

---

**Briefing on Civil Rights Issues Facing Muslims and Arab Americans in North Dakota Post-September 11**

**Before the North Dakota Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights**

**May 23, 2002**

---

**Proceedings**

---

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: My name is Carole Barrett, and I am chairperson of the North Dakota Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights. I am going to have the panel of members introduce themselves, and also I would ask the panel when they ask questions, try to identify yourselves for the court reporter. We will start at the end. Dr. Meier, you want to introduce yourself?

DR. MEIER: My name is David Meier. I am chair of the Department of Social Sciences at Dickinson State University and a resident of Dickinson, North Dakota.

MS. DUEKER: Good morning. My name is Crystal Dueker. I am a resident of the Fargo area, and I am very involved with women's groups and we look at giving women voices. That is who I am.

MS. HENDERSON-NOCHO: My name is Audrey Henderson-Nocho from Emerado, North Dakota. I am involved in civil rights issues, labor issues, and all sorts of good issues.

MR. PADILLA: I am Refugio Padilla. I am a full-time student at Moorhead State, and I get Native American issues, Hispanic issues, and social justice issues.

MS. STANTON: Jeannette Stanton, better known as Mike, very active politically and in government.

MR. BLUESTONE: Marc Bluestone. I am assistant elementary principal in New Town, North Dakota, and education director. I serve on a lot of statewide educational forums and committees that deal with Indian education.

MR. SCHNEIDER: I am Mark Schneider from Fargo, and I practice law here.

MS. ROHDE: Crystal Rohde. I am from the Fargo-Moorhead area and am a full-time mom and care a lot about women and children's issues.

MR. OLSON: My name is John Olson. I am an attorney in Bismarck.

MR. DULLES: I am John Dulles, regional director, from Denver, Colorado.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Other staff members from the regional office are Evelyn Bohor'she will be in and out all day to facilitate'and Malee Craft, who recognizes Ivy Davis with the United States Commission on Civil Rights from Washington, D.C.; Silke Hansen, who is senior mediator for the

United States Department of Justice, Community Relations Service out of Denver; Amy Nelson, who is executive director of the North Dakota Fair Housing Council; and Jennifer Ring, who is executive director of the ACLU of the Dakotas. With that we will begin, and I will discuss the purpose of this morning's meeting. We are here to conduct a public forum on issues of discrimination affecting Muslim Arabs in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, tragedy. The Committee has invited community officials and advocates of organizations knowledgeable about these problems to share information and their perspectives.

At the outset, I want to remind everyone present of the ground rules. This is a public meeting open to the media and the general public. We have a very full schedule of participants to fit in the limited time available. The time allowed for each session must be strictly adhered to. To accommodate persons who have not been scheduled to make a presentation but wish to address us, there is a public comment period on our agenda this afternoon from 12:15 to 12:45 p.m. Anyone wishing to make a statement during that period should contact a staff member for instructions and scheduling. Written statements may also be submitted to Committee members or staff who are present today, or by mail. The United States Commission on Civil Rights' address is 1700 Broadway, Suite 710, Denver, Colorado 80290. The record of this meeting will close on June 3, 2002.

Though some of the information provided here may be controversial, we want to ensure that all invited guests do not unfairly degrade any person or organization. In order to ensure that all aspects of the issues are represented, knowledgeable persons with a wide variety of experience and viewpoints have been invited to share information with us. Any person or organization that feels defamed or degraded by statements made in this meeting should contact our staff during the meeting so we can provide a chance for public response. Alternately, such persons or organizations can file written statements for inclusion in the proceedings. I urge all persons participating to be judicial and factual in what they say. The Advisory Committee appreciates the cooperation of those who have agreed to participate and share information with us. Now Mr. Dulles will share a few remarks with us.

MR. DULLES: Thank you very much, madam chair. It is a pleasure to be in Fargo. Some folks asked me why are we here, and I give them a very positive reason: because you do have diversity in this community and you have been welcoming of immigrants and refugees and folks from other places. And when the Commission first asked that we look at post-9/11 issues to determine what level of concern there might be, what increased hostility or discrimination or harassment exists, we decided that this would be a good community to visit. And I noticed recently in looking at census data, that the state of North Dakota actually gained only a little over 3,000 in population in the 1990s. And as it turns out, you welcomed over 6,000 immigrants from all over the world. So it is very, very clear that immigrants and refugees, that folks from other nations help constitute the future of this state with respect to your economic vitality. So we are very pleased to be here. We welcome everyone and we look forward very much to the information that we will be receiving so much today.

Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Thank you. We will begin by seating our first panel, and I would ask those panel members to introduce themselves so that their names can be entered into the record. We are making a transcription of this. And then also be careful to keep your testimony to 10 minutes, and I'll break in if you don't. You can begin by introducing yourself.

## **PANEL 1**

**Bruce Furness, Mayor of Fargo**

MAYOR FURNESS: My name is Bruce Furness. I am the mayor of the city of Fargo. And we appreciate the opportunity to be with you this morning and share some of our thoughts. I know that you want to zero in on 9/11 activity and events that may have occurred after that, but I thought it might be helpful for my portion to very quickly give you a general overview of what has gone on in Fargo, and the other speakers probably have more details of events that may have occurred after 9/11. Just very quickly for those of you who aren't familiar, we are part of a metropolitan area consisting of Fargo, Moorhead, West Fargo, and Dilworth, a community made up of nearly 150,000 people. And we are not without prejudice in this community, and that is, I think, typical.

There is fear of the unknown. There is fear of change, and we have had certain incidents involving minority populations in our community. That was recognized as a serious problem as early as 1993 when a group of civic and community leaders gathered together trying to address (in a planning session format that you probably all have experienced) what are the key issues that we need to deal with. We had paper all over the walls and concluded that the fundamental issue that was affecting all of our communities was the changing demographics. And at that time an organization called the Cultural Diversity Project was organized in March of 1994 to address this challenge of growing ethnic diversity in our community. And what we wanted to do is to develop into four communities that would value and appreciate diversity, that we would celebrate our diversity and celebrate our differences. We would not view these changes as problems but rather as opportunities.

So that as a background has led to several what I consider to be proactive responses to the changing demographics in our community. As Mr. Dulles points out, we have had significant change in the '80s. The minority population basically doubled. In the '90s it doubled again, and I am not sure what will happen in this current decade, but it is certainly going to increase. I don't know if it will double, but we have had significant growth in terms of immigration. The Cultural Diversity Project has evolved around Cultural Diversity Resources. That is a nonprofit organization. It is now self-sufficient, has its own board of directors, and provides a variety of services in the community.

Secondly, we have the Center for New Americans, under the auspices of Lutheran Social Services, that provides, again, services for immigrants that come into our community, particularly under their auspices.

Thirdly, the Chamber of Commerce had a Work Force Development and Diversity Task Force proactively trying to find out what the barriers were for jobs for minority groups in our community.

Fourthly, the city of Fargo itself, as a governmental unit, had a series of meetings with minority populations to try to figure out what barriers there might be in city government. And so we spent, I think it was 10 different meetings with various groups, trying to identify and determine what problems we might have in that area.

Fifthly, all of that led two years ago to the development of the Human Relations Commission in the city of Fargo. Actually as an outgrowth of conversations that I had with Mr. Dulles, we spent a lot of time considering that. We spent about a year putting it together. And finally we did, about a year and a half ago now I guess, create officially the Human Relations Commission. We chose that term specifically as opposed to Human Rights Commission because we felt—and though I know it is not always true—but we felt that rights are a given. Everybody has rights. What we were trying to do is improve the relationships of people in our community. So we call it the Human Relations Commission.

Sixthly, there has been a series of articles in the *Forum* about three or four months ago that were excellent articles about what kinds of situations in our community in terms of immigrants and refugees

that have come in, and lastly, there is a Refugee Assessment Committee. I am not sure that is the precise title, but you will be hearing from Kathy Hogan a little bit later. There is a group of people trying to deal with this issue. And one of the concerns that we have had as a community is the volume of people coming in very quickly, and so that kind of overwhelms all of the various service agencies. That is a particular issue. I do want to end with just a quote about the refugee situation. In 1900 the number of refugees, or immigrants is probably a better term, in that time period in Fargo, in the metropolitan area, was about one-third of the people. Now, those people looked a little different than our refugees today. They were Caucasian. They came from Norway and Sweden and those kinds of countries, Scandinavian type of countries, but the point is we had a third of our population that were immigrants. Now we have certainly less of our population that are immigrants. There is no reason we can't work our way through this situation as well. And so it is our hope by taking proactive action that we will be able to do that. We feel we have done that to this point and are certainly receptive to any ideas for the future. So I hope that helps maybe give a little background of what's happening in Fargo. And other speakers will give perhaps more detail on specific incidents that we are concerned about. Thank you.

### **Christopher Magnus, Chief of Police, Fargo**

CHIEF MAGNUS: Good morning. My name is Christopher Magnus. I am police chief here in Fargo.

Fargo is a community that has been making a transition from being relatively homogeneous, in terms of racial and ethnic diversity, to being increasingly diverse. Resettlement of refugees from several different races and cultural backgrounds, within and around the Fargo area, around Fargo/Moorhead, in the last several years, has created many opportunities and also some challenges for the community. In addition, Fargo has seen significant population growth overall. Really, within the past decade, we have had more than 22 percent growth, which includes new residents who come from a broad spectrum of religious, political, and socioeconomic backgrounds, and so forth. Now, there is a strong climate of acceptance in the community of tolerance, but that is not always the same as full understanding and acceptance, nor does it mean that residents across the board are always as welcome and enthusiastic about changes brought on by the presence of new community members who are from different races and ethnic origins. On the positive side, apprehension and fear related to Fargo's increasingly diverse residents has not, except for a very few isolated incidents, manifested itself in acts of hatred, such as violence or intimidation, against other minorities. A hate crime that took place over a year ago, well before 9/11, perpetrated against two Sudanese young men, was widely condemned by citizens throughout the region. The individuals who committed these assaults were successfully tried in local courts and convicted on various assault charges. Now, since September 11 there has really only been, to our knowledge, even one or two anecdotal incidents of harassment or intimidation which could be classified as a direct response to the terrorist attacks. I think this is in part because the police department has been ready to respond aggressively to any such incidents and because city leaders promise very swift consequences for anyone who might engage in that kind of conduct.

Frankly, Fargo's political and community leaders, with city government really playing a key role, did a lot of good things after September 11 to set a tone that I think has helped safeguard the rights of our citizens. Let me talk just briefly about some of those things.

We started out with the immediate post-9/11 press conference that involved the mayor, the police department, and human relations commission staff, and during that press conference speakers assured residents from varied racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds that they were safe here in the Fargo-Moorhead area and their rights would be protected. And these assurances were also accompanied by strong warnings that illegal behavior, violence, or harassment of any kind would not be tolerated.

We also had one-on-one meetings, as well as a number of get-togethers of larger groups of minority

residents, especially those belonging to diverse faith-based communities, and these were conducted by local government and political leaders, Fargo Human Relations staff, and so forth. I think these were very important not only in terms of substance that was discussed but the timeliness of those meetings and conversations. I think they were also successful because that dialogue, as the mayor mentioned, didn't just start after 9/11. It is something that a lot of people in the community have been working on over an extended period of time well before that incident.

Extra patrols and security measures were put in place right away by the Fargo Police Department and by other law enforcement agencies in the area, including the Moorhead Police Department and several sheriffs departments. These security measures beefed up our patrols around places of worship that might be vulnerable to acts of reprisal or intimidation such as vandalism, and so forth. As a result of that, we had no problems at the mosque, in the area of synagogues, or any other worship locations. Intelligence information was also gathered by, and more importantly shared, between local law enforcement agencies concerning individuals who might cause a problem or might harm others in the community after the 9/11 events. And as a result of that information sharing and coordination, I think we were able to avoid problems.

I have to really commend the local media, especially the daily newspaper, that did an excellent job educating the general public about concerns, fears, and apprehensions of minority residents. The mayor made a reference to a series of articles that were out there. I think those were very helpful and, again, very well timed to set an important climate here.

Fargo police officers received updated hate crimes training. Officers were specifically encouraged to be super vigilant for illegal behavior that might be directed towards minority members of the community.

I think also, and maybe most importantly, the police department and the community continued to partner in terms of doing community-orientated policing, a buzz word that is probably used by every police and law enforcement agency around the country, but when it is done right and when that partnership truly exists, it can accomplish some significant things in any city or town regardless of its size and this is very, very true here in Fargo. Our officers over the long haul have been committed to building real relationships and opening up lines of communication in the neighborhoods that they are assigned to work in. And they are assigned to work in neighborhoods in terms of getting to know people, identifying problems, working with residents to solve those problems, and I think the true test of that comes when you have an event like 9/11 where fear and anxiety levels are high, yet the community remains calm and people continue to work together and talk to one another. Fargo still unquestionably has a long way to go before the community fully embraces diversity, but I think the long-term prognosis is really quite good, and this is thanks to an increasingly well-organized human rights network in the city. It relates to progressive political leadership we have at local levels. And I think it involves a realistic recognition by many of the key players in the community that there is work to be done but that we all need to do it together.

So I think we are on the right path and good things have happened even as a result of the terrible tragedies of 9/11.

### **Cheryl Bergian, Chairperson, Fargo Human Relations Commission**

CHERYL BERGIAN: Thank you. I very much appreciate being here. I am Cheryl Bergian. I am the chair of the Fargo Human Relations Commission. I am also the director of an organization that was formerly called the North Dakota Human Rights Coalition, and I look forward to providing more information to the Advisory Committee in that role. If I could recognize Dan Mahli for a moment. Dan,

can you come and hand out some paper? Dan is a city staff person who works with the Fargo Human Relations Commission. I cannot emphasize enough how much it is important that the city has supported the work of the Fargo Human Relations Commission.

We were created, as the mayor said?and I really could say frankly simply ditto to the remarks that were said and quit and move on, but I will say a few things. I cannot emphasize enough how much the support of the city in providing a staff person to the Fargo Human Relations Commission has been important in the work we have done. The Fargo Human Relations Commission consists of nine members who are volunteers. And without that city staff support, we would never be able to accomplish the things we have done in the last 18 months.

As far as post-September 11, we were very fortunate in the city as far as I know, as far as official information coming to the Fargo Human Relations Commission, in that we did not have any tragic incidents. We did have, as Chief Magnus mentioned, a couple of anecdotal pieces of information that frankly came primarily through the media regarding harassment of four Muslim women wearing headdress. Police were notified, and I know we are especially aware of that kind of incident, and I am trying to pay attention and reassure those and the community of people of color that the police were going to be available as much as possible for those kinds of things. And then there was a frightening incident in which a group of Muslim residents were at the Islamic Center in Fargo, and a young man pulled a gun out of the trunk of a car. The police were notified. The suspect was not identified; however, I believe it was helpful in that there was quick police response. Police increased their patrol. Police met with members of the Islamic community to let them know any kind of intimidation or other action would not be appropriate and would be responded to.

