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# **Racial and Ethnic Tensions in Florida**

**Florida Advisory Committee to the  
United States Commission on Civil Rights**

**March 1996**

*These edited proceedings of briefing meetings held by the Florida Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights were prepared for the information and consideration of the Commission. Statements and viewpoints should not be attributed to the Commission or to the Advisory Committee, but only to individual participants in the briefing meetings where the information was gathered.*

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## Letter of Transmittal

Florida Advisory Committee to the  
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

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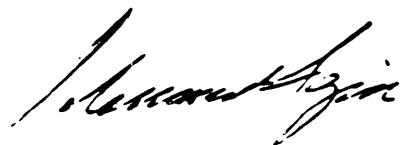
Mary K. Mathews, *Staff Director*

Attached is a summary report on a series of six briefing meetings held by the Florida Advisory Committee in Miami, January 23, 1992, and November 24, 1992; Gainesville, April 21, 1992; Jacksonville, July 21, 1992; St. Petersburg, March 24, 1993; and Tallahassee, September 30, 1993, on racial and ethnic tensions in the State. The Advisory Committee approved unanimously submission of this report to the Commissioners.

There was a general consensus among briefing meeting participants, that although racial and ethnic tensions in recent years have proven to be less volatile in the State, to include the campus at the University of Florida in Gainesville, they, nevertheless, remain severely problematic. Widespread reports of alienation fortified by isolation and exclusion based on race and ethnicity were described by participants in all of the briefing meetings.

Although the information provided does not result from an exhaustive review, it will be of value to the Committee for further program planning and we hope it will be of interest to the Commissioners.

Respectfully,



Rabbi Solomon Agin, *Chairperson*  
Florida Advisory Committee

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### Acknowledgments

The Florida Advisory Committee wishes to thank the staff of the Commission's Southern Regional Office for their help in the preparation of this summary report. The forum and summary report were the principal assignment of Bobby D. Doctor with support from Christine Foster and Robert L. Knight. The report was prepared for publication by Gloria Hong. All work was completed under the supervision of Bobby D. Doctor, Director of the Southern Regional Office.

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## Background Information

Florida, the Sunshine State, has an overall population of approximately 13 million. A breakdown of that number, by race and ethnicity is shown in table 1:

**TABLE 1**  
**Composition of Florida's Population, 1990**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
White	10,749,285	83.1%
Black	1,759,534	13.6
Hispanic origin	1,574,143	12.2
Asian, Pacific Islander	154,302	1.2
American Indian	36,335	0.3
Other	238,470	1.8

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *General Population Characteristics: Florida, 1990 Census of Population*.

In November 1991, the Florida Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights adopted a project designed to examine the issue of racial and ethnic tensions in Florida. The decision to adopt the project was in response to the adop-

tion of the same project at the national level by the Commission at a retreat in February 1991. Subsequently, the Commissioners, in adopting the national project, were very concerned about the impact of the Los Angeles "riots" on racial and ethnic tensions throughout the country.

In an effort to support the Commission's project, the Florida Advisory Committee initiated a series of six briefing meetings, including two in Miami, January 23, 1992, and November 24, 1992; Gainesville, April 21, 1992; Jacksonville, July 21, 1992; St. Petersburg, March 23, 1993, and Tallahassee, September 30, 1993. The Committee sought to invite knowledgeable citizens and public officials from these cities to discuss racial and ethnic tensions and the extent to which they were increasing or decreasing. They were also asked to provide suggested recommendations for corrective action where needed.

The following is an edited transcript of the proceedings from the six briefing meetings, which we hope will assist Florida and the Nation in forthrightly addressing racial and ethnic tensions and what appears to be a "clear and present danger."

## **Miami Briefing Meeting, January 23, 1992**

### **Claude Charles, Professor, University of Miami**

Claude Charles spoke of the plight of Haitians in Miami who are subject to stereotyping such as "diseased and illiterate" with a lack of visibility and political clout. He also indicated that there are serious problems relating to police-Haitian community officials, and the "Latinization" of Miami to the exclusion of other groups in the city. He concluded by expressing strong concerns over the legality of the interdiction policies of the United States Government as it relates to Haitians on the High Seas.

