time ago. In my heart I think what  
4 will happen is this Committee will get a lot of data, a  
5 lot of feedback, take it somewhere and file it away. Its  
6 extremely shameful. We're going into the 21st Century and  
7 we're still begging for basic human dignity and rights.  
8 We go begging for the kinds of things that other races  
9 take for granted and I believe the reason we're begging  
10 here today, and we are begging and black African Americans  
11 and other people of color are on a begging type status.  
12 We should not have to come before other human beings and  
13 beg for things that they take for granted.

14 Now, what I have done as an African  
15 American mother and citizen is try to remedy my problems  
16 by myself because I think when we come before a Committee  
17 like this, we asking you to do something for us that only  
18 we can do as African Americans and people of color. Can't  
19 nobody, white folks can't do it, they would not and should  
20 not do it. And in order for us to get the kind of  
21 dignity, the kind of growth that we need as African  
22 people, we have to take matters into our own hands.

23 I Made a list of a few things that I  
24 think might help us and I'm starting with education

1 because ignorance and freedom does not mix. We have to  
2 educate ourselves. We have to have long term education  
3 and the freedom to use what we've learned. Also we need  
4 to have more of a diet that's conducive to doing a right  
5 thing. As I look over how we live and eat, we eat things  
6 that are not conducive to longevity. We drink things that  
7 don't keep us healthy. My whole theme is that ignorance  
8 and freedom does not go hand and hand and plus the only  
9 way we can make it work is to take matters into our own  
10 hands. We need to learn to spend like people with good  
11 judgment. When the African people spend money, we never  
12 see that money again, so how are we expected to build an  
13 economic base when I spend my money and never know where  
14 it goes. There is no way I can build an economic base  
15 spending like a child. When whites ask and when any  
16 committee like this asks what can we do to fix it, that  
17 question is embarrassing, really. Black folks and other  
18 people of color should be treated with the same dignity,  
19 the same respect that white folks take for granted.  
20 That's not a big thing to figure out and it will help  
21 remedy some of these problems. Like I said and I repeat,  
22 we can't expect whites or any race to do for us what only  
23 we can do and plus we have to stop sanctioning industries  
24 that are detrimental to our health, like the prison

1 system. We can't educate our children, yet we can fix a  
2 prison. Something is wrong with that picture. Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Thank you. Any questions  
4 of the Commission? Do you have any additional  
5 documentation that you may want to present that we can  
6 enter into the record in writing or if you do, then we can  
7 provide that to Peter.

8 Mr. And Mrs. Hartfield?

9 MR. HARTFIELD

10 Hello, how you doing.

11 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Hello.

12 MR. MINARIK: Mr. Holliday, Mr. Chair, before  
13 you get the information of the Committee Mr. and Mrs.  
14 Hartfield testified before the Committee at our last  
15 hearing.

16 MR. HARTFIELD: Yes, I was going to mention  
17 that, thank you very much.

18 The late report I made to you all about  
19 my family. My five children and the east Grand Rapids  
20 School District. Well, for two years that our kids  
21 weren't in school because we reported to you all that we  
22 had to take it upon ourselves to protect the interest of  
23 our kids in the city, two years later we was prosecuted,  
24 found guilty for doing so. I have documentation right now

1 because I did not I feel -- I will not pay the court  
2 order, I will spend time in jail for my children and what  
3 I believe in. The court right now wants us to spend -- we  
4 violated our probation. They feel that we did -- that we,  
5 me, myself, I just have to fight for my children. This  
6 basic bottom line, right now I'm going to fight this  
7 court. I believe that we were well not found, but were  
8 not guilty of those charges. We had an all white jury in  
9 an all white district. Our children had been beat on in  
10 school, had testified to it, testified to the racism,  
11 testified to the environment. They said they did what  
12 they could do. My attorney said they didn't do enough two  
13 years down the road. We was prosecuted for it, not paying  
14 the fine. I told the judge personally myself that I'm not  
15 doing it. I just talked to her maybe three weeks ago.  
16 She sends this notice out saying I violated probation. I  
17 will not pay the fine, let it be. I protected my  
18 children. I know I protected my children. I brought  
19 their education up while they was at home. I had -- my  
20 wife can testify to some things. I don't know what type  
21 of minutes she will have, but my kids went to this school  
22 district with the intention of thinking they was going to  
23 come out graduated. Not one of my children graduated from  
24 the school. Just recently this past year I went to

1 re-enroll my kids in school, they called the police and  
2 had us escorted off the premises because my children  
3 believed that they needed to go to the 10th and 12th  
4 grade. There's two different children here. They went to  
5 go to these classrooms. They called the police and had us  
6 escorted off. I just got a note from another mother in  
7 this district that they passed her child on without  
8 testing, without credits to the 12th grade, just pushed  
9 him through the school system. Me myself I know when I  
10 reported this to you all before something should have been  
11 done. I went to Mr. Sallie about it. I talked to the  
12 chairperson that was here earlier. Peter Minarik know a  
13 lot about it, Tom Carnegie, nobody seems to know what to  
14 do about my children's education. How can I get my  
15 children to have a conducive life for this country? If a  
16 white school district don't even have a rate for  
17 minorities to graduate in all five of my kids right now  
18 have been pushed out of the school system. In order for  
19 them to have an education I will have to take it upon  
20 myself to teach them. So far the school made me take nd  
21 had them tested and found that since they been out of  
22 school their education went up. While they was in school  
23 they stayed down. I don't understand it. My child just  
24 went back for the last six weeks he hadn't been there just