I also want to reiterate that I think it was helpful in Fargo that we had existence of the Fargo Human Relations Commission and participation of the mayor and Chief Magnus in an immediate post-September 11 press conference in which the mayor was very strong in saying retaliation, or other incidents regarding people of color of the community, would not be tolerated in the community. Chief Magnus was very clear on that. We invited members of the Muslim community to that press conference so they were able to hear it in person, participate if they wished, to know that there would be a strong official response to any incidents in Fargo. That was true also after the hate crime that occurred pre-September 11 in which two Sudanese men were beat up. We had a press conference and participation by the mayor and Chief Magnus and a very clear official response that those kinds of incidents would not be tolerated.

In addition to that press conference after the hate crimes, which were pre-September 11, but I think this is important in the way that a community responds, after the hate crime that occurred about a year ago, actually a year ago this week, I think, the Fargo Human Relations Commission had had public meetings scheduled already to gather information from the community on what the community thought the Fargo Human Relations Commission should be doing. And there was a hate crime that weekend. Chief Magnus identified it very clearly as a hate crime. And people came out to our public meeting. We were able to publicize it at the press conference. And we had 100 people come out to that public meeting and talk about both people of color who live in the community, talk about what it is like to live in this community, incidents that their children had experienced, incidents that they had experienced, and there were white people coming out and saying this should not be happening in this community. We should not have people who are afraid to live here. We should not have children who are harassed because of their color. And I think that kind of community response makes a difference. And to me the value of a human relations commission in a community is to be able to coalesce those voices, to bring them together, to bring that information out.

In addition, the value of the Fargo Human Relations Commission is that we can document incidents. We

are able to provide a report to the Fargo City Commission, to let the city commission know. What you have received is an outline of a report. There is a much longer report that relates to every single incident that is brought to our attention.

Last year there was a black man who was verbally harassed in a local book store. That came to our attention. He was harassed in front of his children. He was not going to pursue that, but we encouraged him to do so. Others in the community encouraged him to do so. And ultimately the man who did the harassment, a white supremacist, was convicted through the work of the Fargo Police Department and prosecutor's office. And that kind of community response, highly publicized, front-page news, I hope makes a difference to the people of color in the community because that is the kind of thing that I hope will let others know that should they have the impetus to take an action, that maybe they will stop for a second and know that there will be a community response, know that there will be a criminal justice response. And that I think is the value of this kind of work.

I am really happy that we have not had incidents, and I am glad we as a commission have been able to be present when there have been. One other thing that I think is very valuable in what we have done is that we organized a Martin Luther King celebration where we had about 700 people come to the Fargo Theater and participate in the celebration of the work of Dr. Martin Luther King. And I think that kind of community response makes a difference also.

Again, we have been very fortunate in that the media has found that this is information that is newsworthy, that they cover these kinds of events, and they come and they publicize the information that is in them. And I think that is very fortunate in this community.

With that, I will turn over to you.

### **Sajid Ghauri, Member of the Islamic Society of Fargo-Moorhead**

MR. GHAURI: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Sajid Ghauri. I am a member of the Islamic Society of Fargo-Moorhead. As I begin my report, I would like to present some data regarding the community of Fargo-Moorhead. There are over 3,000 Muslims living in this community. They emigrated from different countries, for example, Bosnia, Somalia, Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sudan, and many others. They speak different languages and have different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Many of us meet each Friday afternoon in mosque for prayer. We may all talk differently and look differently as we come from different continents?Europe, America, Asia, and Africa?but we pray in the same way, facing the same direction.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the individuals and groups who stood by us knowing that there would be high sensitivity in the aftermath of September 11. Mayor Bruce Furness, the atmosphere you created with your speeches, explaining the situation, taking extra steps to ensure the safety of all community members, regardless of religious background, was outstanding. The police department of Fargo-Moorhead went the extra mile to ensure the safety and protection for all their community members and their religious buildings. That was exemplary. A few weeks after 9/11 when I was opening mosque doors for maintenance workers, the police showed up in just a few minutes to make sure there was no suspicious activity, and that was remarkable.

When there was a death threat against a Muslim single mother with two young kids living in Moorhead, Dan Griffon from the Moorhead Police Department went with me to her apartment and comforted her by showing her support and providing her with contact numbers if the situation occurs again. The next morning he had officers in plain clothes surround the building to prevent any incidents.

The Moorhead Police Department sergeants Tory Jacobson and Dan Griffon and deputy Chief of Police Wayne Arnold, in coordination with Fargo police officers, came to the mosque after our Friday prayer to ask people firsthand about any situations they would like to share. There was an individual who brought up a situation where a school bus driver was not stopping to pick up their children. The police officers explained to us the process for complaints and requested us to report any and every individual causing problems so that they could appropriately deal with the situation. Also, they distributed handouts with important emergency contact numbers. The police department also kept close contact with me if they ever run into a situation that they need a translator.

The people of Fargo-Moorhead and their support toward the Muslim community have been wonderful. Many sent supporting e-mails, greeting cards, and flowers regarding the challenging situation 9/11 placed on all Muslims in the community.

There was an incident reported in which a few individuals parked their car outside the mosque, pulled a gun from the trunk, and then put it back while a member of the Islamic Society was standing outside the mosque. Professors from Concordia College in Moorhead offered to build a human chain outside the mosque during the Friday gathering when Muslims are praying inside. I can provide many examples of the support, love, and kindness we received from others in this community.

Initially there was a fear among Muslims, and over 50 percent of them stopped coming to mosque. Muslim females, most of them cover their head, were afraid to go shopping due to fear of getting into a bad situation. But the love and warmth we received from this community helped tremendously in getting things back to normal. People in Fargo-Moorhead are hungry to learn correct information about Islam and the many cultures who abide by this religion.

If you would like to learn or plan events with presenters on these topics, give us a chance. Islamic Center of Fargo-Moorhead would be more than willing to provide a presenter. If some individual or speaker who only has limited knowledge of Islam speaks on this topic, it may only do more harm. A situation like this was brought to my attention in which the speaker, due to limited knowledge, portrayed an inaccurate picture of Islam affecting an audience member so much the member does not want to return to the organization which gave him this opportunity to speak.

We want to avoid these unfortunate misunderstandings, or whatever they may be. We want to instead build bridges between each other and increase understanding about our few differences and our many similarities.

In conclusion, I would like to use the same words which Martin Luther King Jr. used in his address ?I Have a Dream.? I have a dream, too. I have a dream to live in a place where Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, and people of all other religions and culture may live hand in hand together. Though they may have a different way of worshipping, and their traditions may be different, the love, warmth, and respect they have for each other is what binds the community as one. And I am proud to say this community of Fargo-Moorhead has shown me that it could be this community who leads the nations in this stream. The people in this community are exemplary, caring, and kind.

I am proud to be part of this community, and I am proud to be an American. Thank you.

### ***Question-and-Answer Session***

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Are there questions from our Committee for the panelists? If there are you need to raise your hand. Yes, Dr. Meier.

DR. MEIER: This is for the panel as a whole to decide who would like to handle this question. I am curious as to your take on the idea although Fargo took initiative prior to 9/11 to deal with potential challenges, to what extent are you concerned that the let's say the assistance, the stimulus, catalyst of 9/11, is going to be lost over the course of time? Right now we are sort of riding a wave of support for your activities. What do you see is necessary in order to make certain 9/11 isn't the only thing to focus on?

MAYOR FURNESS: Well, I think our history beginning 10 years ago suggests that we will do that. And actually, as Chief Magnus pointed out, after 9/11 the number of incidents, specific incidents, were really quite few. So I don't know that 9/11 even though that is what you are focusing on has had that much of an impact in our community. We have attempted to be proactive in dealing with all these things and not responding or reacting to a particular incident.

MS. BERGIAN: I think certainly from the Fargo Human Relations Commission's perspective, we all became involved with this because we have life experiences or professional experiences that told us to work towards valuing diversity and towards ending discrimination is important. And what September 11 did was just add a new perspective of the possibility of discrimination in our country's history. I think it was very fortunate that President Bush very quickly spoke out against retaliatory acts against Muslims. I think that is a difference in our country's history. I think we are seeing change, and I think it is because there are those of us who are looking towards making our nation more of a nation of Martin Luther King's vision than the vision of separatists and those who would try to make it a wholly white country. And that vision is shared by many and those that are starting to work towards that. September 11 simply was another piece of history to be aware of and to focus upon.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Yes.

MS. DUEKER: How can we help the public understand our nation celebrates and protects freedom of religion while at the same time trying to protect it from hate crimes and violence from terrorists? How can we help the public understand the difference?

MAYOR FURNESS: Well, I don't know specifically what you can do, but in terms of generalities, the key to any kind of issue like this is education. And the more that people know what is happening in a particular community, the better off we all will be. So I think if there are ways you can inform and educate people, that would certainly be beneficial.

MS. BERGIAN: It has been heartening to me to see how the faith community in Fargo is starting to step forward and how so many of the churches have been asking the Islamic Center for assistance, for information, for their congregations.

SAJID GHOURI: We have been asked many times to come over to different churches, different places, to go to a presentation. And my point is that more knowledge, more information, we can provide to people, that really can help make a difference. Understanding of [Islam] is not there. It was not there at the time of September 11. Not a lot of people know what Islam is all about. After educating people for the last six months or with the help of different churches, different schools, we have numerous people from the mosque go and do presentations. It really helps. It makes a difference. It shows them what Islam religion is all about. The best thing is to educate the community. And we are doing a very good job in that, with the help of all the committees. Again, I mention the police department, the mayor's office, everybody in the community.

MS. BERGIAN: I can say from a personal perspective, my own church had one of the speakers from the

Islamic Center come and do one for our church. League of Women Voters also did that. So those are two organizations I am involved in my personal life that reached out and asked for information. And I think that that's been happening across the community, and I think it is a tremendous credit to the members of the Islamic Center that they step forward and spend their time out of their personal lives in doing this also.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Other questions from the panel? Mr. Padilla.

MR. PADILLA: Mayor, you mentioned employment in the major agencies you have under the city government. And it is one thing for broad services, but what steps are you making to integrate the new immigrants, regardless of where they come from, into the actual running of the city and even the police department?

MAYOR FURNESS: The city has, I suppose, a dozen or 14 different commissions, one of which is the Human Relations Commission. We probably have 120 people on those various commissions. We are always looking for nonwhites, I guess I could put it that way, minorities, to be on those. We don't have a stellar record in that regard. We have a number on the Human Relations Commission. We have worked with the Cultural Diversity Program to try to identify those people. And they have created a leadership program now where they are running minorities through their own leadership program to try to acquaint them with what is going on in the community and how they can get involved. I have spoken at that group. But we need to do more in that regard, and we are looking for names of people who have interest in these various commissions and have the ability to participate and contribute to those commissions. We can certainly do better.

CHIEF MAGNUS: I would like to add one thing. We recognized, within the police department in particular, that we are often the sort of and sometimes the last resort that people contact, particularly a number of our newer citizens in the community, for not only questions about legal issues but really questions about community issues because people, I think when they come here, learn quickly that police play a little different role in this country, and we are out in their neighborhoods. We are a service-oriented group of individuals. And we are able to help steer people in the right direction for a variety of services, for information, for support, in addition to providing obviously protection and taking police reports if they are victims of crime, and that sort of thing. So with that in mind, we have worked with the city's planning department and human relations staff to successfully obtain community development block grant funding, so that starting actually next month, in fact, it will be in a couple of days, we will be assigning someone who is one of our patrol officers who has been particularly active in a number of neighborhoods which have a high concentration of refugees as a liaison officer on a full-time basis. This particular officer has already gotten quite a bit of training and exposure to members of a number of Fargo's diverse refugee groups. She has worked very closely with the Bosnians, Sudanese, and she will be really as a full-time assignment helping to link up individuals who need services or who are frustrated with whether it is state or local bureaucracy, that can come up to help steer them in the right direction, to help resolve problems that come up sometimes in living situations, such as some of the apartment complexes, to sort of be a go-between and provide both assistance and support, but also to do that in uniform with a legitimacy of the police authority that she has in carrying out that position. And I think that is a pretty significant commitment from the city and police department to invest somebody in that role, but we are very excited about the opportunities for that, and we are going to be tracking that very closely to see what we can accomplish over the next year or so.

MS. BERGIAN: I'll just mention that the leadership program that has been operated by the Cultural Diversity Resources has paid off, not in Fargo as visibly as in Moorhead. In Moorhead there is a graduate of that program, Sonia Hohnadel, who regardless of her last name, is Latino, who was elected to the school board and the first Latino resident elected to a city position. So I have faith that that

leadership program will help create those openings and that information for people. And I would just ask Chris, in your citizen police academy are you able to see people of color participating in that?

CHIEF MAGNUS: Twice yearly a citizen police academy where we very deliberately go out and seek individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds to participate in what is really a 10-week program where they come one night a week and are exposed to all aspects of police department operations, community policing, tactical enforcement issues, a variety of things. They have the opportunity to meet a significant number of our staff, to ask questions, to really become informed as consumers, as I like to look at it, of police services. And we have really made an effort and will continue to do so to welcome the people from diverse backgrounds into that program. We also have done, along the same lines, a student citizen academy, reaching out to young people at the high school level to get them involved in breaking down some of that natural tension that exists between particularly adolescents and police officers, and we inaugurated the first one of those just this past year. And then I guess just the last thing is we have just started, in fact, it is under way now, our very own and our very first basic police academy to train police officers. In the past we have been entirely reliant on the highway patrol's basic academy out of Bismarck which, while a fine program, tends to focus pretty much on a more rural environment and on traffic enforcement on the highways. Our program is in conjunction with Lakes Region State University and NDSU and focuses on more urban policing needs, including policing a diverse community. We are working with Cultural Diversity Resources and other local instructors to do training for police officers that will help them be more sensitive to our community here and be able to provide a more full range of services. So I think we have a lot of good things going in that.

MS. BERGIAN: I want to emphasize that the way to get people to think about being employed by the city, whether in the police department or city hall, is not simply just to go out and ask them to apply. People need to have an awareness of what the job is and have a sense that they can do that job. So these kinds of ways of reaching out into that community get that word out that those who would never have thought, oh, I can do that. And so I think those things are valuable, much more than simple "We don't discriminate?" statements in public.