### **William Thompson, Executive Director, Housing Opportunities Project for Excellence, Inc.**

William Thompson shared with the Committee the results of a housing discrimination study that was done by his organization utilizing white, black, and Latin testers. The 1989 study results were released recently and indicated that housing discrimination in Miami is widespread. In the study, 194 testers were sent to sales and rental properties throughout the area, and in 59 percent of the visits, discriminatory actions took place. Lawsuits have been initiated against the violators. Mr. Thompson also spoke of a redlining study done by his organization that revealed widespread discriminatory lending policies by financial institutions in the area. He contended that racial and ethnic tensions are adversely affected by these situations.

### **Art Teitelbaum, Area Director, Anti-Defamation League**

Art Teitelbaum indicated that "Miami is a multicultural city that works in spite of its problems." He spoke of an infrastructure that "has been weakened because of a poor economy and a lack of resources to cope with the large influx of immigrants and the rapid changes brought about by this development." He also believed that language continues to drive controversy in Miami, in spite

of the desirability of bilingualism. He also opined that the continued ignoring of the differences in the immigration process (treatment of Haitians versus Cubans and others) is damaging to racial and ethnic tensions in Miami. Mr. Teitelbaum concluded by pointing out that the lack of health care, welfare, and employment opportunities hits inner-city dwellers hardest and this fuels a sense, by those most affected, of "no ownership in community and therefore no appreciation of community."

### **Thomas Battles, Conciliation Specialist, Community Relations Service, U.S. Department of Justice**

Thomas Battles indicated that Florida continues to be plagued with continued problems in the area of the administration of justice. According to Mr. Battles, police departments, with a few exceptions, are directed by insensitive administrators who continue to fail to control police officers who utilize excessive force when dealing with minorities. He noted that the increase in demonstrations by minorities is indicative of both their frustrations and heightening racial tensions in Florida communities, including Miami. Mr. Battles concluded by indicating that problems in the areas of the economy, busing, hate crime activities, along with the continued failure of certain communities in Florida, Miami Beach included, to recognize the Martin Luther King, Jr., holiday, further fuel racial and ethnic discord.

### **Lloyd Major, Director, Metro-Dade Community Relations Board**

Lloyd Major believed that racial and ethnic tensions in Miami not only exist but have been on the increase in recent years. He spoke of a perception by blacks of the racial and ethnic exclusiveness exhibited by much of the Cuban community which adds to the anger, alienation, estrangement, lack of (community) cohesion, and tension characterizing Miami. He also spoke of the slight by Hispanic leaders, elected and otherwise, of Nelson Mandela on his visit to Miami last year

and the resulting damage done to relations indicating that there is also intra, as well as, interracial and ethnic tensions existing in both the black and Hispanic communities.

**Monseigneur Brian Walsh, Executive Director, Catholic Community Services**

Monseigneur Walsh of the Miami Archdiocese of Catholic Community Services, voiced concern regarding the "crisis in leadership" that currently characterizes Miami. He noted that the changing of the guard in Miami leadership has had a devastating impact on decisions affecting social problems in the area. He further noted that the

economic isolation (a point addressed by the Commission report of 1982, *Confronting Racial Isolation in Miami*) of the black community continues to be a fundamental problem in Miami. He ended his comments on a positive note, suggesting that the "riots" in Miami of past years are now apparently being replaced with boycotts and other nonviolent tactics.

*Note: The information above was obtained from the January 23, 1992, meeting minutes of the first Miami briefing meeting. All other information that follows was obtained from original transcripts of the other briefing meetings.*

## Miami Briefing Meeting, November 24, 1992

### Johnnie R. McMillan, President, Local Branch, NAACP

[I am] president of the NAACP [in Miami], and also in charge of the national and State and local NAACP office dealing with the local Hurricane Andrew efforts. We are very happy to have you here in Miami. I want to say, on behalf of the Miami-Dade Branch, as well as the NAACP at large, we welcome the opportunity to present before you, as an advisory committee.

... We certainly wish we could have seen you here much earlier. I want you to know why I am saying that, because of your very important role in certainly listening at the local levels through the State of Florida as to what is going on, regarding inequities giving rise to racial tensions here in Miami, in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew.

... In answer to the call of the whole aftermath issue, on August 30 the NAACP, in conjunction and cooperation with Dade County Public Schools, stepped out to organize and hopefully open a very effective office in the FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Administration] building.

We had tremendous assistance from the United States Department of Justice [USDOJ] in the form of Thomas Battles [conciliator with the Community Relations Service of USDOJ], in helping us to achieve that office, along with Mr. Ozell Sutton [Regional Director, Community Relations Service, USDOJ] and Mr. William Lucas [Acting Director, Community Relations Service, USDOJ].

We are very grateful to them for allowing that opportunity for our community as we looked at this community and we tried to determine where the gaps were.