1 six weeks, they already had a crime -- not criminal, but  
2 a sexual allegation charges against him going to the 9th  
3 grade already waiting for him at the high school in case  
4 something come down, they can point at him. They don't  
5 even get that right. They took that and pushed it under  
6 the rug; no type of investigation no discipline was done  
7 to the other student that made these false allegations  
8 that we brought up to them and made them know that these  
9 are false allegations. They would not investigate it.  
10 They basically is pushing us out the neighborhood. I'm  
11 not going nowhere. I'm fighting these people all the way,  
12 especially for being prosecuted for protecting my  
13 children. I reported to every entity, every agency that's  
14 known to take care of civil rights, any type of criminal  
15 activities any kind of misuse, abuse of a child, nothing  
16 is being done, nothing. I don't get it, combined again me  
17 and my wife, we lost about 35 pounds together. I'm  
18 telling you, I've been fighting these things for years. I  
19 have lost I don't know, I can't -- I just got another job,  
20 I'm afraid I might lose it because they want to send me to  
21 jail. Now I'm going. I don't mind. I'm fighting for my  
22 kids. I'm protecting my kids. I want my wife to tell  
23 some things that I know -- it's a wonder we have our  
24 sanity. It's a wonder some of them people still over

1 there is living. My kids mean more than anything to me.

2 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Now we can hear from Mrs.  
3 Hartfield.

4 MRS. HARTFIELD

5 First of all, I want to say I'm not  
6 from here, I'm from Benton Harbor and I lived here for 13  
7 years, but I consider myself still from Benton Harbor okay  
8 because I never was welcome here, so I never felt at home  
9 in Grand Rapids. That's my home. I never had a police  
10 record and as of today, I don't have a police record, but  
11 that won't be very long, I can see that.

12 When I first moved here we had problems  
13 in the Grand Rapids School System. It went to court. The  
14 judge recommended that our kids don't go back to a Grand  
15 Rapids school system because of the things that had  
16 happened to our kids and that we move somewhere else, it's  
17 not nothing. Grand Rapids, we didn't know. Anywhere else  
18 you move is predominantly white, so how I couldn't never  
19 understand how is it better for my kids not to live around  
20 somebody that looks like them rather than fix the problem,  
21 you know. So I feel from the jump we was messed over,  
22 okay. They already done took my kids' education,  
23 everything that we have been fighting for, they took. So  
24 there's nothing left. My kids, I've raised them to be

1 adults now and taught them very well, so I know they can  
2 take care of themselves. I have went my limit. I'm not  
3 taking no more, absolutely no more. Just like he have  
4 said, they accused my son of sexual allegation, then they  
5 swept it up under the rug. Didn't want none of the people  
6 involved that accused him of it, which I know they knew it  
7 never happened in the first place, like I said it was just  
8 a set up. They just wanted to start him a record, so they  
9 could take it to high school, but see what they don't  
10 know, like they waiting for him, I'm waiting for them  
11 because this time I've been to everybody, nobody did  
12 nothing. So I'm going to go out just like the Oklahoma  
13 bomber, but I ain't bombing nobody. But I might go down,  
14 but I'm taking a lot of people with me and I ain't  
15 intending to take no kids because I don't want to hurt no  
16 kids. The kids ain't did nothing, its these grown folks,  
17 and like I said, I don't make it, could be the judge, you  
18 know, because I have been messed over enough, it's been  
19 kind of in the dark. So I'm fixin to do something where  
20 nobody can't keep under the rug. I gave my momma  
21 everything that we done been through, through this school  
22 system and the documents, everything so that they won't  
23 say so. This is just another crazy nigger, you know, they  
24 going to know why we did it. I was going to President

1 Clinton, but I ain't got to because this is going to go to  
2 President Clinton. I'm not going to spend a penny to go  
3 through President Clinton. He wants to be involved  
4 himself. When I get through, it ain't going to be no more  
5 of this stuff. I'm going all the way out for my kids. I  
6 done made that up in my mind and I'm telling it to  
7 everybody. I'm telling you all, I told the state board of  
8 education, I told the East Grand Rapids police, enough is  
9 enough and I ain't taking no more. Like I said, I will do  
10 anything for my kids, that includes killing and dying  
11 because that's what they done did to us. They killed us.  
12 Now hear me, we supposed to be living in the United States  
13 and talking about being conducive and productive, hey, I  
14 never had no record, never had a police record. Can't  
15 nobody over there and the thing like I can relate this no  
16 that one guy, I'm telling you I'm saying this  
17 specifically, and I'm not saying to you, but maybe you can  
18 pass it on to a friend or somebody of your color. White  
19 people, please quit saying because you all don't  
20 understand when you say these things to a black person.  
21 It's not a complement, it's an insult. All the stuff that  
22 my kids done went through with the school system, they get  
23 up in my face, well you got some good kids and I feel like  
24 tearing up everything. That's not a complement to me,

1 it's that an insult. If my kids so good, why in the world  
2 did I have to go through this? I know they was good.  
3 Here we in a court system that finds us guilty. I  
4 sympathize with what you have been through. My kids was  
5 drugged, spit on, they pissed on his clothes. The worse  
6 discrimination. How in the world can a people admit that  
7 this happened to a family, but you guilty because you  
8 protect your kids because the law said you got to have  
9 your kids in school until they get 16, then we guilty.  
10 Well, I'm sorry, common law tells me what to do with mine  
11 when my kids' life is in danger because ain't none of them  
12 taking care of them. My kids ain't never had -- I got  
13 five kids, my oldest one is 21, my baby is 15 years old.  
14 Not a one with a police record, not a one with a baby and  
15 I got five virgins, thank you Jesus. Now tell me they  
16 ain't raising in these times and you think I'm going to  
17 sit back and let a group of people destroy me because I'm  
18 this color? It's going to be more left behind than that.  
19 I'm going out with a bang and President Clinton, that's  
20 insulting, talking about apologize to the black people for  
21 what they done been through. What about what we going  
22 through? Now he got his nerve.