CHIEF MAGNUS: A fact of life here is we are several hundred miles away from major metropolitan areas, and if we are going to attract more minority applicants into our police department in any capacity, whether it is officers or civilian positions, we are going to have very limited success trying to draw that out of urban areas like Minneapolis and Chicago, people who have not lived or are from around here and who may feel fairly isolated coming here. What we have determined is our best recruiting positions is the homegrown approach, to take the minority groups, the young people from diverse backgrounds right here in the Fargo-Moorhead area and to start right at the high school age and getting them thinking about a career in police work. And you really have to start at that high school age, getting them involved in our Explorers program, getting them involved in our student academy, making them feel welcome in the police department, and putting that bug in their ear to think about continuing and when you get done with college, come here to the Fargo Police Department and take a job working right here in this community. And we think, although that takes a little longer to be successful in a strategy like that, it will yield better dividends, and we are excited about that.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Other questions? Yes. Mr. Schneider.

MR. SCHNEIDER: Chief Magnus, I think we are familiar with the concept of racial profiling. And one concern in the wake of 9/11 is profiling Arab Americans, or those who are perceived to be Arab Americans. What is the policy in the Fargo Police Department with regard to racial profiling generally? And what specifically have you done, if anything, regarding profiling?

CHIEF MAGNUS: Our policy in both the Fargo Police Department and very clearly in the Moorhead

Police Department as well is that racial profiling is absolutely prohibited. We are also giving a great deal of scrutiny as to how we should best deal with this in terms of best training our personnel and monitoring the situation over the long term to make sure that profiling does not creep in in any way, shape, or form into how our patrol officers conduct their day-to-day work out in the streets. This is one of those areas where it is extremely complicated knowing exactly what benchmarks you use to compare what officers are actually doing in terms of traffic stops against what benchmarks exist in terms of representation of minorities in the community. And we want to make sure that whatever programs we put into place to track that are going to be doing more than just window dressing on the issue. We think it is important that we get the word out through our supervisors and through administrative and managerial staff of the department that profiling is absolutely unacceptable and it won't be tolerated. We have a viable complaint process for accepting citizen complaints. People who feel they may have been profiled or that they have been stopped without justification, all those complaints are documented. They are taken very seriously. We share that information sometimes with the Human Relations Commission and their staff. So we have a very transparent open policy for investigating those types of complaints. But we are proceeding with some fair amount of caution and deliberation to make sure that we don't just, as I said, collect data for window dressing purposes or data for data sake, but that we are actually looking at things in an intelligent way to deal with a pretty complex issue, which racial profiling is.

MS. BERGIAN: I wanted to mention one other thing the police department has done from the time the Fargo Human Relations Commission started meeting, one of Chief Magnus' officers has attended almost every meeting and has been there simply to be a liaison with the police department and someone we can contact and ask for assistance as issues came up regarding the police department. And I think that is a credit to the department that it allocated that time to work with the Fargo Human Relations Commission.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Mr. Dulles.

MR. DULLES: I have a question, and it is based on quite extensive experience. It seems like every community I visit throughout the region, throughout the country, every single community, I consistently hear complaints or allegations or concerns primarily on the part of young people and primarily on the part of young people of color, Native Americans, Latinos, African Americans, and others, that they are targets for being followed, for being watched, for being, if you will, made to feel uncomfortable. And I am talking not necessarily on public streets, but I am talking in shopping malls, in areas where you congregate, where there might be proprietors, there might be businesses that may have some legitimate concerns about shoplifting. But it seems inevitable that every community we visit, that young folks feel this kind of sense of an oppression. And I just wondered if you had any concerns in this community or if that issue has been dealt with in any manner.

CHIEF MAGNUS: Well, I do have concerns about it, and I think it exists to some degree in this community as it does in, you are quite right, probably every community. We have three colleges in this immediate area, so we have a number of both college-age young people and a very active obviously secondary school system as well. I do hear frequently concerns from teenagers and young adults that they feel that they are given greater scrutiny by the police department. For a variety of reasons we have had a history in this area of fairly significant alcohol abuse by young people. It certainly goes beyond just young people, but it manifests itself when you combine it with the number of colleges and number of parties. We get a number of complaints within the police department about those gatherings, especially when they are quite large and disorderly, and we have tried to deal with that through a combination of consistent enforcement as well as education and dialogue with student groups, being present in all the dorms. As an example, at the NDSU campus we have had officers make presentations at the beginning of the school year. They met with virtually every campus group, whether it is

fraternities, whether it is athletic programs, resident halls, et cetera. I don't think there is any one solution to what you are talking about, but I think it has to be a combination of communication and dialogue, which we are committed to, with young people across the board, both in high school, middle school setting where we actually now have school resource officers in each of those schools who are there on a daily basis being available, talking, answering questions. I think you then have to take it to the college level where you have police officers who have an active presence on campus, not just to do enforcement but to have discussions, answer questions, be present in classrooms, talking to students and being part of that campus community. So I mean there are a lot of pieces to that, but communication and dialogue has to be a big part of it.

MR. DULLES: But if I may follow up, how do you approach or deal with it in businesses? Because one of the concerns that is expressed is that shopping malls who may have private security companies involved, that this is one of the areas where I have heard these concerns and these allegations. How do you deal with the business community to make sure that in public places, it may actually be private businesses in some sense, that this kind of targeting or harassment or extra scrutiny does not occur? And it may be for other members of the panel, but I am particularly concerned about situations such as those in shopping malls and in business areas.

MAYOR FURNESS: John, I am sure what you described does occur in our community. And I don't know specifically that there is a program that addresses this issue for businesses, but I do know that the Cultural Diversity Resources group does go out and put on diversity training kinds of programs. I can't tell you if they have done that for retail stores or not. I know they have done them for businesses. But that would certainly be one way to try to address that particular issue is to encourage retailers to take advantage of that training which is available through the Cultural Diversity Resources project. I want to echo Chief Magnus' concern though. I don't get any calls relative to what you are describing, from parents or from anybody else, but I get all kinds of calls for the thing he described in terms of youth feeling picked upon because they are drinking. Now, youth that are picked upon are the ones underage and they don't have a right to drink. But they view it as their right to drink, kind of anytime, anyplace sort of thing, and the calls I get are not from the kids. They are from the parents who feel their kids are being picked on.

MS. BERGIAN: I can say as far as the Fargo Human Relations Commission is concerned, we have tried to reach out to the K through 12 student population. We did hold a public meeting in one of the high schools last year. Our scheduling was not fortuitous, so we didn't get any public comment at that meeting from that group. We are looking at in our strategic plan to hold another public meeting to gather information from the K through 12. We haven't figured out how to really reach into the university community to hear their concerns yet. Sandra Holbrook from NDSU, the opportunity officer there, is a liaison for the Fargo Human Relations Commission, and we will be working on that.

But for us the first perspective is to try to gather the information, to hear from the public. And I would echo that certainly from media information, definitely it is the drinking, underage drinking perspective far more than anything I have heard or caught wind of at all regarding public space, shopping mall kinds of things, although I am familiar with what you talk about because I know it happens in the larger cities.

CHIEF MAGNUS: I think one of the reasons it probably doesn't happen as much is because law enforcement throughout the area works pretty closely with security at all the major businesses. And, you know, I think what happens is if that relationship doesn't exist, there is a very real possibility that private security working in some of these larger shopping establishments or malls can really kind of run amuck a little bit because they tend not to be as well trained or as well paid. And if they are sort of allowed to go off and do whatever they think is bad and often it is what they think it is best, it is just wrong. Then you have problems. Now when you have police working closely with those individuals in

private security, doing some training together, having regular interactions, I think you minimize a lot of that problem because I know, for example, out at our shopping mall here in Fargo, at West Acres, they take a very professional approach because they are used to working with us. They know we won't tolerate?we are not going to respond to assist them and let them knowingly do something that would be inappropriate or discriminatory, and they don't want to do that either, so they tend to work closely with us and try to follow pretty reasonable standards for dealing with situations that involve young people.

SAJID GHOURI: I wanted to inject a little bit. We have a lot of young kids in our mosque, members of our community. Basically it was surprising for me when this question was brought up because we hardly hear anything regarding this kind of issue. This is a very close community. We pretty much know each other's kids. We know where they live. We know everything. It is a very closely related community. And problems like this have never been reported to me. Even before coming over, I asked members at mosque if they have any issues, any concerns, any questions they have, if they wanted me to bring it to the Committee, to their attention, and let me know. And I never received a single call. So as of right now, I think there is nothing to be reported from my group, and the community is doing a great job.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Mr. Olson.

MR. OLSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. John Olson.

A topic with this group for years has been the creation of human rights commission at the state level. And I commend you folks here locally for what you have done. I am looking at your 2002 strategic plan outline, which is a very good, complex look at what your goals are and what you want to accomplish. Goal 3 you have a recordkeeping requirement, and you want to document existing civil rights resources and determine if they are sufficient. I know you are relatively new, but where are you on that? Have you had any indicators now that we do have deficiencies, No. 1? And what do you predict would be coming down the line for your group?

MS. BERGIAN: Well, we have been in extensive communication with the director of human rights, Department of Labor, Mark Bachmeier, and in fact, just last week we hosted a public meeting with area legislators and members of the community, members of the public, where Commissioner Bachmeier received public comment about the Division of Human Rights within the Department of Labor. Prior to that meeting he met with the Fargo Human Relations Commission because we had asked that he, the Division of Human Rights, provide some additional access to the Division of Human Rights in the city of Fargo. What we discovered as we worked through our year last year is that we referred 18 people out of 47, we referred 18 specifically to the Division of Human Rights within the Department of Labor because we felt that they had concerns that fell within the purview of that division as far as discrimination violations of the state Human Rights Act. Of that 18, Commissioner Bachmeier could only verify that three complaints were filed. And we felt that that was a real concern. We looked at the reasons and the barriers that we saw as far as filing complaints with the Division of Human Rights, and what we identified was that the Division of Human Rights, when you contact them, and this is their current process, they are changing this process, but their process in 2001 was that when you contacted them, you said I have a discrimination complaint, they sent out a piece of paper. They sent out a few pieces of paper. They sent out a form and asked people to fill that out in writing, sign it, and send it back to them. And we felt that for people with language barriers, people with barriers in linguistic abilities, people who speak English as a second language, people who don't have the ability to communicate in writing, that that was a large barrier to getting complaints filed. And so what we did is we asked the Division of Human Rights to begin providing in-person access to the Division of Human Rights here in Fargo. We asked them to come out once a month. We would facilitate the in-person complaint filing process. We would work with people who contacted us to make sure they knew when the Division of Human Rights would be here and provide some communications so that Division of Human Rights

would know that people might be asking to meet with them, and that they take complaints in person. Commissioner Bachmeier's initial response was that is a really good idea, yes, we could do it, but I don't think we should for various reasons; that if they did it in Fargo, that the rest of the state would also feel that they needed to have that kind of service, and he wasn't sure they had the capacity to do that. And also if their investigators were taking time to take complaints in person, it would slow down their ability to investigate the complaints that they already had. We met with Commissioner Bachmeier last week as the Human Relations Commission and we asked him again to provide that in-person complaint processing, and he is considering that. So that is where that part of the strategic plan came from. We were able to document the information we were referring to. We were able to document the referrals we were making. We were able to document that somehow those complaints weren't getting filed, and there was serious communication with the Department of Labor on how to provide better services to people in the state, not just in Fargo, but across the state. But our focus is Fargo because that's the information that we have got.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Thank you. We have just about a minute, but Mr. Ghauri, could you comment at all on the Muslim women who choose to wear headscarves, are they able to get jobs, being treated well in stores? Also the young women in school wearing headscarves, in particular, because they really can be seen and perceived as Muslim very easily.

SAJID GHOURI: I would like to defer to Dr. Bashir. He has pretty close communication with the community on that. Can Dr. Bashir answer this question on my behalf?

MR. DULLES: If he is recognized and steps forward. We don't have much time. Step forward and give us your name for the record because we have a court reporter. But it has to be done very expeditiously.

Let me emphasize we do have a public comment period after the formal presentations end, so those of you who wanted to make a brief public comment for the record will be allowed to do that at approximately 12:15.

MR. BASHIR: Thank you. My name is Abdu Bashir. I am a computer science professor at Minnesota State University, Moorhead. In reference to the schools, I think the perception is quite good. There have been very few instances where we felt some form of discrimination may have occurred to a girl wearing a scarf, especially in reference to sports. But in general, the climate, teachers, students, classmates, and so on, it is quite positive. I have personally two daughters, one of them already graduated from college who went through the Moorhead school system and now one is in junior high, and I feel they don't feel any negative impact due to their wearing the headscarves. For the jobs, it is kind of a little bit shaky. When you talk to the sisters, you feel some of them say that I feel hypocritical with myself in the sense that I wear the headscarf when I am out here at the mosque in the Muslim community but when I go to work, I feel I have to take off this headscarf because I feel I may not be promoted or I may not be looked at as a good worker, and so on. Those who stood on their principles and wore their headscarves, I don't see they have registered complaints. So it is matter of perception rather than a matter of documented negative activity.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: We will need to seat the second panel. We thank you very much for your contributions and the information that you provided to us.

[Off the record.]

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: We will begin with the panel. Please, again, introduce yourselves. You will be kept to the 10-minute time line. Please speak in a normal pace because it is difficult to pick that

up if you are going too fast. Ms. Thoreson.

## PANEL 2

### **Kathy Thoreson, Director, Center for New Americans, Lutheran Social Services**

MS. THORESON: My name is Kathy Thoreson. I am director of the Center for New Americans, which is a refugee program in North Dakota.

In the previous panel, there was an issue raised that we have been dealing with, quote, "the volume coming in quickly," unquote, of refugees. But that hasn't been an issue for several months now, unfortunately, due to September 11. And since the cutoff of refugees coming into the United States for some time until some months later, we in this state in North Dakota have only had 21 refugees arrive into this country since October 1. At this time last year we had 258. We had an advocacy day on May 21, which was to give a push and a shove to say let's write to President Bush to encourage him to have his administration carry out the mandate to bring in 70,000 refugees this year. Eleven thousand refugees only have been brought in. So we have had a very difficult time of trying to understand and trying to figure out what all the reasons are, why they haven't been brought in. And, of course, we know that it is for security as a primary reason.

The security issues for refugees have been raised to the very highest level. They have always been at a high level to begin with, but they have been raised even higher. So our support is for more refugees to come and for our community to be ready and prepared for them. I took a poll of my staff that I work with. We have 22 staff at the Center for New Americans and I wanted them to talk with them about what kinds of discrimination they as former refugees have felt since September 11, or what kinds of areas of discrimination their clients have shared with them in terms of concerns post-September 11, and I will share those with you briefly.

We have gotten approximately 15 phone calls at our front desk after September 11 asking us why we would bring in refugees of any kind from any country who would only be coming in to try to kill us eventually. We have an employee whose clients that she worked with were harassed right after September 11, and they did not use the word harassment to her. They used the words people were very, very rude to me, my co-workers. One of those persons felt he had to quit his job because it was so upsetting for him. In the Fargo area we had talk shows that produced many prejudicial statements about why we, Lutheran Social Services, we Fargo, we North Dakota bring any refugees or any immigrants to North Dakota. Also, letters to the editor were many. And they as well as the phone calls referenced why don't we help our own and let's take care of those who are born in North Dakota.