The first gap that we found in the aftermath, and I want you to know that we hit the ground running, immediately, within hours after the hurricane passed over.

We went down to make an assessment in the south areas, as to what kind of damages were sustained and where the needs were. Of course, you know the initial needs were that of food, water, and shelter.

... The first agency that we worked with was the Red Cross. The American Red Cross. We tried very hard to communicate. We met with the American Red Cross ongoingly. ... Our role with them was to try to help them find volunteers, more specifically, those persons from the black community who would give more of a presence in their disaster centers and in their overall volunteer effort.

... We did make what we thought were very credible recommendations to them, based on what we were seeing. We asked, specifically, that they would put centers in the black community.

... They said, "We, based on our assessment, we are finding that we are putting the centers where we think they will best be needed." Well, when the centers [were placed] north we complained about the fact that many of the people from the south, I am talking specifically about the black community, [as a result, were disadvantaged]. ...

... To give you a framework about what I am talking, when you look at the overall number of persons that were identified as homeless as a result of Hurricane Andrew, there were 250,000 people, approximately, that were homeless. Out of that 250,000, 150,000 were black. That gives you an idea of the number of people that were displaced as a result of the hurricane.

We indicated to the American Red Cross that we thought that that number, and just for the sheer devastation of it all, that there need to be some centers in our ... area. Well, the Red Cross indicated that they just couldn't find the need in our community.

So what they did was they did two things. They set up a disaster center just northeast of the black community and just northwest of the black community, which meant it just surrounded the black community.

Well, we just really were concerned, and voiced it publicly. As a result, eventually they closed those two centers. They did put one center in the Haitian American community. Shortly thereafter that, too, was closed.

There never was access for the overall black community to get resources from the American Red Cross. Many of our persons suffered severely by not having an opportunity to get hold of these resources.

The next set of resources that we looked at, and of course we are dealing with those agencies who had the responsibility from the United States Government, after Miami was declared a disaster area, to give assistance to the community in the face of that disaster.

We had to deal with FEMA. Of course, FEMA is a place that did afford the opportunity for the NAACP to be in its office. FEMA had disaster centers. Disaster centers were never placed, by FEMA, in the overall black community . . . They subsequently put some minor centers, no minor, I should say smaller centers in the south black areas.

The problem with the disaster centers was many-fold. There was one problem because of the lack of accessibility for the people. Many blacks were unable to get FEMA's assistance in a timely fashion. Two, the assistance given to people in helping them to complete their forms in a timely manner was not given.

More particularly, we found that the elderly and the handicapped were not getting the assistance to the point that we formed—the NAACP formed a committee of medical persons, who volunteered to work with us to do assessments and to provide direct assistance.

. . . I found out that the State of Florida was moving in immediately, and what happens in the disaster, when a disaster occurs, is that FEMA only comes in for a short term. Then the State takes over. Then you look for counties taking over.

When you go in to talk to one person you would discover you had to go talk to the other agency because they were not in charge. You began to find yourself running around chasing your tail to try to discover how to get assistance for the people who are crying.

. . . So we found that even within FEMA, and trying to work with who was responsible, the State of Florida, or the county, and trying to find the one responsible for a particular problem, we just ran into all kinds of [problems].

You need to be aware that that whole process is out of kilter. We certainly hope there will not be another disaster in this country of this mag-

nitude. . . . We certainly hope that no community of this size, as Miami, has to undergo this kind of problem in trying to find its way back as we have had to.

In addition to the difficulty with that, there has been, and is documented, a discrepancy being made with the black community as it relates to the contracts and the availability of those persons, in this community, to participate in the rebuilding process.

The initial contracts that were given out by the Army Corps of Engineers, which was given to them by FEMA, you will find documented in newspapers, and, perhaps, you are already aware that the six companies that received those contracts, out of those, none of them were African or black or participants in the overall community.

That was for the first set of contracts. We recognize that subsequent contracts, obviously, are being given, but none of the prime ones are being given, at this point, to our best knowledge, to members of the local black community.

. . . It ought to be seriously looked at, certainly with the community, with an unemployment rate as high as this one and with all the devastation, the resources ought to be spread out to the extent that local people can begin to take part in this particular process and should be having that assistance.

Additionally to the fact of recognizing the contracts, I want to also bring up the medical accessibility. . . . We still see a [lock] out and disenfranchisement of the black community, in terms of all-over assistance in the area of medical as well as the other areas that I have previously listed. The list goes on.