23 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Ms. Hartfield, we've given  
24 each one of you an opportunity to present. I want to know

1 at this point are there any questions this Commission  
2 would like to ask.

3 MS. HARTFIELD: I would love to entertain  
4 some questions.

5 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Would you have anything  
6 that you would -- you said you have got something you want  
7 to put in the record in terms of materials that you might  
8 want to--

9 MS. HARTFIELD: This material here is  
10 nothing compared to what I want you all to see, I have  
11 boxes.

12 MR. HARTFIELD: I just want this on the  
13 record, so you know what I'm going to --

14 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Very good. If you have  
15 with you -- you've been in touch with Peter, if you have  
16 got additional materials that you'd like presented to the  
17 Commission through Peter, we'd certainly appreciate it.

18 Mr. Brown?

19 RODNEY BROWN

20 Hello, my name is Rodney Brown. I'm a  
21 professional with an academic background, political  
22 science, the chair out in California, highly reputable  
23 academic institution, very highly respected political  
24 science department. I've taught political science for the

1 last three years at Grand Rapids Community College, so I'm  
2 only sharing this for the record so you know that it's  
3 professional.

4 Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen of  
5 the Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil  
6 Rights. Welcome to Grand Rapids. For the sake of brevity  
7 and clarity, I'm going to be direct and to the point.  
8 Grand Rapids is a very disillusioned community in regard  
9 to race relations. I see the relationship between blacks  
10 and whites in particular in the community as a slave and a  
11 slave owner dichotomy. Most of our leadership in the  
12 community, excluding a few in the black community operate  
13 on directives from members in the white community. Now  
14 understand me, collaborative relationships between blacks  
15 and whites in our community is very much needed. But in  
16 many instances in our community, the black leadership only  
17 make decisions if it does not offend, disruption or go  
18 against the traditional methods and practices of the  
19 historical power group, i.e. white males. This is in my  
20 estimation a resemblance of a slave acting out his owner's  
21 wishes. On the other hand, in the white community, they  
22 see this practice as being consistent with the intended  
23 objectives of control which is one of the basic objectives  
24 of white supremacy. Thus, as I mentioned this

1 relationship characterized as slave and slave owner  
2 relationship. I'd like to give you an example. In  
3 response to an initiative that President Clinton called on  
4 regarding community development banks, a group of local  
5 business people and community representatives attempted to  
6 form a bank. This group transcended color, yet control  
7 would have vested in the people of color on this bank  
8 board. The mainstream banks were in direct opposition to  
9 these efforts and many of them vocally echoed their  
10 displeasure. This bank effort was thwarted and the spin  
11 doctors, meaning media, made the black community believe  
12 it was their own fault when, in fact, the people in power  
13 never wanted the bank. This, in my estimation, is  
14 economic injustice. Now, in the meantime, there's  
15 currently two new separate banks being organized in west  
16 Michigan in Grand Rapids in particular without any  
17 opposition whatsoever from the people in power. The  
18 majority community allows for their friends, associates  
19 and allies to compete freely in the banking environment,  
20 yet every under handed attempt to discredit the efforts of  
21 the initial community development bank by people of color  
22 was used to prevent the objective of economic empowerment  
23 for the minority community. Now, there's many other  
24 social, political, educational, and cultural inequities

1 and travesties that exist in our community and I sincerely  
2 hope that some of my distinguished colleagues who came  
3 before you today that they addressed them. But since we  
4 all realize that the color of freedom is green, I see this  
5 banking incident as one of, if not the most important and  
6 I would gladly answer any questions.

7 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Okay. Are there any  
8 questions from the Commission?

9 MR. MINARIK: If he could just clarify, Mr.  
10 Chair, if you would please, the name of the bank because  
11 there was something --

12 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Could you tell us the name  
13 of the bank?

14 MR. BROWN: Yes, the name of the bank was  
15 South Side Development.

16 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: When was it organized?

17 MR. BROWN: It was initially organized in  
18 1989.

19 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Do you have any  
20 information as to who some of the organizers and  
21 participants were that you can provide to Peter so we can  
22 have those names and dates in the record?

23 MR. BROWN: I sure do. Yes, sir, I sure do.  
24 I'd like to add also that I'm currently running for a

1 local commission seat for our 23rd ward and I'd like to  
2 give you all cards. Maybe you can use some of your  
3 influence down here in Grand Rapids to help me out.

4 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: We're not in the political  
5 business.

6 MR. BROWN: I'll still give you a card,  
7 though. Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Ms. Harrison?

9 GAIL HARRISON

10 Gail Harrison. For the record, I'm  
11 from North Ottawa County which is 95 percent white. I'm  
12 not from that area originally and so it was a bit of a  
13 culture shock to move there. There is racism that exists  
14 in North Ottawa County and for those of us that live in  
15 that community, that are upset by that, we felt we needed  
16 a rise and I personally went around to the Institute for  
17 Racial Health which you guys heard about earlier today.  
18 This is 25 years after being raised, no 30 years actually.  
19 I was raised in the Detroit area during the riots and  
20 because my mother was a graduate student, we stayed. At  
21 the time I got to be a participant as one of the children  
22 that they were trying new ways of integrating the schools  
23 and I think because of that, because I was involved as a  
24 student, my perspective on race relations was much

1 different than some white people that never had that  
2 opportunity.