The staff have also shared discrimination issues. An Afghan person was in a job and it was going very fine and very well until September 11, and September 12?I guess it was September 13?she was fired from her job. And she chose not to pursue that. It was a position that she didn't particularly want to stay in and for that reason she chose not to pursue it. She strongly feels that it was because of discrimination and not her work performance.

We have a Somali staff woman who is working in an employment program with us, and she had to leave on September 12 or 13, shortly after the September 11 event, to go pick up her daughter from school. A school counselor called and said that they had dealt with it at school, but that her veiled daughter had been teased and other students had made insensitive and hurtful comments to her and continuously tried to pull her scarf off her head. She had not had any issues or problems at all before September 11. So she was brought home for that day. Students were talked to and she was talked to, and

it has been better since. Our, quote, "North Dakota-born staff," observed a great deal more of glaring and staring, backing away and judgmental expressions as we go to the grocery stores, as we go to the shopping mall. We all see people of color who are generally people who are refugees. And myself, when I have been there, I really don't see a lot of staring and glaring. I think people are pretty used to that. Right after September 11 there, of course, was a bunch more. I made an observation three nights ago and I didn't see that at all in my walking through the mall, with seeing several black persons, and that was really good.

Many Somalians who were persons who did not have a job particularly to go to every day but went to the grocery store, the mall, other places, reported that they felt better staying home for a few days.

Again, one of our staff—she is Bosnian—told me her kids told her after they came home from school September 11, "Mom, when we go out to the store, will you please just speak English? Don't use Bosnian." She was very concerned, and she said as they were talking with another Bosnian person, that she felt bad that her children would have to say that because it wasn't any discussion except to tell their mother that, and they have never said that before.

Another Muslim Bosnian person, when I asked a group of Bosnian staff this week what their response was as Muslim persons, refugees, the comments sort of collectively were we felt so bad that it was Muslims that did this to the United States and we feel so bad for the United States, but we are thankful to God that we have the same color of skin as the people in the United States because people can't tell we are refugees until we open our mouth. And I think there was a lot of quietness for a few days.

The other area that we have investigated only briefly or have requested some investigation is apartment rentals. We do have some acknowledgement and even some brief reporting that there is some discrimination in apartment rentals; however, I am not prepared to make any further comments about that right now.

In closing, I also wanted to reiterate that it was very helpful for former refugees to hear our Fargo officials—Chief Magnus and Mayor Furness—proclaim that hate crimes would not be tolerated. That was not only helpful for them right after September 11, but they have seen that message continue, and they have been faithful in following through with that.

That is according to our refugee staff and the persons that we work with. So we are grateful for that.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Thank you.

**Kathy Hogan, Director of Cass County Social Services, and Chairperson of the Refugee Impact Committee**

MS. HOGAN: I am Kathy Hogan. I am director of Cass County Social Services, and I chair a committee called Refugee Impact Committee. Cass County Social Services works directly with individuals who are vulnerable adults and children and with low-income families. And because low-income families are disproportionately minorities, we provide direct service to all refugee households. We deal with issues routinely and over the last 10 years have changed substantially. We have been actively involved in the development of the Cultural Diversity Project in the early 1990s, and with the Refugee Impact Committee, which has been in existence off and on for about four years. The county itself has been very significantly impacted by the large refugee resettlement process and has made a strong commitment to provide quality services.

About six years ago, maybe eight years ago, it is hard to remember, the county began to ask the question is there a community capacity because we saw so many unmet social service needs for refugees. And so we asked the question about is there an adequate support structure during the resettlement process? This generated a huge reaction by my asking the question. I was called a racist on the front page of the paper because I asked a question regarding capacity. And there was again a lot of talk show host discussion about it. And our concern quite honestly was at that point we were seeing when we had large numbers come in, inadequate support service for refugees. They were not getting to school. There was not adequate health care. There was really a falling apart of the structure. And we were pretty direct with Lutheran Social Services. We talked about the individual concerns. But the reaction was if you had a discussion about community capacity, you are instantaneously labeled a racist. It is like, whoa, it is a very traumatic kind of experience because then you can't talk about an issue, and it was a kind of closing off of this process.

One of the things the county made a commitment to during the discussion of this is we are going to provide the best service you can possibly provide and be extremely proactive in protecting human rights and providing services. We made a commitment in the middle 1990s to do active recruitment of staff. And now 7 percent of my staff are minorities, and those minorities tend to be Hispanic and Native American. We have not been able to recruit many refugees because they don't have the minimum educational requirements as licensed social workers, so we have had some requirement sorts of issues. We are aggressive about recruitment. We are aggressive of funding appropriate services, and the county has made a very strong commitment to funding needed services, and we have been blessed by having a stable economy.

A year and a half ago the county commission made a commitment to fund an educational training program for low-income individuals and refugees who needed educational programs, and they committed \$100,000 to work with the Skills Training Center for Employment because employment is a huge problem, education, employment for many minorities. So they made a commitment to that effort. We have done a huge amount of staff training. Staff training has been really challenging because the majority of my staff are still native people who grew up here. And because we are dealing with so many different cultures because of the variety of refugees placed here, we have done training on the African cultures and Bosnian cultures. And that ongoing need for really cultural education has been a real challenge. And then we have established quite a formal interpreter system.

Four years ago the systems kinds of issues generated discussion with the police, with the health care providers, with the teachers, and we started a group called Refugee Impact Committee. And that is where all those individuals and organizations that work with refugees have been gathering. At first we were meeting three and four times a year. As it built, we began to identify issues and concerns and the committee meets once a month now. And it is a huge amount of commitment to maintain this structure because we are trying to address issues of unmet service needs and sometimes discrimination issues, so we have a whole set of working subcommittees. We have a group that is looking at case management. We have a group that is working at how do we orient refugees to our culture? And how do we orient and provide adequate support and training on all the cultural issues, particularly for the refugee group? We have a housing subcommittee that Dan and Jessica from the city are working with. We have an interpreter group that is looking at how do we provide adequate interpreters. So as a community we are looking at how do we provide an integrated supportive response system.

Coming out of the Refugee Impact Committee was a study of the community which Kevin Thompson will present in your next session so I won't do that. This committee secured the funding for that study and will be the committee that monitors the implementation of that study. I think in terms of discrimination, Cass County gets accused of discrimination a lot. Let me give you some examples. For example, in our TANF program, we got a formal civil rights complaint when we required a single

Muslim woman to go to work because in her culture women didn't work outside the home. And she was claiming religious discrimination. Well, you know, the TANF rules the federal government wrote require everybody to go to work, and that was very difficult for her to understand work requirements when from a religious point of view, her religion said she shouldn't go to work but stay home. We had to work through that. We went through a formal appeal on that case. Because we were consistently requiring everyone to work, we obviously won. But that was an example of a cultural kind of conflict where we really had to sort that through. About four, five years ago we got a tribe, I can't remember what African country, that had been actively practicing female circumcision. Well, you know, we heard this was coming from the resettlement agency and we felt that may be a child protection issue. Is that a permissible activity in our culture? Before that tribe arrived we had a meeting with Lutheran Social Services staff, the health care community, the state's attorney, and we developed a position statement. And so the first week the tribe started arriving, we did an orientation session. We had a very strong, wonderful local tribal leader who said, "Oh, I think this is going to create problems," and they took the message and changed their practice. They said okay, this is a practice we won't continue here. And it was real collaborative. We never had an incident. But you always have to be one step ahead in terms of anticipating issues. And sometimes we don't anticipate.

About two years ago we ran into a situation where a group of Bosnians were—and it is not all Bosnians but some Bosnians, were marrying their daughters at age 12, and they were arranging marriages. The parents were arranging marriages. They weren't legal marriages because they didn't go get the license, but the 12-year-old would go live with the 21-year-old. That again was a child protection issue because the girls didn't want to go to school. So we developed a position statement to train and try to be proactive rather than going through the formal child protective service.

So oftentimes you run into cultural kinds of conflicts and we are kind of in the middle. Our philosophy and approach has been trying to identify the issues, engage the community in the discussion so that we get to a mutually agreeable plan that meets the requirements of the law but at the same time we are culturally sensitive. This is a challenge.

And then we have also been very aggressive, talking about the discussion about civil rights complaints, we are very aggressive about saying it is all right to file a civil rights complaint, and that's an okay thing to do. In terms of post-9/11, we saw massive changes in behavior. We serve a lot of refugees every week. And in our lobbies the first two, three, four days we saw no one talked. Eye contact was not there. People were absolutely afraid. We made a conscious decision to go and have conversation with refugees as they were coming in. And for almost a month our interpreters and our line staff, in particular, our supervisory staff, had conversations with our refugees routinely to make sure that they were okay. That tension and anxiety lasted for a good two months.

This week in preparation for this meeting we went and did the same thing in our lobby, and it is just not there anymore. What I noticed is the level of talk those first days was very quiet. People didn't want to talk. They didn't want to. Yesterday I was in our lobby and there was this noise level, people were animated, and it was very, very safe. So I think there was massive fear, and I think much of that is gone.

Your turn.

### **Yusuf Sharif-Ibrahim, Somalian Community Member, and Refugee Advisory Committee**

MR. SHARIF-IBRAHIM: My name is Yusuf Sharif-Ibrahim. I am a Somalian community member. I don't want to talk about September 11. Kathy said almost everything I wanted to say, but I will talk about civil rights. We here in North Dakota or the Islamic community in North Dakota, we feel that we

have discrimination. An example, we keep asking last six and a half years, Lutheran Social Services, the state, Cass County, if we can have Islamic cemetery, but nobody answer to us, and even nobody say, hey, we know what you are asking. North Dakotans, they want us as Muslim refugees to come to this state, to land here, but they never think about what we need. Do we need as a community something? Do we need something special? They never asked. And nobody answer to us our question. They have a lot of cemetery, good cemetery they can bury their own body. What happened 2000, I think in 1999 or 2000, young man who die here in North Dakota, his mother, sister, brothers, they are all here, we couldn't have anywhere to bring his body. He died, 21-year-old. We spent \$9,000 to take his body to Minneapolis. They don't want to believe we are here as their Muslim population. There are more than 5,000 Fargo-Moorhead Islamic people and thinking if someone died, what we do. They are not allowed to give us cemetery in this state.

That is something we feel we have discrimination, not true to say discrimination, but it is political. What happened two weeks ago, I applied for rental freezer. The owner of the freezer told me, okay, you have to pay two months payment. You have to pay the rent and \$150 for paperwork. I pay. After two days he called me and he said you are [not understandable.] This is rent. Something like this we have a problem. We ask the population, the state, the community, this we need. I believe that the population of the community need to help us, but the problem is how we can communicate together, how you want to help us and how we can ask what we need. I believe they need to help us but still we are going somewhere. It is not the right door. So if we are going the wrong way, please tell us. You are the first community who was here and we are the second community. If we don't know anything, still we need to learn.

The next situation I need to talk about is the single woman who came here in 1996 and still she is not speaking English and the time came that she want to apply for citizenship. She is not eligible because she is not speaking English. Why? Because when she came here the state says you have to work. This mother has five, six children. She will help all these children wanting to go to school and then she will have to go to work. When she come back from the work, the children come back from school and they are home so she take care again the children. She has no time to study. She finished six years this situation, and when she went to apply to be American, she is not eligible because she is not speaking English because she was working all the time. So all these we need solution. If you go to other places, for example, the very closest state, Minneapolis, the single mother, she is not going to work until she learn the language. She have to learn the language first. Then she can go to work. But we have difficulty, the mother, when she came here, she have to go to work. Job Service, Lutheran Social Services, Cass County, all those three they are asking to have to go to work. So this way we need some solution, if we are a community in North Dakota. If I want to buy home, we can't, as we are refugees, because when we go and they say you don't have background credit, it is true. I don't have background credit because I am new to country. But if I didn't start, if rent doesn't help, I will remain all my life no background credit.

So all these what we are asking the state or civil rights organization, please to look for some change. Thank you very much.

### ***Question-and-Answer Session***

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Thank you. We will entertain questions from the panel.

One thing I wanted to ask is that there seems to be this undercurrent of there is all this training going on. There is all this education going on within the community, and yet from the testimony of all of you people involved in this panel is that there are really lapses in that there are sort of official training and so on going on, but then the popular problems that people are having that come from sort of the popular culture, if you would, or from the mainstream, are a lot more trying on people, and they are very real and

they do exist in this community. And I was a little bit disturbed by the idea that within the Cass County Social Services area that there is training going on and then a comment made, "Well, we changed the culture." There wasn't any kind of dialogue going on there at all. It was that we went in and subverted this problem before it came up, but yet it is a problem that has not been satisfied within the particular group that was named. I would like some comments on that.

MS. HOGAN: I appreciate your comments because I think they were difficult situations that we had. On the female circumcision issue, we worked very hard with the leadership of the tribe, and after our first meeting, they understood the concern, and I think they were in complete consensus with us, and that they didn't feel any kind of conflict in that situation. And so I think we were sensitive to their history. We listened to it. We had studied it. And that situation I didn't feel that there was a conflict in that culture.

I think in the situation where the mother is required by TANF to work and the culture of the woman is to stay at home, that one was very difficult because we understood the Muslim culture and we tried to listen to that, but we had a set of federal rules, and so then we feel we are in a bind. And many times we have had people say, "Well, this is our culture. We do things differently." And there are times we do accommodate those differences. An example is when we had mass training for electronic benefit cards, little EBT cards, and it was from 5:00 to 7:00 at night, and a Somalian group, I don't know if you were in that group, but 6 o'clock came and it was prayer time. And someone said we need to pray now. We stopped our training session. We separated the men and the women. We accommodated for their needs.

So I think you need to recognize we accommodate at times, but we really do feel in a bind at times when the federal rules require things or the state law requires something. We can be set up as the problem, and we can listen to that culture but can we change the rules?

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Do you feel your training with your social workers because I have been involved in a fair amount of training with social workers, I am not a social worker myself but have training with social workers you are providing them with information but are you really changing attitudes or changing their understanding of how they will be working with the population? Do you feel you have gotten to that point yet?

MS. HOGAN: I think you have to look at individuals. We have several staff who work very closely and much of the community say they are their favorite staff people; that they call them at home on weekends. We have people who are really good and we have people who have difficulty. I wouldn't begin to say that we have all of that addressed, but it takes massive amounts of time and effort. And it is continuous because we have had so many cultures Vietnamese have different issues than Sudanese and Somalians, and so that's the reality.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Mr. Ibrahim, does your community feel that they have open communication and that that's possible at these organizations, Social Services and Lutheran Social Services?