. . . The main position that I would like to present to you is that in every area that has been impacted by the Hurricane Andrew, the black community certainly sits at the bottom of having accessibility to what is available to help to rebuild.

. . . Many of them are living under conditions, as we speak, that are certainly below the standards of what any human being ought to be living in in your country and, certainly, in our own community.

## **Eugenie Nelson, Representative, Haitian Refugee Center**

Ms. McMillian has covered the whole issue about the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew. Many of our refugees, who have just come from Guantanamo, have been victimized, especially when they don't know the United States. Most of them live in Florida City. They do not know where to go, and with the language barrier, it was very hard for them. Obviously, they are still suffering. What I would like to stress more is under the double standard of the INS (Immigration and Naturalization), regarding the Haitian refugees, I feel that the Haitian refugees' rights have been violated.

The INS, while releasing most of the other refugees here, giving them political asylum, they are returning the Haitian refugees to the repression.

Right now they are facing a lot of repression in Haiti. Just yesterday we had 66 Haitians who arrived here and we just learned instead of releasing them to their relatives here they are sending them to Texas because they claim that the Krome Detention Center is overcrowded.

They have mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters here. They were all calling the center this morning. They are willing to take their relatives. They sent them to the [criminal institutions] in Texas. So this is big discrimination against the Haitian refugees.

... They have the Krome Detention Center in Miami, which is very hard for them also, when they keep them for over a year. They don't send them back right now because after a year they return them to Haiti, which is bad, also.

At least they know they can talk to their relatives here when they are in Miami and their relatives can go visit them. When they are in Texas we can't help them and their relatives cannot communicate with them.

## **Samedi Florvil, Haitian Refugee Activist**

I am working for the refugees in here right in Homestead in my organization [the Haitian Refugee Center]. ... We have so many calls from the affiliates there to say the way they treat them. So, yes, we be mistreated over here.

... So if they are to get help they say they get the help but for those people to go to get the help

they are always afraid. So I found out a lot of them, they sleep in the street even when they say they have the trailer or whatever

Those Haitians, they don't go [to seek assistance in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew] because they are afraid. So even the ones who have to serve them. The way they present us with a negative image, like it is negative for them, but it is positive for us. It is negative for them because we are black, but it is positive for us because we are human beings.

## **Kee Juen Eng, Attorney, Asian American Federation**

... I would like to take the opportunity to thank the community and the Commission to allow the Asian American Federation to present some issues that are important for the Asian Americans.

... As a brief overview, the Asian American Federation is relatively new in the civil rights field. We were originally founded in 1984, in Broward County as a group of Asian Americans who came together with common interests.

Quite honestly, in the last 2 years, 1991 and 1992, we have been thrust into an area we were a bit unaccustomed to, that being dealing with issues arising in our community, dealing with civil rights and discrimination, and unfortunately, this year, hate crimes.

Just to give you an overview of what the Federation is, it is a coalition of 16 ethnic Asian communities in Florida ranging all the way from Asia Minor, in Turkey, all the way in the Far East to the Filipino and Polynesian continent and all countries in between.

It is a rather diverse ethnic group as well as religious group. We have Christians and Moslems and Hindu. It is a wide spectrum of interests. It is always fascinating.

You never know where you are going to meet from month to month, whether in a Christian church, assembly hall, Hindu temple.

... The most important [issue], quite honestly, is the incident of hate crime in the community and the tragic beating death of the Vietnamese youth in Coral Springs.

... I think the event that happened this year, that galvanized the Asian community to come together and to work towards civil rights and issues related to civil rights was the tragic beating death of Luven Phan Nguyen in Coral Springs.

That occurred in August of 1992. If I may, I will recount to the Commission, briefly, the facts of the case.

Mr. Nguyen was a 19-year-old premed student at the University of Miami. . . . He attended a party held in his own neighborhood, thrown by basically teenage kids in the 19 to 21-year-old age bracket, about ready to go back to college.

In the course of the party itself there were certain, if I may characterize it as racially motivated or ethnic slurs that were said, from what I understand, and from the testimony that came out in court, not in his presence, that were related to Mr. Nguyen.

Mr. Nguyen, of course, took offense to these remarks and went back and asked if these remarks had been made. At this point he was confronted in the room itself where the party was going on. They went outside into the common area, the grassy area, the parking area, where, again, the confrontation continued.

At this point Mr. Nguyen, who at that time was in the company of two other people, was surrounded by at least five white males. . . . At that point the group that Mr. Nguyen was a part of, himself and two other people ran away from the group that was confronting them and went around behind the building.