3 I've been involved in social justice  
4 issues for many years. I came to this community, it was  
5 very white. I was concerned about that. I was concerned  
6 about some of the intolerance that seemed to exist in the  
7 community and after doing the Institute for Racial Health,  
8 I started seeking out some of the other people in the  
9 community. I've been there 12 years. Now that we are  
10 involved in social justice issues to try and affect some  
11 positive change. There was a incident, an African  
12 American family who moved to the community and I later  
13 found out they left that community because they felt it  
14 was too intolerant and there was no support there for  
15 them. I said that can't happen, that should not happen.  
16 This is the 1990s. So, some of us got together and we  
17 decided we were going to do something instead of people  
18 just talking and intellectualizing the whole issue of  
19 racism, we wanted to actually do something. As it turned  
20 out, one of the people that sits on our Alliance three  
21 days before our very first meeting was a victim of a cross  
22 burning in Harrisburg. It simply re-enforced that we were  
23 starting this none too soon. In the last year, and we  
24 have been together for one year, there are approximately

1 30 people that sit on the Alliance. We have migrant  
2 people, we have latino people, we have African American  
3 people, we have Native American persons and we have many  
4 caucasian people that are working together to try and  
5 affect some positive change where we are trying to create  
6 an invitation for people of color to live in that  
7 community if they would so choose and to know that they  
8 are supported in their presence; that we value their  
9 diversity.

10 One of the first things that we have  
11 done is a Calling All Colors Conference for middle school  
12 students at Grand Valley State University where there are  
13 1,100 students, 30 percent African American, 30 percent  
14 white, 20 percent latino, 9 percent Asian and a couple of  
15 Arabic kids. We came and we did a whole day of racial  
16 dialogue and activities and I've included some pictures in  
17 this exhibit that I'm going to turn over to you. It was  
18 very successful. The evaluations from the kids were,  
19 let's do it again, race unity forever. On a scale of 1 to  
20 5 being the most positive, the lowest we got was a rating  
21 of 3 by two kids. The rest were all 4 and 4.5s. We  
22 started just exactly like that, race unity for everyone.  
23 Let's do it again. We have been asked by many, many other  
24 schools. We have many other schools. We have included 7

1 schools in that conference and we've been asked by others  
2 if we could include them and by GVSU president to come  
3 back next year. I believe that we need to start the  
4 dialogue about racism much sooner than adulthood. I think  
5 it needs to start early and then I think it needs to be  
6 between groups of, diverse groups as opposed to isolated  
7 groups.

8 Another thing that we started was a  
9 migrant issues committee and this was because we have a  
10 large migrant population in our town and they are, I  
11 believe, under valued both economically and in terms of  
12 socially. We wanted to work. An English as a second  
13 language teacher came to the committee and felt strongly  
14 that there were issues that needed to be addressed that we  
15 as people that could try to affect a power structure  
16 needed to do something about that. We felt that before we  
17 could get to do some effective change, even do a needs  
18 assessment, we needed to do some relationship building and  
19 we also needed to reduce the language barrier. And so we  
20 started partnering English and Spanish classes where the  
21 Alliance members are learning Spanish at the same time the  
22 migrant people are learning English. We come together for  
23 socialization components, sharing of food and we partner  
24 the English students with the Spanish students to practice

1 their dialogue together. Because its an aligned  
2 curriculum, we can do that. We have moved from that to  
3 visiting camps with the families and working with the  
4 children to develop some social support network where the  
5 migrant people are teaching us about their lifestyle,  
6 we're teaching them about ours and starting some tutoring  
7 programs for the students.

8 We also are working very hard on  
9 advocacy. We know that and these are all reports that are  
10 undocumented, so I can give you no documentation, but one  
11 young man who was a honor student at Muskegeon High School  
12 is now working part time in the Grand Haven area while he  
13 goes to Muskegeon Community College and someone asked him  
14 how do you like being in Grand Haven? He said I've been  
15 stopped 17 times by the police in the three months I've  
16 been here. We have a person on our Alliance who is a  
17 professional who is an African American man. He works  
18 with the human resources, was a human resources person in  
19 Grand Haven who went to buy a house in the community and  
20 was told first when he called -- he said I don't sound  
21 like a black man on the phone. He called a house that was  
22 listed on Friday. It was in the area, he had been  
23 watching it closely. He said could I come on Sunday,  
24 would that be too late? He was told their would be no

1 showing on Saturday, that Sunday would be fine. There  
2 would be no problem. He showed up at the door and was  
3 told an offer had been made. They already expected it  
4 would be accepted.

5 Just one thing in closing. I'd like to  
6 see this model of people working cooperatively together  
7 and collaboratively to try to effect change. I'd like to  
8 see this model. I think we need to work together on  
9 racism. We as white people have a responsibility, people  
10 have a responsibility to try and effect some change.

11 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Are there any questions  
12 from the Commissioners?

13 MR. MINARIK: Mr. Chair, she referred to two  
14 of those incidents which apparently were hate crime  
15 incidents. I was curious if the committee was concerned  
16 about whether law enforcement and which law enforcement  
17 agencies had been contacted and if she had any knowledge  
18 that those had been reported as hate crimes?

19 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Could you provide Peter  
20 with some detail on that?

21 MS. HARRISON: The cross burning was highly  
22 documented, yes, we can get you some information and the  
23 17 times being stopped, are you asking about?

24 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Right.

1 MS. HARRISON: Actually it was just been  
2 recently reported to the county commissioner. Its being  
3 investigated. We are getting more documentation to the  
4 Advocacy so many times, so many times that kind of stuff  
5 is getting reported, so we're just now starting to  
6 document and working with the county commissioner.

7 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Okay, and be sure to  
8 present that to Peter so we can have that as part of the  
9 record. Thank you very much.

10 Ms. Shorewell?

11 MR. MINARIK: This has been accepted as an  
12 exhibit.

13 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Thank you. Molly  
14 Shorewell?

15 MOLLY SHOREWELL

16 Hi, I'm Molly Shorewell from Grand  
17 Rapids. I live over on the Northeast side and if I may  
18 I'd like to read, I'm really nervous, a letter about an  
19 experience that I had at one of our local grocery stores  
20 and this is a letter to the owner of the grocery store.  
21 Would you like me to name the grocery store and the  
22 person's name?