MR. SHARIF-IBRAHIM: Again, my community, they are good friends with Cass County and Lutheran Social Services. Actually Lutheran Social Services, they give their best training, communication, how to deal with the community, but sometimes it is not enough. When you came at my age in new country, it is not enough one month, two months, to give me all you need. I can't be quick, so it has become a little bit difficult. Sometimes one of my friends told me that neighborhood, they doesn't like him because they never come and say hi. They never say good morning. They never greet each other. So I ask him do you go yourself and say hi? He say no, because I am new. So it is same. So the problem is missing

communication. So that is only a little difficult. Women, when they come here, they have to work. That is the rule of your state and Cass County Social Services. They are not wrong this way, but the problem is dressing culture. They can't throw away? maybe later after 10 years it will change, the children who are in school, when they finish their school, something will be changed. But when they come, throw your clothes away, go work, it is a little hard that way. Maybe in other states they are better than us. The people that work, they all culture dress. Because these people, they can't go to work in industry because machinery and clothes are too big, but there is another position, another place they can find a job where they can be comfortable. So it will take time. It will take time. So Lutheran Social Services really, really, they are working as they can. They are working as they can, but it will take time.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Thank you. Ms. Dueker.

MS. DUEKER: This is Crystal Dueker from Fargo speaking. Would you please explain to us the criteria of how a trained female, Afghan doctor or nurse or teacher who had escaped her nation and has come to the U.S., what criteria would she have to have in order to use those skills in the U.S.?

MS. THORESON: I don't know if I can speak to that particular position, but I do know that we have professional people who come from other countries that are doing very well with white collar.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: We need to speak to issues in North Dakota, so I think what is being got at is when people, refugees, immigrants come in from other countries and have professional requirements, is there a way to facilitate getting licensed? If you can answer that briefly, we are kind of short on time.

MS. THORESON: I'll just say our referrals and connections with the schools, trade schools and units are to get an assessment there to see, No. 1, do they have any papers, No. 2 to get assessment of where their skills are and what levels of expertise they have as well as what might need to happen for them to continue the education to get to the level where they were. That's my extent of that.

MS. HOGAN: I do know that the Family Health Care Center has worked with a number of individuals who have been in that situation, to help them get through the licensing standards for the state of North Dakota, and I know that we do have some licensed. I know we have a Bosnian I think who just graduated from medical school, and that there has been a real commitment to those individuals to try to help the individuals get through the process.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Mr. Padilla.

MR. PADILLA: One thing I would like to address is TANF. As you said, it is federal, but it is also state. And the state, North Dakota, could make some changes, and I think maybe that should be addressed.

The other thing in getting back to the issue of the jobs thing is that I know personally a lot of individuals that do have these skills, that have skills that they suggest, a little certification or piece of paper is keeping them from doing the job. Lutheran Social Services or wherever, where do they get referred to and how do they get placed in a job?

MS. THORESON: There is an assessment done with every client. And with every single client, it is not our employment person taking them wherever they want to take them. It is doing an assessment to say what are your skills, what are your abilities, what do you want to do? And then matching with the jobs that would be available. And it is very hard and very sad and difficult when a person can't speak any English and has a professional education back in their country, and that refugee will always? I shouldn't

say always, most of the time?say I don't care if I do that right now. I will get to that. I just want a job. I will do anything. Just get me a job. And so we can't say to that person, well, no, let's wait. You are a teacher. Let's try to?You know, we can encourage them to work towards that certification, refer them to the admissions office, whether it is colleges, technical schools, or whatever, because that's where they really need to get started, but it becomes their choice to say I want a job. I need to feed my family now, or referring them to Job Service to a jobs program where maybe within the context of that program there can be some headway. But it is still the refugee's decision if they say I want to work at Denny's because I want to take money home and I know I will have benefits when I get to be there full time, which is always our goal. That is their choice if they want to do that.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Mr. Padilla.

MR. PADILLA: Follow-up. How much decision and desperation for a job, shall we say, is based on the rules of not having any help or assistance?

MS. HOGAN: I think you make a very, very good point because at the end of eight months when they don't have cash assistance, what kinds of benefits are they going to get? And there is not much there. So there is a desperation, and that is why I think this education issue, that is why the county put \$100,000 into training to try to offer education to work with low-income, particularly refugee, households to help in that kind of education because we still have a large percentage of refugees on public assistance, food stamps, child care, medical assistance because they are not making a living wage, and it is the living wage issue. I totally agree that is a huge problem, and education is the answer.

MS. THORESON: They only have eight months before they are off assistance, and that is a huge?

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Dr. Meier.

DR. MEIER: Mr. Ibrahim, as you as member of the Somalian community look out and beyond the community, and I look in, it seems to me that the American public is acquainted more with a 30-second clip of film of a United Nations mission to Somalia, and that's all. And I am curious, do you believe that the media and that clip are more responsible perhaps for the dilemma of Somalians in the United States than the terrorist attack of 9/11?

MR. SHARIF-IBRAHIM: Many times I say I don't like to talk about political but sometimes. First of all, September 11 was big day. Everyone feels bad that bad incident happened. What I believe is 50 states in United States, all the population, Muslim, Christian, black, white, we are on the board. And I believe anyone attack us out in the country, if anyone attack us, we have to go one side to defend our country, our children, our nation. We don't need to come back and say you are this and you are this. This is not a way. We are same as who attack us. We have to go outside and defend our nation. Somalian population or anyone, nobody, no religion, says to kill innocent person. Islamic religion never ever says to kill innocent person. So who must these be? So Somalian people or Arab people or Islamic people, they have difficulty for these things because everyone thinks that Islamic did this. No. This is not Islamic issue. This is someone who did this and they must pay for what happened and what they did.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Ms. Nocho.

MS. HENDERSON-NOCHO: It is eight months that these individuals as refugees have to make the transition and then the services are gone?

MS. HOGAN: Not totally, but the cash assistance, the financial cash assistance, is gone except for

traditional public assistance which they continue to be eligible for.

MS. HENDERSON-NOCHO: When they come in, obviously you have translators, but when you are making these evaluations of the services they need, and I heard him say that this one woman was lost in the system because she couldn't speak English, if that was identified in the beginning, how did six years lapse by? And are there programs available? Are there nightly courses? I don't know.

MS. HOGAN: I think we have a range of evening ESL programs, but if you have five or six children and work a full-time job, you don't have the time and energy to participate in them. And it is more the exhaustion. So the service is available and translators are available, but in some ways we have been criticized that we do so much translation that people don't learn English.

MS. THORESON: The other piece of that is in terms of someone, you know, I don't know if it is lost in the system as much as unfortunate that when it got to be five years she couldn't apply for citizenship because she didn't know English and there were good reasons why she didn't know English. Now as of October 1 federal regulations require every refugee coming in to be involved in ESL classes or we can sanction their money. It is a federal requirement, which means this probably wouldn't happen now. And as unfortunate as it is, it would mean that she would have to have day care or she would have to do something to find care for her children because before we couldn't make them go. We would encourage them. We would hope they would. Most people have jobs within three to four months so they still have three to four months to go every day or to go, you know, two or three evenings. But that is very difficult. Any of us having taken night classes know what that puts on us to take a night class, and we might not have any children. So it is not that it isn't a possibility. It is what the problems are in doing that.

MS. HENDERSON-NOCHO: Is there an allocated amount of money that a refugee would be targeted in getting for transition and transportation and child care and things like that? Is it based on the country of where you come from?

MS. THORESON: No. It is based on cost of living, North Dakota cost of living. Every state is different. North Dakota cost of living. And it is dependent on how many people there are in the family and how many working adults are available in that family to work.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Ms. Dueker, you had a question also?

MS. DUEKER: I thought it was real exciting to know there were 5,000 Islamic people in the Fargo-Moorhead area. Is it possible that some people who come in as refugees and have the medical skills, teaching skills, could somehow interact with those Islamic citizens as well? Do we see some of that?

MS. THORESON: Yes. In fact, we have specific training that is done through the Family Health Care Center that they have trained a number of our staff trained as medical mentors, I believe they call them. They are trained Bosnians, Somalians, they go into each of those communities and teach things about communicable diseases, well beyond the initial orientation. That has been very effectively done. It is still fairly new, but has been done over the last year.

MR. PADILLA: Are these paid positions?

MS. THORESON: They are paid for the training; isn't that correct? They are paid for the training to go. And then at the outset it is a volunteer to your community. In other words, for the Bosnian persons that I know that went, they were trained to go on Saturdays for 10 weeks. And then my understanding is that they agree to volunteer to, on a monthly basis, do so many hours. So there might be 10 Bosnians and

each does an hour a month or two hours a month.

MR. PADILLA: But within the refugee population, and you wish to see it grow, is there a possibility these positions are going to be full-time paid?

MS. HOGAN: Yes. The Family Health Care Center does employ a number of refugees directly. They have Bosnian staff. So that there are resource people available. The health delivery system is a major challenge, partly because of the interpreters and cultural kinds of issues, and we need a more diverse health professional community. And that is just developing over time.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Other questions from the panel? Dr. Meier.

DR. MEIER: As a follow-up regarding the programs, it is clear that you are working on a very close budget. At the same time I also recognize that in other countries these same refugees would receive upwards of 10 times the volume of contact, quality, and quantity in terms of financial value of their assistance. How much do you believe our existing programs would need to be expanded in order to adequately accommodate incoming refugees so that we could effectively integrate them into the community and avoid the types of tension that 9/11 generated?

MS. THORESON: That is a very good question. And we met all yesterday afternoon with key players who are from the state of North Dakota through the federal government to make decisions about our funding for this next biennium. And it was how can we not only continue to do what we are doing but how can we expand when the money has been cut? It has been decreased by the federal agency in terms of money allocated almost across the board. So we are saying we have this many thousands of dollars less. So the question has not been how can we expand. We have another meeting scheduled to prioritize how we cut what we are doing now. And that is very sad and difficult for us.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Thank you very much for this panel. We are beyond time. We will seat the third panel right away. There won't be a break. So if the third panel can come up, we very much appreciate your time.

[Off the record.]

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: We are going to go ahead and get started. We are behind. Mr. Hegab is on his way. We will go ahead and begin.

Mr. Thompson, would you announce your name for the record because it is being transcribed, and then tell the organization that you represent and then try to keep to the 10-minute time line.

### **PANEL 3**

#### **Kevin Thompson, Professor of Sociology at North Dakota State University**

DR. THOMPSON: My name is Kevin Thompson. I am a professor of sociology at North Dakota State University. My colleagues and I, Kathleen Slobin and Daniel, were involved in a study the past year examining specifically the impact of refugees on the city of Fargo. This study came about under the recommendation of the Refugee Impact Committee that was formed in the year 2000 in Fargo and Cass County. The funders for this study were Cass County Social Services, United Way of Cass Clay, city of Fargo, and Dakota Medical Foundation. And the purpose of this study was basically threefold.

First we wanted to assess the impact of refugee resettlement on service delivery agencies in Fargo. Secondly, we wanted to identify concerns among these service deliverers regarding refugee service delivery. And, third, we wanted to provide the Refugee Impact Committee with a series of recommendations, whereby we could provide better services and support for refugees coming into the community.

Very briefly, the methodology that we employed for this study was to go out into the community and conduct a series of personal interviews with people who had almost daily contact with refugees, both primary refugees and secondary refugees, coming into the city. We also gathered documents, reports, any records kept by those agencies, most of which were public documents, to include in this report to fortify some of our findings and collaborate across agencies.

And then, finally, we were instructed to write a report, disseminate the results, report the results of our findings to the Refugee Impact Committee, and that Refugee Impact Committee then would in turn start to engage these recommendations and turn them into workable solutions, which is going on right now.

I may kind of echo some of the issues that Kathy Thoreson and Kathy Hogan described earlier, but our report is rather lengthy, so I am just going to summarize three of the major findings and talk about some of the recommendations and then touch a little bit on some of the issues that we see that might be somewhat pertinent to discrimination.

One of the major issues, and this is of no surprise to probably anybody in this room, is at the beginning of 1996 this community began to experience a very large influx of refugees. The number of refugees coming into the community began to increase in 1992, but by 1996 it increased rather exponentially. Part of this reason is because Fargo was a very attractive community in terms of quality of life, quality of schools, very low unemployment rate, and little crime and disorder. So this was a very attractive community for many refugees.

By the year 2000 we had almost 600 refugees being resettled in the city of Fargo. And so this became a resource issue for the schools, for social services, for public health, for translation services, for Cultural Diversity Resources, and any other agencies that had to provide services to refugees. We interviewed a number of people in conjunction with this issue. Almost everybody was fairly unanimous in that resources were somewhat constrained in the community.

As a result of this, we looked at what might be a workable number of refugees coming into Fargo and settled on a number, a cap, somewhere between 250 and 300 refugees.

One of the other issues that we addressed as well was to more equitably distribute refugees coming into the state of North Dakota so that Bismarck and Grand Forks were getting more refugees as well. Fargo was getting by far the lion's share of refugees. Bismarck and Grand Forks both have been in position for several years to handle more refugees and the Chamber of Commerce has echoed that as well. So we had a series of recommendations in the report to look at both Bismarck and Grand Forks as being other communities where refugees might be resettled.

Second issue that arose in our report was communication and coordination between Lutheran Social Services and coordinating service providers for refugees. This became what we saw in the report as a communication issue, a boundary issue, a responsibility issue. We saw a need as a result of conducting a number of interviews that the city of Fargo might want to undertake hiring a coordinator to coordinate refugee services in the community and to ensure that all of the service providers were on basically the same page with providing services to refugees.

Another finding that we looked at was orientation issues with refugees. We discovered that many refugees were very confused regarding the bureaucratic issues involved with being resettled, with benefit issues, with getting their children into school, with employment and social security issues. Traditionally they have been exposed to a fairly massive orientation session where they are given a whole host of information in a very short period of time.

This did not seem to work very well and caused some confusion among refugees, so we recommended that these orientation sessions be spread further apart and that they be more topical in nature rather than putting all this community information up front. One of the issues that arose, I think, during our study was there were some perceptions of discrimination that were out there, and some of these issues have more to do with enforcing some of the guidelines and laws on the books. And a number of agencies felt that by having to enforce things like not allowing teens from different ethnic groups to be married, having to enforce benefit boundaries, getting kids to attend school, that some of these issues came down hard, particularly on Cass County Social Services as being kind of the cultural enforcer of American values. So these were some issues that we examined in our report.

One of the other issues that I think arose in light of this is that it is no surprise that many refugees coming into any community are traumatized by coming from a war-torn country, by being exposed to conditions that most of us can never even begin to imagine. So one of the things that I think may go on in many communities and not just Fargo is kind of a re-traumatizing concern arises with many refugees where they are exposed to a lot of what they would consider to be bureaucratic nightmare that I think really overwhelms a lot of them in their lives. So one of the recommendations that we made in our report was to see what we could do to simplify some of the bureaucratic issues that come with resettlement and to avoid some of the re-traumatizing that may go on with many refugees.