. . . They were able to separate Mr. Nguyen from his other people, his other friends. At that point he was beaten, kicked to unconsciousness. The death blow, from what I understand it, was a kick to the back of the head with such force it crushed his vertebrae and severed an artery, causing a pooling of blood in the base of his brain.

He expired on the 17th of August. The other rather telling fact in this whole scenario was that in the course of the [incident] there were from 30 to 50 other people standing by that did very little, if anything.

### **Sang Whang, Board Member, Dade County Community Relations Board**

I am one of the newly elected board members of the Dade County [Community] Relations Board. I am also the Korean American Community Relations counsel. We are trying to have some proactive stance to improve Korean American-black American relations here before any bad effects take place.

. . . Discrimination and so forth comes from ignorance and miscommunication. . . . For years the Native Americans and Asian Americans were part of . . . minority set-asides so that they had an opportunity to bid, especially on set aside projects.

For some strange reason, the last year the Dade County School Board has elected to delete Native Americans and Asian Americans from that list. They are saying that there is no proof that those minorities were discriminated against.

. . . We thought it was rather a strange thing, especially in Dade County, where the Hispanics are the majority but they are considered as part of the minority set-asides and the Asian Americans and the Native Americans are not. I don't understand.

. . . The other . . . specifically speaking for the Korean communities, a couple of years ago one of the Korean students was murdered and everybody knows, quote "knows" that it was involving [domestic problems]—he was engaged, and his fiance's ex-boyfriend was the one who committed the murder, and the police investigation was very mild.

There were no witnesses and not much pursuit. It is still in the dark. No question, the Korean community feels if this wasn't the Asian American, I'm sure the police would have done much more of a vigorous investigation.

. . . Speaking of the hurricane and the aftermath, there is a language problem with the Korean immigrants . . . Most of them have got [hurricane] damages. Some of them have insurance, which is taking care of the damages. Those who do not have the insurance coverage are trying to get some aid with FEMA and the Red Cross. The language problem was a problem of getting some forms filled in.

It was difficult to get assistance. Most people just gave up. You have to understand [that] the Asian Americans are silent minorities. They are not really advocates and the noisy ones. We don't get the oil because we don't squeak loud enough. Regardless, the hardships still continue on.

. . . We don't have Korean-speaking psychologists. We don't have Korean-speaking lawyers. So help is a little bit hard to get.

. . . We try our best to improve the relations and, after all, we all live here. We are in the same boat, and if the boat sinks, we all sink together.

## **Hopkin Laman, President-Elect, The Organization of Chinese Americans**

Our organization . . . has 45 offices throughout the length and breadth of the United States, originating from Hawaii and even as distant as Hong Kong, because the interests of the Chinese in America, both from trading and political points of view are being served through our organization.

As a domestic organization our forte is really to be a vanguard on racial discrimination, hatred, glass ceilings, and anything that adversely affects our community.

Our role in south Florida has been very minute up until now. We have started to come out of the woodwork.

. . . Our contention is with the city of Miami and ruling from the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Program, OFCPP, as it relates to Ordinance 10062, dealing with the debarment of Asians to the city's minority business affairs and procurement program when the Asians do not comprise 2 percent of the population of the city of Miami.

If the city and the OFCPP really wish to help the minorities in the true sense of being a minority and the true meaning of the word minority they would remove the condition of population obstacle.

The enormity of the situation is that the recipients of most of these set-aside program benefits are, as Mr. Whang pointed out, Hispanics who occupy 48 percent of the benefits from these programs.

The dollar equivalent last year totaled \$16.4 million. The blacks had a 4.6 [percent], and 5 percent are given to women. So far we have yet to be granted—when I say “we”—the Asian community, has yet to be granted a fair deal on the set-aside program. . . . Let me assure you that the absence is not due to disinterest on our part but the lack of opportunity and the disenfranchisement, from the obstacles.

In a recent application to the city, an Asian was rejected because he had no appropriate check box classification form to indicate whether he was Hispanic, black, [or] a woman, which were the only three boxes on that application form.

The Asians are always being considered a minority but apparently in this case they are being

singled out to be discriminated against in this community.

. . . After all, the Asians are taxpayers, too. As responsible, fair, and reasonable citizens I appeal to you to conciliate our plight, eradicate this discriminatory practice, level the playing field, and, by so doing, we will be creating a racially just community.