23 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: As long as its not  
24 defamatory or degrading.

1 MS. SHOREWELL: Okay. This occurred at a  
2 Family Fair Store here and the owner of the Family Fair  
3 Stores' name is Mr. Don Coors. So I will read. Dear Mr.  
4 Coors: Since my family and I moved to the Northeast end  
5 of Grand Rapids I have been a regular shopper at the  
6 Family Fair on Lenard and Fuller and I've enjoyed its  
7 convenience. However, last Friday -- this is a couple of  
8 weeks ago -- June 13th, while I was at the store something  
9 happened that upset me so much that I will no longer be  
10 able to conduct my business there. I felt it was  
11 important to write to you to explain what happened. At  
12 about 4:30 Friday afternoon I begun checking out my  
13 groceries. There was a women in front of me paying for  
14 her things. When another cashier came up to my cashier  
15 with a check from one of her customers. Without any  
16 hesitation this cashier explained to my cashier that she  
17 had a customer who had pre written a check and that she  
18 didn't know if she should cash it because she didn't know  
19 the customer and that the customer was black. My heart  
20 sank with sadness to think that a fellow customer was  
21 being judged solely by the color of her skin. Why would  
22 your employee think that it was acceptable or necessary to  
23 mention the customer's skin color. The cashier's  
24 insinuation there were that, through her behavior, that

1 this is an acceptable way to refer to her customers at  
2 Family Fair. I can assure you that in no way that I feel  
3 that this cashier acted in an appropriate way. I'm still  
4 highly offended that this clearly racist act happened.  
5 Needless to say, I was infuriated to know that I had just  
6 witnessed something so horrible and archaic. I went home  
7 and I cooled down and I called the manager and when I told  
8 him of my experience in his store, the manager named Dan  
9 assured me that in no way is he a racist. I told him that  
10 he may not be, but that he's got a racist for an employee  
11 working for him. The manager apologized and assured me  
12 that he would get to the bottom of this and I told him  
13 that I planned on boycotting the store and that I would be  
14 complaining to the Grand Rapids Urban League about this  
15 and his response was that he thanked me and that was it.  
16 He never asked me for my name, my phone number. He never  
17 said he'd get back to me and I felt that he didn't take me  
18 seriously at all.

19                   You should be aware that this is not  
20 the first time that I've witnessed a racist act in this  
21 store while shopping. Last winter I was in several aisles  
22 with a grandmother and her two grand sons. They were a  
23 perfectly adorable family with the boys trying to get  
24 grandma to buy him stuff their mom would not normally let

1 him buy. I had even joked with grandma that they were  
2 trying to pull the wool over her eyes and we laughed. And  
3 what was happening throughout the store took me a little  
4 while to recognize, but by each of these aisles I realized  
5 that this woman had been being watched. At the ends of  
6 each aisle there was a white employee staring to make sure  
7 that she wasn't stealing anything and it use crushed me.  
8 So I went home and I cooled down that time and I called  
9 the manager and he assured me he'd look into it and he  
10 thanked me, but he never asked me for my name and he never  
11 asked me for my number and I believed it was the same  
12 manager. Then as it is now and I wrote to the owner of  
13 the store: As you know, currently in Grand Rapids much is  
14 being done to correct the issue of race and racism at our  
15 Spartan stores as well as our D & W stores. Family Fair,  
16 by the way, is a Spartan Store. Seminars are being  
17 conducted to change people's way of thinking, why is your  
18 Family Fair at Lenard and Fuller so behind the times? Why  
19 are your black customers being treated any differently  
20 than I am? Frequently while waiting in line to check out  
21 I have pre written a check to expedite matters and there's  
22 never been a problem. I've even cashed checks without  
23 proper i.d.. Can you honestly say that this would be the  
24 same case for your black customers, and I think not. It

1 is my sincere hope that you address the issue of racism in  
2 your store immediately. I expect a response from you and  
3 I am providing my name and my address should you need  
4 further information. It is clear to me as a customer that  
5 your company needs to do more than walk the walk. As it  
6 stands now, I feel that your company lacks the integrity  
7 to treat all of its customer on an equal basis and until I  
8 see or hear further, I will no longer give my business to  
9 a store that promotes racism and I will continue to  
10 encourage my family and friends to do the same so. So  
11 that's my letter and I have not received a response from  
12 the owner so and I cc'd it over to Paul Mayhue who is one  
13 of our County Board Commissioners. Harry Borom, the  
14 Executive Director of the Urban League, Patrick Quinn who  
15 is President of the Spartan Stores and then even the store  
16 manager, no response yet. So --

17 MS. HA-ALJUNI: From any one of them?

18 MS. SHOREWELL: Well, Paul Mayhue advised me  
19 to cc it over to these particular people, so I don't  
20 really expect a response from Paul.

21 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Well, we certainly  
22 appreciate your sharing that with us and it also points  
23 out that if more individuals like you would step forward  
24 and confront situations like this, hopefully overtime it

1 will help to change people's hate, but when we are, as  
2 individuals are ignoring these issues and letting them go  
3 by, then they just continue to remain.

4 MS. SHOREWELL: That's right.

5 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: So we're very honored that  
6 you were willing to share this with us and commend you for  
7 your efforts and anything we can do, please provide any  
8 and all documentation to us through Peter and we certainly  
9 appreciate what you've done.

10 Any questions by the commission?

11 MR. MINARIK: Mr. Chair, would she be willing  
12 to give us a copy as a part of the record of the letter?

13 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Would you be willing to  
14 give us a copy of your letter?