So where we are with this right now is that the Refugee Impact Committee is in the process of dividing into subcommittees to address some of the recommendations in the report. I believe there were eight or nine recommendations that we made. We felt that they were very workable recommendations. Some of them will require funding. Some of them will require writing grants. But many of them are issues that we can deal with, I think, without additional funds that involve simply better communication, better coordination in bringing groups together. I think the major start for this was the Refugee Impact Committee itself. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Thank you. Dr. Nganje.

**William Nganje, Assistant Professor of Economics at North Dakota State University**

DR. NGANJE: My name is William Nganje, and I am an assistant professor at North Dakota State University. I am the advisor for three student groups, Black Student Alliance, all black students, at NDSU, Farmhouse Fraternity, and the Business Club, so I work a lot with students. And what I am going to present today is a case study of what happened to me.

I know some of you are aware of the incident that happened in Barnes and Noble with me and my two kids. I am going to talk a little bit about it, and then I am going to talk a little bit about some of the ways I perceive discrimination in this society and the way it affects kids.

First, the incident that happened at Barnes and Noble. I don't know how to explain it, but I thought it was a little bit disturbing because you meet somebody. I don't know this person. I thought he was waving at me. So I waved back at him, smiling. And then he got really angry. He got up, walked towards me and sniffed and shouted the word "nigger," then went towards the bookshelf, and then came

closer to me. And I had my two kids, a little boy who was 2 years old and a little girl who was 5, and they were scared. My little girl clinged to my leg because she was scared. So when it happened, I was a little bit?I was angry and at the same time I was scared, and I went to the counter and called the police, and luckily the police were there in about two or three minutes. They were really fast. And I didn't even know there were other people around me listening to this event. So when the police came in, this guy was about to walk out of the store and I told them this is the guy. He said no, he didn't do anything. He refused it completely. So I narrated the story the way it happened to the police and they asked me to tell them where it happened, and I took them around the area where it happened. Luckily there were two guys there. They asked them, did you hear anything? To my amazement, they narrated exactly what happened, the two of them. They said yes, he called him nigger. He went towards him aggressively. And one of them had a big tattoo on his arm, and I thought because it looked like the Nazi sign tattoo, he was one of them. But amazingly he narrated exactly what happened. So even though it was a disappointment to me, what I took from the incident is don't look at people and assume that they are against you. I understood that as a community that is a word people will not tolerate because this guy that I really thought was one of them narrated exactly what happened. So even though I was disturbed, I was a little bit happy that people stood up and did not tolerate this. Two things I wanted to mention. This was just one incident.

Another incident that I think is more disturbing is the sort or type of discrimination and resentment or hate. That is the most difficult one to fight. It is even more difficult if it is being done with somebody with power, somebody who is in a position of power. And I think different forms of how this type of discrimination can be expressed will be to tolerate people of color, rather than appreciate people of color. None of us want to be tolerated. None of us want to feel they are allowing us to be around. We want to be appreciated like human beings. So you have that feeling once in a while from people, and it is even more difficult if it is coming from your boss or somebody who has power because then you have to prove yourself in so many different areas. Most of the time everything you do is expected to be perfect and it is like people are expecting you to fail.

I think the more difficult, the more really difficult type of discrimination that I wanted to talk about is how it affects kids. When the incident happened to me at Barnes and Noble, my little kids were scared. And I had to play the role of telling them, no, don't worry, it is nothing. Because if I was scared and they realized I was scared, then it would have been terrible and traumatizing for the kids.

Another incident happened at my kid's school. After the incident at Barnes and Noble, about three months later, the principal of my son's school called me from his office. He said, ?If your son comes back home today and tells you about somebody threatening to kill him, know that the incident has been resolved.? So apparently my son was at school and he was playing with this little boy who was his friend and they had a fight and the little white boy called him ?nigger? and threatened to go get a knife and come and kill him. The principal called the police and the police called the white boy's parents, and they suspended him from school for two days. What disturbed me is that a little white boy acts that way. Their parents teach them to hate and discriminate. So I was a little bit disturbed. It affects kids more than it affects us. If we adults can be affected, kids can be scared, and they may refuse to go to school because of things like that. They may say I don't want to go to school. I am scared. I don't want to do this. So when it happens to a child, I don't know how to tell parents we should try to have our children not to go about with hate issues. I think that is where it should start, if parents can educate their kids not to be hateful or discriminate, I think that would be wonderful.

### **Jeannie Camarillo, Client Service Representative, Motivation, Education, and Training**

MS. CAMARILLO: Hi. I am Jeannie Camarillo, and I work for Motivation, Education, and Training. I am going to talk about that a little bit, about the effects of our clients or some of the barriers they

encounter when they try and find work or settle in the community.

Motivation, Education, and Training is a program funded by the Labor Department. And what we do is try and move clients from agriculture or seasonal farm work into permanent positions so they can become self-sufficient. When we present the idea we are able to either give them training for up to two years, either at the tech or anything where they can get certified. We also provide GED, ESL, anything that can help them obtain a permanent position in the community. I have been in this position for about nine months, now going on 10, and one of the hardest things for me is opening the doors for them to have opportunities in which they will be able to make a living and live to meet tomorrow's expenses. I call and right away the door is slammed on me. They don't want to meet with help. They don't want to open the door.

There are certain situations when I know there is a position open and they send a client and they all of a sudden tell them the job is closed, and I will call and check on it again, and the position is open, but they don't want to take the time. And I understand that one of the biggest barriers is the language factor, but I think that given the opportunity and given the chance, anybody is willing to work and learn the job that they need to do to get the job done and be a good employee to the employers.

It has been somewhat disappointing because I just find so many different areas in which we need to help them, even getting housing. They sometimes don't have everything together because they have lived in different states with different farmers, or housing here, housing there, and it is not substantial enough for the apartment buildings here. They say they don't have enough credit history. They don't have enough history with rental. So they don't want to take a chance on them. And they lose out on an apartment. We have had three families, or four families, already this month that have had to leave the state completely because they can't find housing, and they are not given a chance to even live here.

There are a lot of positive stories. We do have one client that we put into ESL. And there is one nursing home, and as soon as they went through ESL, they were able to get a job in that agency, and we called them, and she has been through ESL and continues to go to night class. They said great, let's hire her. We have been looking for employees, and let's give her a chance. So there are some really good stories out there and I am glad to see this lady is so appreciative and so happy and really glad for human resources people from this agency that have been working with us, and now they send us their ads every week and tell us of any open positions they have and they are willing to work with us in anything we can do. I just wish that in the community there were more agencies that would be willing to work with us and give us that chance to put people of minorities in their business ads because I think they would be great workers. They are great employees. They know how to work long hours. They know how to work hard. They know how to make it work and everything. And I think it would be a really positive environment for both. I know how discrimination is.

And the sad thing is that a lot of our clients don't have education and don't have confidence to stick up for themselves when situations arise. I am on the other side where I think that I have had the opportunities and I have been given the chance to give myself that confidence that when those situations do arise, I am able to stand up for myself and say this is wrong and it is not going to keep going and confront the situation. But I have had clients where they call me and, as an example, they were at work and all they were trying to do is help a customer who kept asking questions she couldn't get what she needed so this other employee started speaking to her in Spanish and was able to help them, but as soon as the customer left, the employer came up to her and said if she spoke Spanish again in the workplace, that she would be terminated. I didn't quite understand that because I thought she was helping the customers. So we were able to move her out of that particular business and put her into another job because I just didn't think that would be a positive environment for somebody to grow in and gain confidence either. But that is why we are here. We are here to help them and to help anybody that wants

to settle in the community that has worked in agriculture, help them gain confidence and gain any experience that they can get to get out of agriculture, and like I said, gain self-sufficiency. But there are a lot of barriers that they encounter. It is just too bad that they don't have everything in place or the confidence to fight and keep staying here. So once they get that cold shoulder, they don't want to stay here. It is, "Why deal with this? I can go back and I'll just live my life and not disturb anybody and nobody will hate me or come at me, or anything like that."

Like I said, MET is here to help them, and we try and work with the agencies, and the agencies that work really well, we try to place all the clients we can. And that way they feel comfortable and they gain confidence and they come back and they are so happy after a while. When you have families that for the main reason that they stay is for their children's education, they want them to graduate. They want them to keep going in school. We have one parent right now that decided to go and get his CDL and wants to stay here because both of his children want to go to college. One wants to be a welder and one wants to be a beautician. And once I told him, well, if you stay here, we are able to help them help you get the income you need and then start saving for their funding for their schooling after high school. And there are other opportunities, scholarship, grants, and financial aid, so there are some good stories out there. I just wish the businesses would be more open to working with us and give us the opportunity to at least explain what MET is here for and give them a chance to look at some of our clients.

### **Mohamed Matar, President of the Muslim Student Association**

MR. MATAR: My name is Mohamed Matar. I am a student at NDSU in civil engineering, and I am president of the Muslim Student Association. Actually I didn't see any kind of discrimination or harassment. On the contrary, the people that I met with were understanding.

As for being a member of the Muslim Student Association, we have about 40 members. I didn't hear, or nothing was reported to me, about any incident of discrimination, but something to be noted that after this 9/11 attack, the attendance of the members was about 1/10 or less. I don't think it is related to the people in Fargo, because I have met many people and I really like the people. People are very friendly and very smiley. But I think the members of MSA stopped attending or participating in activities because of what was heard in the news that every foreign student is a target of the FBI or whatever. So they just took the safe side and preferred not to be involved with the Muslim Student Association, or whatever.

But as to my personal experience, I find that the people here in Fargo are very understanding and very cooperative. During the days after the attack, I was attending class, I was the only foreign student there, and some of them came to me and frankly said we understand that it is not related to a specific religion. It is just some people acting certain ways. I do agree that there are some people who don't want to understand the difference between a person's behavior and general attitude or religion, and I think it should be started by letting the teenagers and kids know about the different cultures and different religions, try to understand the difference in personal behavior and general behavior.

That's all I can say about this.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Thank you. We will now entertain questions from the Committee.

### ***Question-and-Answer Session***

MR. PADILLA: Mr. Thompson, in this study you assess the impact and had recommendations, but there was a phrase used "misperceptions of discrimination." In keeping with your study, what did that mean?

DR. THOMPSON: Well, I think that in the context of having to enforce rules and guidelines, service providers themselves provided us with that phrase, that there is a perception out there that they were the cultural bad guy, if you will. And I think it came down to more part of their interpretation of what they were hearing or possibly seeing as a reaction to enforcing rules and laws and guidelines rather than anything overt.

So it was more of a perceptual issue that I think existed on the part of the service provider than anything.

MR. PADILLA: So they did not see it as discrimination? Or?

DR. THOMPSON: I think they saw themselves as doing their job to enforce laws that prohibit marriages between a 14-year-old girl and a 31-year-old male.

MR. PADILLA: What about the clients? Was there a perception of discrimination there?

DR. THOMPSON: The study was not geared to interview new Americans. We were simply asked to go out and look at service providers and the agencies that were providing support services for refugees.

MR. PADILLA: Another question is, in the study, and I think it is an important point, exactly what is the definition of a refugee and/or immigrant in the study? When does a refugee start being a refugee?

DR. THOMPSON: It is a very good question, and it is an issue that we raised in our report because it is not always clarified across service agencies. And there are some different definitions for them out there. And I think part of what we discovered was that there are some gray boundaries for what constitutes a refugee as opposed to what does not. I think one of the things the Refugee Impact Committee is trying to do is to resolve and tighten that definition so that there is more unanimity across agencies regarding what a refugee actually is.

MR. PADILLA: May I continue?

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Yes. Continue.

MR. PADILLA: Ms. Camarillo, I have had a little bit of experience in the same work you do, and when you were discussing having to explain to businesses, it almost felt like you have to justify the work ethic of your clients. Now has that gotten better or worse since September 11?

MS. CAMARILLO: I haven't seen any big drastic changes after September 11. I think it has been the same ever since?even from when I started. It is just a battle to get in the door to get the opportunity to explain to them that these clients want to get a job, full-time job, year round. But it is a lot of explaining and a lot of justifying: Why don't they have a job now? Why haven't they been here? Why are they still migrating? They migrate because farmers want them and they need them during the season. So this is the lifestyle that they are used to. So they need to learn something else and that is what we are here for, but it is a lot of justifying as to will they stay here? Are they going to work hard? Do they understand the work ethics that we want?

MR. PADILLA: Back to Mr. Thompson, when the refugees resettle here, it has not always been the refugees' choice to be here; is that right?

DR. THOMPSON: You would have to ask that question of Kathy Hogan and Kathy Thoreson. They understand the dynamics of resettling much more than I do. I want to comment on that because it is a

very complex process. It took us a long time working on this project to really try to grasp the dynamics of that and to be honest with you, I am still a little unclear of it.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Ms. Dueker.

MS. DUEKER: Yes. I was wondering, some of the businesses that I know in the Fargo area, they have factories, and they are hungry for the work ethic that Jeannie is talking about; dedicated people that show up. They do a good job. And two or three of the people in conversation that have these businesses had said they lost the train?they had trained them over a period of years. They acquired the health care benefits but they lost this person because they had been classified as underemployed. They had been told you need to seek higher learning or something like this in a totally unrelated field. So here they were very happy. They wanted to establish their roots, keep their kids in education, and all of a sudden somebody, and I am not going to name names because that is not allowed, but it was a difficult problem for some of these businesses to say, we want people, we support them, to work for us, and then they are gone. Have you seen any of that yourselves happening?

MS. CAMARILLO: I have not.

DR. NGANJE: Let me say something in that regard. I think the exit level in most companies or businesses in America is about 40 percent, on average people come in?after three to four years they are gone. So you don?t have a situation where all people, even Americans, come in and stay in a job for life. So I don?t think they should use that as a factor not to hire a minority because even Americans stay in a job for an average time of four years. So if you hire anyone and train them, they are going to look for better jobs and better pay. It is just the way the society works.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Ms. Stanton.

MS. STANTON: In your opinion are most refugees discriminated against? Or what percent of refugees are discriminated against? Have any idea? We hear horror stories and we have to wonder how widespread it is.

DR. THOMPSON: Are you asking me that question?

MS. STANTON: Anyone who wants to answer.

DR. NGANJE: I don?t know if I have an answer. But it is difficult to pinpoint the percentage, 10, 20, 30 percent, because you have incidents that may happen once in a while. Fargo is a very nice community. People are friendly, but once in a while there is an incident. I told somebody who interviewed me about the incident that happened to me after September 11 that it doesn?t take two incidents to make the problem real. If somebody gets killed because of a hate crime, it is not going to take 10 percent of the time to make a big problem in the community, or it is not going to take 20 percent. So we have to try and fix the problem even if it is one problem happening or the frequency of that happening over time is increasing, it is tough to pin it down, but every incident that happens, one or two, I think it is still important.

MS. STANTON: Shouldn?t happen to anybody.