## **Florence N.B. Bernardo-Ailbaugh, Filipino Community Representative**

. . . I am a member of the Asian American Federation. I am also a member of the Federation of Philippine American Associations and other Filipino associations in the county, Broward.

. . . I would like to see better or more open communications between county, State, regional, whatever, with the [Asian] community.

. . . We would also like to be able to actively participate in the boards that have a great influence on what happens to us in the community because currently, at least in Broward County, from my experience, there are only two boards that have any Asians on them and I and Kee [Eng] are on those two boards.

Dade County—I am sure, in Dade there are a lot of boards also and I am sure that there are not any, or if there are, maybe one of two Asians represented on those boards or in any community positions and I would like to see that take effect as soon as we can possibly work that into the schedules.

. . . We do realize that is where the root of all government basically stems from.

## **Thomas Battles, Conciliation Specialist, USDOJ, Community Relations Service**

. . . [As far as Hurricane Andrew], this particular disaster, unlike South Carolina [Hugo in 1989], strained everybody's resources. At the Federal Government, when you look at the data, statistics, whatever they did in Hugo, this was two or three times larger than that situation.

. . . One of the big criticisms and concerns that the county had with the Federal process, is that many of their needs were essentially met, but they weren't met in the timetable they wanted.

In the first few days the county would say they made some requests for humanitarian aid, food,



and water. There was a communication breakdown. The relief wasn't here as far as they wanted it here or it should have been here.

One of the things that we identified in that process, we established community liaison teams, reconnaissance teams to get into the community right away, to assess the needs and get that back into the [quick response] units.

In the 12 units of FEMA, in the FEMA plan they all have different functions. We recommended to FEMA that they take that particular immediate response team and [that] they deploy that team into the community.

One of the weaknesses in that situation was the absence of the [C]risis [R]eponse [T]eam. I thought perhaps it would have helped crystalize further the needs in the community if we had that team.

We had all the Federal people who had no familiarity with the Dade County geographics doing the assessment in Dade County, going out with my team and three of us from the Miami area, who knew the community.

... I thought we had the Crisis Response Team there. It would have created a better opportunity and faster opportunity to get to identify and to do assessment. That is one of the missions. We didn't have the benefit of that particular team.

So it is one of my recommendations I would like to make to the county, I am going to make to the county, in my recommendations to the county, that in these types of situations we use teams.

... At the State level one of the weaknesses we identified was lack of bilingual staff. When you go into the disaster centers the State has a strong presence and we ended up using a lot of our resources, our staff to assist there. It hurts us in other areas, in getting to the community. We suggested to the [State] staff that they look at their recruiting efforts and get some bilingual personnel at the highest levels as well as their reservists [that] they bring in to assist in these situations.

We have problems, for example, in emergency food stamp operations. That is clearly State run, a State-run operation. We had lines that started [at] 4 o'clock in the morning. We had a lot of communication problems with the victims in line getting, waiting for the place to open up.

Stress levels were high. Confrontation between the individuals and the law enforcement and vic-

tims happened. Had it not been for CRS teams out there there would have been more problems.

We suggested to the State to bring on some more people, a bilingual pool. That is something we need to work on.

... The only disaster applications center that was established outside of the South Dade area, from Kendall on down, was in Little Haiti. That was the only other disaster applications center, I would suggest to you, and I am sure there are several other organizations who publicly expressed some concern about that.

The absence of disaster application centers in other parts of the county, city of Miami, and North Dade area was one of the big concerns.

I know some of the other organizations that have expressed to me the issue of contract and awarding of contracting, that whole process. It seems to be an issue that is not going away, from the county all the way up, from FEMA on down. That whole process started off with FEMA identifying five of six prime contractors to come in doing the debris removal.

The local officials express(ed) concern about that.

They got into the situation of the prime contractors hiring subcontractors and not hiring local and not giving preference to the local business leaders and businessmen. That generated a great deal of problems.

... The African American contractors have expressed some concern about the way contracts are awarded at all levels, city, county, and State level.

One of the recommendations I made to FEMA, as it relates to that issue, is the establishment of a business advisory committee to them from local areas.

... Again, the issue of immigration was a big concern. Initially there was a lot of concern in the South Dade area about what the Border Patrol and INS were going to do, particularly with the undocumented immigrant population.

We were able to allay some of those fears by having our teams out there. We weren't able to get clear directions from INS on the position. They just said, "Nobody is being arrested. We won't arrest anyone."

But we had difficulty convincing a lot of people, particularly the Mexican population, because that

is the majority of the population that does work in the fields.