15 MS. SHOREWELL: Its got my chicken scratch on  
16 it.

17 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Just a copy, as long as  
18 we get a copy.

19 MS. SHOREWELL: This is fine, thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: We can have that one,  
21 ma'am? Thank you very much.

22 Mr. Nitz?

23 SHERLOCK FREDERICK NITZ

24 Good afternoon, my name is Sherlock

1 Frederick Nitz. That name has caused me a lot of problems  
2 over the years because it doesn't fit the face, color or  
3 the body. I came to Michigan in 1962 as a resident  
4 drafted by the Detroit Lions football team. I was  
5 discriminated against then and I put a curse on them, they  
6 haven't won since.

7 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: When did you come here?

8 MR. NITZ: 1962. At that time I was told  
9 that they had to have an even number of black ball players  
10 for roommates on the road and it was a guy named Willie  
11 McClain with a knee problem. If Willie would have made  
12 it, I would have made it, but his knee didn't heal. They  
13 saw fit to transfer me to the Grand Rapids Blazers and on  
14 that team we had approximately about eight black  
15 ballplayers and we experienced over the years a lot of  
16 racial problems because the guys that we called captains  
17 of industry; Mr. Quinn, Mr. Meyers, Eberhart sponsored  
18 that team because they were trying to get a franchise in  
19 the AFL and one of the most racist things that happened to  
20 us at that time was that we had, most the ballplayers, you  
21 know, they didn't complete their degrees. I was a  
22 semester short. Some guys were eight hours and black and  
23 white and the president of the Urban League, the white man  
24 called all the black ball players and said what can I do

1 to get you people out of town and never come back here?  
2 Again well I'm here again. Well, I never liked the Urban  
3 League since and everybody that spoke here tonight I have  
4 a connection with every one of them. I have a story to  
5 tell even about the lady from west Ottawa. I worked in a  
6 consumer power company, the Campbell plant out there. I  
7 got stopped once -- this was back in 1964 -- I got  
8 stopped, but Mr. Flores and I go way back and one of the  
9 things, you know, that bothers me right now is why are we  
10 here? Why are you here? Because I went to a black  
11 college down in Central State in Ohio and before we  
12 misrepresented our history by giving all the credit to --  
13 and I'm from Birmingham -- Dr. King, but the real Civil  
14 Rights Act started when the schools were supposed to be  
15 desegregated. The Supreme Court rule and that was done by  
16 Republicans. I was in the first class. I lived in  
17 Oregon, Portland, Oregon and I moved to Washington D.C.  
18 that year. I didn't know what racism was. I didn't know  
19 what desegregation was because I always was around white  
20 people and I went there and it was a big deal. We was  
21 going to have a football game for the first time against  
22 whites and those turned out just to see a scrimmage. Now  
23 you come to this commission and I know I've been through  
24 the marches, demonstrations through the 60s because I was

1 born in Birmingham and my family moved out Oregon during  
2 World War 2 and I'm pretty sure, you know, I don't really  
3 know what this commission is really for because I just  
4 seen the article in the newspaper yesterday and I put this  
5 list and I see all these people and I was here earlier,  
6 you know, listening to them talk and everybody said  
7 everything's going to be all right. So far as I heard  
8 there's little racism and we can talk our way through it.  
9 You can't talk your way through racism. I have  
10 experienced racism from both ends, you know. I heard the  
11 comedian, Chris Rock best describe it. I'm the biggest  
12 racist in the United States because I hate all white  
13 people and I hate niggers and niggers by the definition of  
14 Webster's Dictionary because we have a problem. We have a  
15 problem that if you think its all black and white, its not  
16 going to get solved. The American Indian guys that  
17 were talking here, you know, we have -- I just spent the  
18 last two years, I got so disillusioned I had to leave  
19 Grand Rapids. As you see I went to the march in  
20 Washington, where I went to high school and I went all  
21 over the country the last two years and I hear the same  
22 thing from every state, every city I lived in L.A. off and  
23 on for two years, Tulsa, Oklahoma, Washington, D. C,  
24 Detroit is trying to come out of it, but its a mess. Now

1 I want to know, you know, why we're here talking. This is  
2 just going to be another I went to Grace Church that a had  
3 a meeting on racism and this was a couple of days ago  
4 around the block from me and we all sat in there and hey,  
5 we are all getting together, you know, because I believe  
6 in hitting it hard out when I get in, some white folks  
7 they like to challenge me. That's dialogue. The guy was  
8 there with a pad and he was writing everything down. We  
9 were saying an hour and he called the meeting to a close  
10 and said well I'll see you in September. They're getting  
11 money funded. We got so many organizations getting money  
12 funded saying that we're going to talk about racism. D &  
13 W, the guy that was here earlier, he didn't do anything  
14 about racism until he was sued. Spartan stores didn't do  
15 anything about racism until they were sued, but then  
16 everybody wants to make some money, then they oh jump on  
17 the bandwagon, oh, he's a grand guy.

18 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Your 5 minutes are up.  
19 Are there any questions that the committee wants to ask?

20 MR. NITZ: I got his card. I'd still like  
21 to -- what are we going to send him stuff?

22 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: If you have additional  
23 information, you'd like to provide to us through him. You  
24 can do that.

1 MR. NITZ: I'm saying for what?

2 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: So that we take testimony.  
3 This is about race and ethnic tension in the Grand Rapids  
4 area and that is what we've been listening to here all  
5 day. We certainly appreciate your making comments and at  
6 this time I'd like to offer the opportunity to Ms. McNair.