MR. PADILLA: One other question. This is directed to refugees. Do you feel that the economic status and social status of the refugee, of the person, has bearing on how much discrimination they are going to receive?

MS. CAMARILLO: Whom do you want to answer?

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: It is open.

MR. PADILLA: It is open.

DR. THOMPSON: Are you asking in terms of their earning power?

MR. PADILLA: Not potential, but where they are in their earning status at the time. I don't know if that was addressed in the study or not.

DR. THOMPSON: No. We found clearly that the pay level for many refugees in this community is very poor, but it is also very poor for many nonrefugees as well. We make these same claims at the university system, so I am not telling you anything new.

MR. PADILLA: But through the acts of discrimination. Because I know also that a university professor is probably looked at a little different than me? Joe Garbage Can Pick Up.

DR. NGANJE: I think if a refugee comes in and finds minorities in different areas, example: professors or in different structure in society, it makes them feel like we are not going to get discriminated because of our color. But if they come in and don't see minorities in higher jobs, then I think your question would be right. If they come in and see us, I am a professor, I am a black guy, and they see so other minorities in high positions in the community, they know that if they work hard, they will get to those different positions. So I don't know if they feel discriminated because of what they make or not.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Other questions?

Housing seems to be an issue that has been brought up a couple of times today. Ms. Camarillo talked about it a little bit more. But is housing an issue, especially once the support services like Lutheran Social Services and those things pull out of picture? And does housing get into the issue of people moving into apartments and university students, also with the foreign students, are there problems if they want to go off campus, anything that you are aware of? In broad terms, anybody on the panel want to talk about housing issues?

MS. CAMARILLO: I think housing is a big issue. They are using criminal background checks and credit checks. Those are ways to eliminate people that you might have? or they think they are eliminating potential problem tenants. But what you are doing is avoiding ever giving anybody a chance to live there. I know a lot of migrants don't have a single credit card, and they have never established credit. They bought \$2,000 cars here or there, so they don't have an established credit. That is not allowing them to get an apartment just for that sole reason. So I think there are little things in place through the housing authority to eliminate renting to low-income people.

MR. MATAR: Most of the students in MSA, 92 percent live on campus. It is safe. It is near the campus. It is cheap, actually better than off campus. There are no problems with the housing within the university. It goes under first-come, first-served. Off campus, sometimes there is some type of problem, criminal records or whatever, but I don't think it is specific for most of the refugees, or whatever. I think it is some type of rules that are applied here. As I said, it is 95 percent minority live on campus so there is nothing talked to me about it.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Any other questions from the panel? Ms. Dueker.

MS. DUEKER: Could you please explain to me because I don't have access to this like you guys do, have you seen the celebration? I guess is the best way to classify? of interracial dating, interracial marriages? I live here in this community and I see these relationships, and they have got their families, they go to basketball games, they go to Fargo Dome stuff, and I don't see? you know, we don't hear about that because it is not of controversy. But what do you see on campus in your life? Because I am really proud of that.

MS. CAMARILLO: Of interracial relationship?

MS. DUEKER: Yeah. What do you see? How do you see the community? Do you see people who have been harassed for being a black person with a white person or Hispanic person with a white person? Have you seen any other members of the community who have harmed them, discriminated against them because of that relationship? I guess is the best way to go at it.

DR. NGANJE: I think overall, I know a lot of black people who are married to white? mixed interracial marriages. I know a lot. They are very happy. The community is very nice. I think we had an incident once when an NDSU basketball player went to the movies with the girlfriend, and he was a black guy and he went to the movies here in West Acres with his white girlfriend, and a guy stood up and punched him, ?I don't want to see you dating our white girls.? I think that was in the paper. I have a copy. There are some rare incidents of that happening, but overall I know a lot of interracial marriages, and they are happy in the community.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Any other questions from the panel? Dr. Meier.

DR. MEIER: I am trying to kind of articulate this. You mention questions of housing and various other observations about integration and coordination. I have to admit that my sensitivity to? and Crystal reminded me of this? our propensity for using such a phrase as interracial relationships. It seems off the DNA comparison, it suggests there is no basis for that type of generality. It should be interethnic relationship, not interracial. That is phraseology that is terribly outdated. From your perspective, how do we get beyond these suggestions on housing, in short? It can't really be a housing issue because we have had a long history in the United States of a massive number of immigrants and means by which to integrate, whether they knew the language or not; yet we are hearing discussions of people who don't know the language and can't get a job or don't have credit histories. Hundreds of thousands came to this country without a credit history and I don't see them having any problem. Same thing goes with other groups, and they didn't have computers for criminal investigation of any sort to know their background, simply question of word of mouth. So what is the difference between how these immigrants are being treated versus what you might perceive and how perhaps a previous generation of immigrants was treated?

MS. CAMARILLO: Technology. We have the technology. When immigrants came in, it was a free country, everything was well, and there were certain incidents of racism within the communities that came here, but that was a whole different world. Today we have in place what is the majority, the Anglo-Saxon white American. And when you take into consideration that you are bringing in, we hear it all the time, people from Mexico keep coming in, they are crossing our borders, but people from Canada can walk over and there is no difference. But you keep those people from Mexico in Mexico. And that is just a mentality that we have had. It wasn't even last year when I was told? I was speaking Spanish, and they told me, you know, when you decided to cross over America? and I said I didn't cross over, walk over or anything, I was born here, ma'am. So were my grandparents, so I am third generational.

But still people have that mentality that you are a minority and that you don't have the same rights that

everybody else does. And the problem there is that I chose to keep connected with my culture and my language. That should not be punishable to me. If you did not choose to do that for yourself or your culture didn't choose that, that has nothing to do with me. But I am proud to speak Spanish and I do it when I can and I will keep doing it, and if somebody gets offended, I apologize but this is who I am. There should be no apologies made for what I choose to speak. But still people have that mentality, you know. I lived in this community? I was raised in Grafton, North Dakota, so when I get asked where you are from, Grafton, they are like but where were you born? Grafton. But where are your parents from? Texas, I guess, that is where they are born. So my grandparents are from Mexico, too. I mean what do you want? I did it to one lady. Where are you from? I am from Maddock. But where are you from? From Maddock. Where are your grandparents from? You are not from Maddock. You are from somewhere else, too. We have the mentality that white Americans are Americans. Everybody else is not a true American. And that is where you have that problem, I think, because now we have subtleties of discrimination, and housing would be one. They do the credit checks for a reason, and we started implementing rules and regulations to keep out what we think are the people you are going to have problems from. I mean that happened in Moorhead after a couple years ago when they had the so-called riot. Took down apartments, took that all apart, and that is to avoid having any more problems there. They think they are getting rid of potential criminals or the bad crowd or whatever they think they may be doing. But one bad person does not make a bad community.

And that is the other bad thing. Whenever you hear something about any minority doing something wrong, especially in Fargo-Moorhead, you hear about one minority doing something wrong and we have to put our heads down because we are going to be told something or somebody is going to make a comment. But there are the Andersons in there. There are Capinskies that do things wrong, but white people don't have to put their heads down because that is that person. But when it comes to a minority, one minority does something wrong and we are all to blame. I don't know how we change that. And all I can do is, you know, I have educated myself and I have chosen to try and educate everybody around me. And when I meet people, I smile, and I am just as normal as you. My family has some dysfunctional people. I am sure yours does, too. But we are just like everybody else. That is how I come at it. I choose to treat everybody as I like to be treated and try and educate them. I am pretty normal. I choose to speak Spanish sometimes and incorporate everything else from my culture. That's a long story, too.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Questions from the panel?

MS. HENDERSON-NOCHO: You mentioned that individuals in your program have two years for an additional type of training to make a transition into their workforce. You mentioned Grafton. Is that Grafton or is that statewide? Do you do work in Minnesota as well?

MS. CAMARILLO: It is statewide. We have an office in Fargo and then we have an office in Moorhead and Grand Forks, so it is statewide. That is a federally funded program so we have four states in place that we help.

MS. HENDERSON-NOCHO: So are you saying in all those communities the doors are shut for people making the transition to get the job even after they have the training?

MS. CAMARILLO: Texas is a good state though. They really are able to get people to work and transition them. And agencies there are willing to take on some of our clients and they open the doors. IBM is a big one working with them, anything they can do. They do specific workforce English training. That is some of the things that we have been trying to do here. It is just our clientele isn't as big as Texas, so ours would be a little smaller. So that is also one of the things we have problems in dealing with businesses is because I would say bring five people there compared to Texas I would say I am bringing 30. So sometimes the agencies are?by the time I do all this paperwork, get it all done, is it

really worth my time? I think it is worth their time and efforts. It is just a matter of bringing us together and what we can do to work today.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Mr. Padilla.

MR. PADILLA: Following up to that, the racial people in the human resources office in Texas is a minority, correct me if I am wrong, is a little bit higher than it is here?

MS. CAMARILLO: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: We are going to take a break until 12:15. Anybody that is here that would like to say something has to register at the desk, but the microphone is yours from 12:15 on briefly, not, you know, get the whole day, but if you would like to make any comment, add anything to what any of the panelists have said or represent anything from a community that you are in, feel free to do so. You would have to sign your name on a paper and register outside. So we will reconvene at 12:15. Thank you very much, panel.

[Recess taken.]

## **PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION**

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: We are going to get started with the public comment section. I'll call people up individually. If they would like to use the microphone, I would suggest it because it is so much easier for us to hear. This room kind of mutes. I have a loud voice because I teach. But it would be easier if you use a microphone, but if you choose to sit in your seat, you may do that also, but keep in mind this is being recorded so if you could get up to the microphone.

Jim Strutz would be the first person that I would call forward for the public comment period. Again, everybody be aware about a 10-minute timeframe at the most.

MR. STRUTZ: My name is Jim Strutz. And as far as representing anybody, it would be myself and injured workers. Back in '95 my wife and I moved here from Minnesota and we both liked Fargo. Both our daughters went to school here, college, and we both found jobs here in Fargo. We came up here from Minnesota with work ethics that were very, very good, and I found a job. And in the process of working there, I got injured.

And afterwards I was brought back to work under false pretenses, and I did not know at that time I was discriminated against. I didn't know what that was. That's how ignorant I have been in this issue of discrimination and human rights. But I have learned a lot in the process of trying to help myself.

And in that process, I accidentally came across North Dakota Labor Department's Web page and found the appropriate forms to fill out for discrimination and denial of services, and I have come up against a company that turned its back on me, and I have come against—I don't know, I think it is a state agency, I believe it is, and I am not going to mention any names, but this agency is supposed to be helping injured workers with disability payments and appropriate and timely medical care. And when I came up against these people, it was a nightmare, and it has been a nightmare and continues to be a nightmare, and I firmly, believe sitting here today in front of you folks, that I have been discriminated against in so many different ways and so have a lot of other injured workers. That system needs to be worked on and looked at, looked into. And I hope some day somebody will do something about it. I have tried in my own way to get some public attention brought to this, and I have been on a radio station a couple times. And the

thing I have to remember when I am doing this, and I really worked hard on it, is not to be aggressive and just to state some facts and then allow other people to do what they can, if they so chose to. But the fact is that I have been discriminated against and I didn't know it at the time. I didn't know it. And it wasn't until I got my first copy of my first charge back from the Labor Department that when I read that, it felt so good because that was the first time anybody ever believed what I was saying, the very first time. And I want to thank—I can't mention any names—but her name is Rita at the North Dakota Labor Department's Agency on Human Rights. And she put together that form and had it accurate, just perfect. You don't know what discrimination feels like until you have been there, until you experience it, until you finally realize that your rights as a human being have been violated by different people. I had no idea until it happened to me, no idea.

I have heard a lot of talk here today about minorities being hired at different places in Fargo. I have firsthand experience of seeing this at the company I used to work for. Only thing is that the company I used to work for puts the minorities that they hire into the most difficult job that there were in that plant, and that was working, maybe not all of them, but I know there were four of them that experienced this, and they were put in a position of working on a paint line system that had three 500 degree ovens, and the heat from those three ovens was terrible. And they had to take parts off of a rack that would run down and then through the paint system, and a lot of these parts were heavy, and at that time there wasn't anything in place to take the parts off the assembly line. They had to do it by hand. One guy was there and would grab the parts with gloves on and it would burn his—the parts would be so hot that it would burn his hands. You could see the smoke coming off the glove when he took the parts off the assembly line. I believe that here in Fargo there is more discrimination and more human rights violations than people realize. I really believe that. And I also believe if something like this can happen to me, it can happen to anybody; especially I would have to believe minorities of all races and colors. Because I guess I am in a position, you know, I have had schooling, graduated from high school, I have that going for me, and so—and working on the Internet found a way to help myself. But I know there are a lot of people here in Fargo that can't do it like that, don't know what the resources are, have no way of finding out. At least that is what I believe. I could be wrong, and if I am wrong, I will surely admit it. I think that is a big problem here in Fargo. Maybe, you know, down the line or something, people can? Because that is really a tool, I guess, that everybody needs. Black, white, doesn't matter, it is a tool that we all need in case we feel we are discriminated against or in case we feel that our human rights have been violated in some way. I think that is a really important thing to think about and remember to do something about is to get the message out to everybody, doesn't matter who.

The teenagers in school today, school kids, I remember back when I was in school, I got teased about patches on my jeans. That was back in the late '50s, early '60s, and today I would believe that it is a lot worse than that.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: You are almost over with time. Could you make a summary statement and then??

MR. STRUTZ: There exists, I believe, in all communities but I live here in Fargo, discrimination and human rights violations. It is not only with individuals, it is with companies. It is with medical facilities. I have filed I believe it is nine different discrimination charges so far. That's the only remedy I have for myself at this point is to file the charges because there is nothing else I can do, absolutely nothing else. That's it.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Thank you. Any questions from the panel? Extremely limited for clarification purposes.

MR. SCHNEIDER: Just one. I wanted to clarify the agency you are talking about handling your injury

claim is the North Dakota Workers Compensation Bureau?

MR. STRUTZ: Yes, sir. I wasn't supposed to mention names.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Okay. That's a state agency. That's fine. Diane Wray Williams. We will ask her to step forward.

MS. WILLIAMS: Greetings from across the river. I am Diane Wray Williams, and I am a citizen that lives in Moorhead, Minnesota. We represent about a third of the population base here in Fargo-Moorhead area. And I am coming to you basically as a representative of the Justice Circle, which is a group of citizens, both white and of color, who are engaged in community organizing, education, and advocacy for the purpose of enhancing equal opportunity and promoting racial and ethnic justice in our community.