We thought that it was a very Haitian population. Initially our assessment was [that] there were over 4,000 Haitians undocumented, particularly ones from Guantanamo, since we had, at CRS, the primary responsibility for bringing them in. . . . We were able to resettle some of the Haitians out of the area, through our volunteer system.

. . . Housing is a big problem throughout the county. HUD [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development] as well as the Civil Rights Division within the Department of Justice, and Dade County Metro-Dade, the State Commission on Human Relations established a task force to deal with housing discrimination.

I don't think that is completed. They are still here.

. . . There is one other area I thought that was very important. That is the volunteer agency network. The point agency for coordination and assistance is the Red Cross.

We did have some organizations that expressed some concerns about the Red Cross. One of the things that I recommended to FEMA is that the Red Cross be a little more inclusive and be more proactive in identifying and going out and getting other organizations into the network.

We had organizations, churches, and groups going out there providing food, shelter, and assistance. One of the reasons for that, they didn't know how to access the Red Cross system to get food, for their organization to get food for the victims so they created their own.

We had food shipped in from all over the country, the world. A lot of times they couldn't get [the

food] into the disaster area and [it] ended up on the side of the road.

The major distribution for the area was West Palm Beach. The [contributing] organization[s] wanted to send their food and send their clothing and wanted to come down and go into the disaster area. Sometimes they weren't able to do that. Transportation became a big problem.

I recommend to the Red Cross [that] they do training in a practical way, bringing in other organizations to train them in their process when they have these major disasters.

They should be trained on how to access the services and how to go get the food. There is food still here. . . . There are warehouses stored full of food but they need to be able to train and let these organizations learn how to access this stuff.

So I am making that recommendation to the Red Cross. It is a matter of expanding the network. They had over 300 volunteer agencies, local agencies who didn't access the system. They were out there because they didn't feel welcome in the loop of the Red Cross system. So they are doing their own thing.

. . . One of the lessons learned from the situation, FEMA's policies on providing assistance is based on family size and based on income.

One of the problems in this situation—we had to educate them to culture. For example, in the Haitian culture to have four or five families living in one house is nothing unusual. Well, what that simply meant was, based on FEMA's policies, only one person was eligible for assistance.

. . . From the CRS standpoint it has been a big education for a lot of us.

Since the hurricane we haven't been able to do work we wanted to in the State on racial problems and concerns.

## Gainesville Briefing Meeting, April 21, 1992

### **Reverend Thomas A. Wright, President, Ministerial Alliance**

... Name calling has come to be a common thing again, ethnic nickname calling. It has become very common. I'm surprised at some of the things that I hear. Even driving across campus, the University of Florida, just driving across campus, I was called something that really shocked me driving across campus. It would not have happened I don't think 2 or 3 years ago.

... Since I am the president of the local Ministerial Alliance and was president of the local branch of the NAACP for 17 years, a lot of people still see me as president of [the local] NAACP so I get a lot of this stuff [alleged incidents of discrimination] and so I look into a lot of it. As president of the Alliance I look into a lot of it.

### **Rosa B. Williams, Chairperson, Black on Black Crime Task Force**

First I would like to thank you for inviting me to participate. When I sent back in my response, I sent it in as the chairperson of the Black on Black Crime Task Force, which I'm not going to deal with ... today. But I have some of the same concerns [that] Reverend Wright talked about first, and this is a concern and [they] do cause racial tension.

The majority of the young people, I'm talking about kindergarten on up, Afro-American black male, you can pick any school around here, they're the ones [that are] being sent home, they're the ones who are being suspended, they are the ones who are being disciplined the most and are getting an attitude in those young people's mind that school is for those white teachers that just don't care about me.

It also is the attitude that if you come from a housing authority area, which we have lots of housing authority here in Gainesville, we also have lots of young people here in Gainesville, one area in particular, those kids is in kindergarten and they are supposed to be so bad and so terrible until they are left out of all social events. And we have been talking to the teachers out there, we've

talked to the principal, and we have a group organized from this one housing authority area to go out there and see just what they can do.

... Another area which I am kind of concerned about, whenever a crime is committed and if it is a black person [who] have committed that crime, most all of the black people get blamed for that. If they go into a store to even look for something, the people tend to follow them around more. The people tend to watch them more and see if they are going to shoplift something. Even me myself I can go inside certain stores here in town and they [watch] me like a hawk and I know how other people feel. When we was coming up going through all this we could take this more, but these young people cannot take things like that with someone walking behind them, over their shoulders, and that cause problems because they'll turn around and say: "Hey man, what's the problem," you know, "what are [you] following me for?" And then before you know it there's a fight going on.