7 RENE MC NAIR

8 Hello, Rene McNair. I moved here in  
9 1989. I'm originally a Chicago, Illinois native. Since  
10 I've been here I've experienced racism almost on a daily  
11 basis. I'm not here most likely to talk about racism in  
12 the work force because I haven't heard it touched on very  
13 much today. But from wages and from the perspective of  
14 how people look at you and talk to you, treat you in the  
15 work force, racism is alive and going on here in Grand  
16 Rapids. I've even had incidents where people have written  
17 me notes in my work station that were derogatory towards  
18 my race and my sex. I work for -- I was recently fired  
19 from within the last week from a corporation that was  
20 based from Germany, but it was three different locations  
21 here within the Grand Rapids area and their practices are  
22 totally racist. Its a good old boy system where you get  
23 raises and things, commemorative to who you know and how  
24 you get along with who you know. And there are people

1 when I first started working there three years ago there  
2 were people who had been there 13, 14 years, they've  
3 gotten to the point where when they come to work everyday,  
4 they write down on the calendar or notebook the things  
5 that happened to them, but they never fight any of these  
6 things that happened to them because they're scared  
7 they're going to lose their job. They don't have outlets  
8 to go to people and see if the things that were done to  
9 them were completely and totally racist and somebody to  
10 help them figure out what they can do about it. There is  
11 a lot of racism going on in here in Grand Rapids and  
12 people have no outlet or no help to find out information  
13 as to how to stop it or to get help to even combat it.  
14 When you called the NAACP, you get an answering machine.  
15 When you call lawyers and things, even the lawyers here  
16 choose to be out of it because it depends upon what  
17 organization you're trying -- you're having problems with.  
18 They're a larger company in town, they employ so many  
19 people, we don't want to mess with them. I'm here because  
20 I don't know anywhere else to go. I just noticed  
21 yesterday that this Committee was going to be meeting  
22 today and I wasn't really prepared to come in here with  
23 particular incidents outside of my own or with names of  
24 other people or to even bring other people along with me

1 who have had similar problems or complaints, but I just  
2 wanted to come and let you guys know that it is alive and  
3 going on here and people have no outlet for it.

4 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Well, we certainly  
5 appreciate your taking the time. However, to try and  
6 assist you as best we, can if you have names and  
7 information that you would like to supply, then we'll make  
8 sure that Peter gets your name and you take his name and  
9 supply that to him so that it can be entered into the  
10 record. You will have until July 26th to get any and all  
11 other additional comments and documents entered into the  
12 record and we certainly would appreciate any information  
13 that you would be willing to provide. Thank you.

14 MR. SALEH: I assume -- its actually just a  
15 comment to Ms. McNair in terms of what I inferred in your  
16 statement was violence or intimidation at the work place  
17 and then you were -- and then you mentioned you were  
18 recently discharged from your employer?

19 MS. MC NAIR: Yes.

20 MR. SALEH: And if you believe that this is  
21 due to racially or sexually based in terms of the reasons  
22 for discharge, then there are agencies that are available.  
23 I know that there will be persons who may not agree how  
24 effective they are, but the State of Michigan, Department

1 of Civil Rights.

2 MS. MC NAIR: I've already filed a complaint  
3 with the Department of Civil Rights.

4 MR. NITZ: You do anything --

5 CHAIRMAN HARRISON: We've got to let her  
6 speak.

7 MS. MC NAIR: I've already filed a complaint  
8 with the Department of Civil Rights over an issue that  
9 happened with me in March and it was like after I went  
10 through the company's process of harassment, filing  
11 harassment against the people that I was having the  
12 problems with and filing the papers with civil rights,  
13 things just got worse for me.

14 MS. HA-AJLUNI: Have you tried filing a  
15 complaint with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity  
16 Commission?

17 MS. MC NAIR: No, I haven't. I wasn't  
18 aware that that was another department that I could take.

19 MR. NITZ: That's done simultaneously with  
20 the Civil Rights Commission. Its done too, automatically.

21 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: No one have any other  
22 comments?

23 MR. SALEH: What was the name of your current  
24 employer?

1 MS. MC NAIR: Bentler Industry.

2 MS. HA-AJLUNI: Is it B-e-n-t-l-e-r.

3 MS. MC NAIR: Well they just recently  
4 changed the name to Automotive.

5 MS. HA-AJLUNI: Yes, automotive.

6 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Are there any other  
7 persons that want to come before the Commission?

8 Would you please state your name?

9 MS. HALL: Yes, my name is Sharon Hall and  
10 I'm a community activist in the community.

11 SHARON HALL

12 There needs to be a vision here in  
13 Grand Rapids. There is certainly racism going on any time  
14 that city hall can have the Klu Klux Klan come and march  
15 right down on city hall and then we cannot have a black  
16 speaker come in and speak to our children at the colleges.  
17 The city, who would not allow that, then there's certainly  
18 racism going on.

19 And as a matter of fact, talking about  
20 the school system, I too had to stand up for my child and  
21 I live in a black community and I did to stand up for my  
22 child because I knew that there was a counselor that was  
23 planted into the schools, not letting the kids graduate.  
24 My child is very intelligent, she knew what she had to

1 have in school in order to graduate and when it was time  
2 for her to graduate, the counselor did not tell her that  
3 she had to have a government class in order to get across  
4 the stage. So I had to fight and I had to go against the  
5 school system to make them have her graduate. She's not  
6 the only one. The people that were in the black community  
7 from which I live, the children that's coming out of high  
8 school getting ready to graduate, that's why we have crime  
9 and we have so much drugs and people out, our young people  
10 out on the streets today because they're not letting them  
11 get their high school education or their diploma. And its  
12 sad when you got to sit here and you live your life and  
13 you got to make a living for yourself and you can't even  
14 make a living for yourself. You've got to watch the Klu  
15 Klux Klan come in here and sit down in front of their  
16 faces and then what you know you need and what the black  
17 people need here are jobs and things like that. We cannot  
18 even get them. You looking at nooses hanging up around,  
19 its pitiful. It needs to be investigated. If you don't  
20 have it investigated, me myself, I took it upon myself, my  
21 own opportunity to bring Ben Chavis Mohammed up in here in  
22 September and he will be here. Any questions?