We have primarily been working in Moorhead because we began in response to the Minnesota Advisory Committee of the Civil Rights Commission conducting a hearing in Moorhead in 1999 after a complaint was filed following the July 4 Romke Park incident. The hearing was attended by a lot of Moorhead citizens. And those of us who attended and listened to the testimony, heard that there were two Moorheads. And so we knew when the report came it would say that we basically had a problem in Moorhead. So the Justice Circle formed to be prepared for the receipt of that report. The report didn't come until finally January of 2001. But by then we were ready to help the citizens of Moorhead understand what this report said. This report was, I think, very interesting and timely as we talk about has there been discrimination since September 11. I found that the words of the committee were very telling. They say, "We note for the most part that overt, aggressive racist behavior and attitudes are not tolerated by the vast majority of people. But we do find that there is an illusion about inclusion. This lack of consciousness about racial and ethnic prejudice allows white individuals to honestly maintain a support for a just and equal society without having to accept any personal responsibility for either an unjust, unfair, unbalanced system, or for working toward the resolution of the problem.?"

Those were fighting words for people in Moorhead because, I think, as several people have said today, people are nice here. They are nice. Okay? They are friendly. But you scratch the surface and there is still that attitude that you can find. What we did with this report, and which is really why I wanted to share with you today, we formed study circles all over Moorhead to help citizens digest what was in here. Approximately 30 study circles came into existence. And this is just through what I would call an informal network of using churches and the library and leaders and the institutions at the colleges. In April of 2001 we held a public forum, and out of that public forum came a lot of interest on the part of many citizens to continue working on the areas that have been identified in this report. The [Minnesota Advisory Committee] members identified income and employment, education, public safety, and housing and public accommodation as areas that we had to pay attention to. So citizen action teams came into play, totally voluntary. They indicated their interest and went to work over the summer in 2001. And in October of 2001 they came forward to the Human Rights Commission in Moorhead and reported what they were able to generate as ideas for helping our community to improve. Those ideas are in the works. That's about what I can say. We have not achieved a racially just society across the river, but we have put ourselves in the position of many of the reports, the ideas from citizens are now working their way through the school district, through the college campuses, through the city hall, and they are affecting how we are beginning to think about things.

We have also noticed that a lot of people have taken advantage of anti-racism training or training in white privilege. And as that has happened, we have noted a difference in the agenda and the conversation. This year we were able, because of the colleges, to participate in a human rights summit, and that included both Fargo and the Moorhead communities. And in the process of that, many ideas

were generated that relate to businesses, to our educational system, and then to our life in general. Once again, we are at that place where we have lots of ideas, and our experience in Moorhead has been that the more we make this a broad-based response, the better off we are. We have found that you cannot just turn to an institution and say, "Fix it." But what we have to do is pull in as many citizen members as possible to think, to generate ideas because that's what seems to change the climate and it changes the conversation.

So I am just here to offer encouragement for your work to say that my perception is the climate has not changed since September 11. It was always like it is. We already were thinking that we included everyone and that, frankly, that is an illusion in my estimation.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Thank you. Are there questions from the panel? Yes.

DR. MEIER: Is your information and the report available online?

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: That report is available through the Civil Rights Commission, and it is available online.

MS. WILLIAMS: There is a report that is available online that is slightly different, and it is with the Cambridge Scientific Abstract because we are actually winning a prize in Moorhead this year for the process of using study circles and involving citizens, and the whole process is outlined in that paper on the Web. And it is just called the Moorhead Justice Circle Community Organizations and Development for Equal Opportunity and Racial Justice.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: It will be available in hard copy. If you would like to get it, you can address any of us and also on the Web site, [www.usccr.gov](http://www.usccr.gov).

MS. DUEKER: I was wondering if through your research if you could compare or if you see in your similarity the problems of racial differences right now and probably religious differences? Are they at all similar to the problems we had in North Dakota and Minnesota umpteen years ago between the Catholics and Protestants and French Catholics from Canada and people not wanting to do business? Do we have similarities?

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: We need to have clarification on that because we have to be done on 1:15, if you want comment at all.

MS. WILLIAMS: America is a melting pot. We have always had new people coming in, new people who entered on the bottom of the rung. However, the more alike we have been, the less that has lasted and created problems for lasting futures, so to speak. I think America is experiencing people with greater differences on the surface. And this community knows stuff like that. We are friendly on the surface, but we have a hard time including people in our real lives.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Thank you. Kathy Thoreson from Lutheran Social Services gets an encore.

MS. THORESON: Thank you. When I was asked to speak on the panel I was specifically asked to direct my comments to discrimination observed after September 11, so I did stick to that. However, since so many comments came up about housing, I felt this was the forum for me to make some comments and concerns because frankly I have been at a loss as to where to take some of this, so I would like to briefly lay it out. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service is our umbrella agency out of Baltimore,

Maryland, where the refugees are assigned to us through the federal government. They work with over 20 agencies throughout the United States, and they have informed me during this past year and a half that Lutheran Social Services in Fargo is the only agency that ever co-signs lease agreements with apartment owners of any that they have ever known. And it is only in Fargo. It is not in Bismarck or Grand Forks, our other two areas to settle. I checked this out and met with actually the police department because I know they did some work five or six years ago with rental properties who wondered how they could retrieve from occupants, not necessarily only refugees, but that word wasn't used, could retrieve expenses, recoup expenses from when people left their apartments because they couldn't get the money and not going to court. And evidently if it is refugees, they move a long ways away, and they don't have the money.

Anyway, so there was not a law but an informal agreement or some kind of agreement between major rental properties to require a five-year history and a criminal check for anyone to rent an apartment in Fargo. They say that they do that across the board, and for the most part that might be true. At the time this was instigated is when we had the heaviest population of refugees coming into the state. We had two or three years where it was 500, 600, 700 each year. And it was during that time it was instigated. We do not get documents that a criminal check was done on refugees. We do not get that specific document that we can show here is a criminal check; however, before any refugee enters the country, when we get their documents of approval to enter, that has had to be done; however it is still not?we don't get a document this is your criminal check. Now also it is required that they are finger printed, but we don't get the finger print check. We know in order for them to get to us, they have had a criminal check by the United States government and a finger print check; however, the major rental apartments have said we will not rent to you, as we prepare to get apartments for refugees before they come, unless you co-sign it. There are a few apartment buildings that we can co-sign for two years. A number are five years.

So over the last about three years, actually it is mostly in the last two years, Lutheran Social Services has paid over \$40,000 for apartment breakage or destruction or breaking leases because they don't go after the occupant, they go after Lutheran Social Services. Lutheran Social Services paid them for a period of time without, you know, when we had a lot of refugees coming in and thought, well, we are the co-signer. We are responsible. We are a Christian agency. We should take care of our obligations and responsibilities. We started to look at over the last two years that we were losing a lot of money by doing that. In the past before that signing agreements wasn't a big deal because if we had several refugees come in and somebody vacated an apartment, we could usually have a refugee family next week to put somebody in that apartment, so it wasn't like we were having to pay that for two months. But it became a major problem. We now just got a billing for someone that we signed on a lease three and a half years ago, and they vacated the apartment building without giving two?I am sorry?the apartment owner evicted the persons, and that means there isn't two months notice. So if you evict, you are responsible for the next two months. And Lutheran Social Services is responsible for the next two months. So I hired a consultant to review this and found out that frequently when apartment managers in these major apartment buildings evicted refugees, we are required to pay the next two months rent because it wasn't a 60-day notice.

Lutheran Social Services has made two decisions. One is we are not signing any leases for refugees coming here, which means we have to find apartments, and we have found some small apartment buildings that are willing to work with us, but the major rental properties are covered by one or two major properties in town, so this is very difficult.

We are also negotiating with them now as a result of a check we did, but we are not signing leases, which means we have to find apartments that will either rent to refugees without a co-signator such as us or where they will allow a member of that refugee community or relative to co-sign; however, that has

been turned down in a couple cases because they haven't been here five years to have that. If apartment buildings have had very good luck with refugees, they have allowed a relative to co-sign. And we have found, like I said, a couple apartment buildings that have been very good. We did file a request to Fair Housing to ask them to do an investigation, and they did report to us saying they did find discrimination towards refugees. At this point we understand?really I have just understood that in order for that to go any further, Lutheran Social Services needs to pursue that. Lutheran Social Services is a private nonprofit agency, both time and resources and staff and money. To know how we will pursue that is really something we haven't made a decision about. So at this point we haven't made a decision about how we pursue that, but we are concerned for the refugees who come to our community, the difficulty they have, and most of all, are they being treated the same. But really, secondly, when they leave that apartment even if a relative signed, will the next apartment they go to, will they always have to have someone co-sign for them? So I present this as a community problem and one that I heard mentioned a number of times by a variety of agencies today. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Thank you. Are there questions to clarify? Thank you very much. Amy Schauer Nelson from the North Dakota Fair Housing Council will be our next speaker.

MS. NELSON: Hi. My name is Amy Schauer Nelson. I am the executive director of the North Dakota Fair Housing Council, and I will keep my comments short.

There are a few items on discrimination that I wanted to make sure were made part of the record. And to start off, I want to clear up one thing that Kathy mentioned just because she did basically inform the panel that we had conducted an investigation, that I don't want the impression to be given that the damages that were done to the units, that refugees are causing all kinds of damages to apartment units. I don't want that impression to be there. I think there is concern, and Kathy can correct me if I am wrong, by Lutheran Social Services that they are being charged for things that are not appropriate after the refugee moves out versus if any other occupant moved out. I want to clear that up because I don't want there to be the perception that refugees are damaging these apartment buildings and leaving huge amounts of damage.

Couple things. We have as an organization received a couple complaints regarding refugee issues. I can't go into a lot of details about them except, of course, the one Kathy mentioned, but based upon the investigations that we have conducted, there appears to be discrimination going on. One easy way for an individual to determine if discrimination is going on in a situation like Kathy's is that if you have a refugee applicant and they do not have a credit or rental history of any kind, how does a housing provider treat a white college student who also may have lived with mom and dad their whole life and also does not have a credit or rental history? Are those individuals treated differently? And based upon our investigation, we find yes, that they are. The white college student with no rental or credit history just has mom and dad co-sign for six months. As Kathy has alleged, you know, they may be required to co-sign for five years for a very similar situation. So I want to point that out.

Post-September 11 we haven't received a lot of complaints regarding issues in specifically housing, and that is really all I can speak about. Since September 11 we did receive one complaint we investigated but have not received a large number when it comes specifically to housing issues dealing with specifically September 11. One thing though that I do want to have made of the public record, this hearing is being held in Fargo, and I think it is important for those who are not residents of our state to understand that in a lot of ways Fargo is unique compared to the rest of the state. You go to other cities, especially on the western side, and there isn't the influx of as many refugees there, and there is a larger Native American population, although in Fargo, Native American is also the highest. Again, perceptions are different. And in looking at that based upon my experience, Native Americans are treated much more horribly in housing discrimination than refugees, in fact. And I guess I want that made part of the record,

particularly when it comes to any of the vulnerable populations, people with disabilities, low-income, refugee, Native Americans, et cetera.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Thank you. Are there questions for clarification?

MS. DUEKER: I have a question. Do you have anybody that takes pictures or documents any damages that are done to justify saying these were the damages? Is anybody able to go in there very quickly and see the damages for themselves?

MS. NELSON: Unfortunately, you don't know what somebody is going to get charged for until after they have left the unit. So an individual, if they have had some concern maybe with their landlord in particular, that they might have some problems, we will typically request them to take photos in case there is a problem later on; however, a lot of people don't realize it is a problem until after they move out and get the \$1,000 bill requesting they pay the additional damages. Then you have to unless it is a housing discrimination issue, it can go through the Department of Labor, court action. If it is not, it has to be remedied through small claims court. There is no other remedy under the law. So to answer your question, people don't know what they are going to get charged for until after they move out.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Thank you. Mr. Peterson will testify, but you may stay in your seat. That request was made.

MR. PETERSON: My name is Allan Peterson. I am here to represent North Dakota Human Rights Coalition. We have been in existence for about two years. We are kind of a new organization presently. Cheryl Bergian did mention she is part of our coalition. And she will be a great part of our coalition because she will be our first director. We did get some funding from the Bremer Foundation to do work in this area. Our commission is an advocate for advancement of human rights in North Dakota. We thank the North Dakota Advisory Committee. Because of their report, we used much of that information in our effort to seek human rights coalition in the Human Rights Commission in North Dakota during the last legislative session. And we used much of that information to advocate for a commission in North Dakota. We did get an advancement during the last legislative session because the Division of Human Rights was given the authority to enforce the North Dakota Human Rights Act.

We are a coalition. During the last legislative session, we did have 68 member organizations as part of our coalition. We plan to be more organized. We plan to advocate for human rights committees in the various communities around the state. I guess if you have any questions.

I know that you didn't really address much during your hearing here about people with disabilities, but we would be advocating on behalf of any background, whether it be racial or ethnic or disability. And people with disabilities actually are the largest group of minority people in the nation, actually. The estimates are between one and four and one in five people have some sort of disability.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Thank you. Mr. Padilla.

MR. PADILLA: Mr. Peterson, one thing. On refugees with disabilities, have you noticed an increase? Are they reaching out? Or is there a communication there? Because I know some come in. Are they referred anywhere?

MR. PETERSON: I think there is a difference in the refugee community as far as dealing with people with disabilities because of where they have originated from. But we are very interested, I, in particular, am very interested in people with disabilities from within the refugee community, but I don't have any

hard facts to share with you.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Thank you. Mr. Lewis Lubka would be our next.

MR. DULLES: Would you spell your name for the court reporter when you get up there?

MR. LUBKA: First name is L-E-W-I-S. Last name, L-U-B-K-A. I am going to be brief. I am a retired professor who taught for 18 years at NDSU. I am over 70, so I am supposed to have a little wisdom at my age. I have been involved in civil rights, human rights since I can remember. My parents were fighters, and I was fortunate to have an early start. I was involved in the civil rights movement, and I was jailed while active in the movement. I have been to many of these hearings, and I am throwing this out to Mr. Dulles and the whole group. Are we going to be doing this thing every year, on and on and on and on and on forever? My work was city planning. I worked as planner in many locations in the U.S. and did work and teach abroad. I see a deterioration in human rights, civil rights. We are moving backward. My work as a planner involved setting goals, objectives, timeframes, schedules, and so forth. These hearings take a lot of time and energy of people. The Committee has traveled a long distance to come here. Are we going to be doing this forever? Is there any plan? Is there any goal? Are there any objectives/time targets to really deal with this in a meaningful way? Will we take more testimony, pile up more documents, and everything goes on the same?

When I was a kid we would go to the beach and we would build little castles out of sand, and after a while the waves came and you never even knew where your castle was. And I feel that we are in the same situation with civil rights.

Is there any plan? Is there any tangible objective? Is there any vision of a society as we used to call it, ? the beloved community? where people work for one another's benefit instead of grasping each other's throats? It is not that bad, but it is almost that bad. I rest my case.

CHAIRPERSON BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Lubka.

There are no more people seeking to present testimony to us, so we officially adjourn.

[The North Dakota Advisory Committee hearing concluded at 1:00 P.M.]