23 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Anybody got any questions?

24 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: Just for our record,

1 could you give us some more clarity on the black speaker  
2 who was denied access?

3 MS. HALL: The black speaker was Ice T. He  
4 was coming into, I think it was Calvin College and he came  
5 to speak and our chief of police did not allow him to even  
6 come in. I'm a gospel promoter anyway and I do gospel,  
7 but since its happened, I try to get some of these  
8 corporate sponsors to come in here and we can't even get a  
9 black show. I have a black syndicated show, cannot get  
10 that on the air. They will not sponsor, corporate  
11 sponsors will not sponsor it. We are syndicated and its  
12 a shame, and we're talking about trying to help our  
13 people, trying to help our children, trying to help, you  
14 know, and the community and I work very hard in the  
15 community. That's nothing. I can't go out here and work,  
16 I cannot because I have a disability. I cannot go out  
17 here and get a job. So that's my thing is to make my  
18 living. I cannot even make a living.

19 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: Did I understand you to  
20 say there were nooses?

21 MS. HALL: Yes, Spartan Stores had nooses  
22 hanging up in the men's bathroom. They've been throwing  
23 up in the people's lunch basket. I work with the  
24 organization with curricula they've been doing that. I

1 have a picture of that. We've been putting out flyers the  
2 last couple of weeks. I have a picture of that. I also  
3 have information whereby my daughter where they did not  
4 have that government class and the people that I had to go  
5 to in order to have her graduate because if she did not  
6 graduate, if she did not walk that stage, there would have  
7 been a riot here. It would have been a riot here.

8 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Would you be kind enough  
9 to provide maybe the flyer and the pictures to --

10 MS. HALL: I gave that flyer to Mohammed.

11 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: --So we can include that  
12 in the record?

13 MS. HALL: Yes, I will.

14 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: We certainly appreciate  
15 it, thank you.

16 MS. HALL: Give me your card.

17 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: What is your name?

18 MS. HALL: My name is Sharon Hall. I'm a  
19 community activist and my business is Hall's Gospel  
20 Production.

21 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: You're a resident of what  
22 city?

23 MS. HALL: I'm a resident of Grand Rapids,  
24 Michigan.

1                   CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Okay. Are there any other  
2 persons that want to come before the Commission?

3                   RICHARD WESTERFORD

4                   I'd just like to introduce myself. My  
5 name is Richard Westerford and I'm a longtime resident of  
6 Grand Rapids something like about 43 years and I've been  
7 here, I've been in the work force, I had my own business  
8 and I've lived in the inner city most of that time, in  
9 fact, all of that time.

10                  About March, no January I decided I  
11 wanted to make a move, move out of the inner city. I went  
12 and made application to an apartment and I was denied.  
13 They didn't give me an application. They just started  
14 telling me about other apartments that was available, such  
15 as Herkema Hotel, hey, they had nice apartments there.  
16 Oh, man, I know they had nice apartments there. Hey, I'm  
17 here, I ain't -- I know those places long before you did.  
18 But this is what, you know, I looked at that and I hadn't  
19 tried to move anyplace else and I say I don't think that  
20 would happen. Just driving around the city I see black  
21 people everywhere, all over the city and I'm just thinking  
22 things was nice out their and here I go. Racism is alive  
23 and well in housing. I didn't even know that. I just  
24 decided I would make a move from where I was. I live in a

1       subsidized housing unit which I'm capable of living just  
2       about anywhere I want because I handle my money in a way  
3       that I feel if I have the financial means, I should be  
4       able to live anywhere I want to live, and I was denied  
5       that. I have filed a complaint which I'm going to follow  
6       up to the very end. Just to see if these agencies is  
7       going to do something because they are getting funded and  
8       its my intention to follow it right on through. I know  
9       that a lot of people who have been discriminated against  
10      and from the way that you have to go through these  
11      complaints it would take a person almost a life time.  
12      Most people just get discouraged, throw up both hands and  
13      say the heck with it and gone about their business, but  
14      that don't solve the issue. You have to fight these  
15      issues and you have to fight them right on down. You get  
16      to the top where they go and investigate and punch the  
17      people who is doing it, and that's one of the things I  
18      would like to put on record here that there is definitely  
19      discrimination in housing in Grand Rapids, Michigan.  
20      Thank you.

21                   CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Did you file your  
22      complaint with the people at the Fair Housing Center?

23                   MR. WESTERFORD: I did.

24                   CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Very good. Are there any

1 other questions by the Commission?

2 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: I don't want to give you  
3 extra work, but earlier today the United States Attorney  
4 for the Western District suggested that he had filed his  
5 first case in housing discrimination and I asked him if he  
6 had a relationship with the fair housing people because it  
7 seemed to me they had a number of cases and he was talking  
8 about one case. He said that he really hadn't formed that  
9 relationship, yet it would be interesting, though I don't  
10 know if they'll give you the run around, but it would be  
11 interesting to see what kind of response you would get  
12 since they did say publicly that they were interested in  
13 those kinds of cases, for you to call directly to Mr.  
14 Dettmer's office. Maybe Peter if you could give the  
15 gentlemen the number and just see how responsive they  
16 actually are.

17 MR. WESTERFORD: I will definitely call.

18 MS. HAMILTON-SMITH: Thank you.

19 MR. WESTERFORD: Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN HOLLIDAY: Are there any others that  
21 would like to come before the Commission?

22 If there are no others, then this  
23 meeting is adjourned.

24 ( The meeting was adjourned at 6:35 p.m.)