And it's another thing [that] causes problems in the area. Most every community of Afro-Americans—what you see there is a pawn shop sitting there. You don't see no pawn shops in no white community ... But by every [black] community there is a pawn shop sitting there. And people—it's easy for people to go inside there and pawn whatever they have. I think all those pawn shops should be run out of their community and let them go on downtown where the other business places [are] located.

Another thing [that] I have a very much concern about, that is the small minority business person. When it come[s] time to apply to get a proposal in to get a bid in on something, the most of the big white contractors have somebody [who] would go grab somebody like a female, a one person Hispanic and put them up there as the owner. And they would get the bid and you wouldn't see those people any more.

... Another thing—I'm not sure what you can do anything about this but I just got to bring it up. The Afro-Americans do not have any ways to be

flying dope and crack and stuff into Alachua County. That causes racial problems, not only among blacks and whites but it causes among them blacks their ownself. And I think that's one area you should look into.

... [Regarding white teachers sending children home from school with a discipline problem]—it is a problem. It is really a big problem. And they are too young to have that attitude in their mind already that all whites are bad. But they have it and these are kindergarteners.

### **Bret Berlin, President, Student Government Association, University of Florida**

It's kind of—well, maybe almost a coincidence that this meeting falls on this particular date. Last semester during the student government budgetary process you all probably heard it made some pretty big news about a big protest and the office take over, student government office. Well, it's that time this semester. Tonight is the final budget hearing for the student government budgets this year and I would like to extend an invitation to all of you to come and see what goes on. We're expecting a large turn out. The student body as far as minorities we represented, there will be police there, there will be large—I have to make sure that we don't have problems of people not coming. I have called an assembly, a student government assembly meeting for this evening at the same time so all representatives of student government will be there as well, and it will be an opportunity I hope for people to meet and share their ideas in a peaceful way and resolve their problems.

... This is one of the things that I think that have scarred this campus is the fact that we've had problems and this year we're trying to work them out and this is—tonight is it, the meeting, and I think that it's important. We'll see lots of things come to a head tonight and I would like to see how they come out.

### **Ben Sian, Vice President, Volunteers for International Students Association, University of Florida**

Although I am Asian American I am also more specifically a Philippino American.

... In order for Asians to communicate as a whole we must first define what we mean when we think Asian American. We must recognize each individual piece so we can better understand the mosaic, to complete the mosaic. And that mosaic, ladies and gentlemen, represents the needs and wants, the very heart of Asian Americans here and elsewhere.

Let's first start with defining ourselves as a group. Upon closer examination the term Asian American includes those who trace their heritage to places as far apart as the Indian subcontinent to the Polynesian islands of the South Pacific. Our homeland language is from Hindi to Korean, from Chinese to Japanese, are also as varied as the cultures from which they stem. Although many of us trace our familiar American citizenship back only one or two generations, there are also Asian Americans among us whose families have been in the United States since the 1800s. All the while ... [dealing] ... with other minorities segregation laws, illegal immigration legislation, and other attacks on their civil liberties. So, you see, the stereotype of Asian Americans falls apart in the face of reality. Unfortunately, the diversity which makes us so proud has also been divisive, mostly in a political sense. It creates a barrier that many African Americans and Hispanics do not have. For example, the African American community has a long and impressive history filled with struggle, tragedy, and achievement. Understandably they use this as a unified factor to further their cause. The historical perspective of Asian Americans on the other hand is not so well-defined.

... Well, what problems do affect all Asians, all Asians as a whole? Probably the most prevalent, other than being unfairly stereotyped together, is a myth of the model minority. The belief in this myth is so pervasive that many Asians themselves buy into it. The media constantly bombards us with success stories of Asians who have made it big, who have pulled themselves up by the boot straps and now live the American dream. However, upon closer examination this is not necessarily the case. According to a 1980 California census, even though Asians had a median income of \$20,790 as compared to the \$19,552 for whites, Asian American households average 1.7 workers versus .8 for whites. Translated that means Asian income was only 80 cents to each dollar the white

worker earns. There's also regional bias inherent in these figures seeing as how Asians are centralized in high pay locales such as California and New York.

Finally, comparisons with other minorities are unfair for, due to the Immigration Act of 1965, most Asians who chose or were able to immigrate to the United States had professional technical degrees already and that which placed them at a distinct economic advantage.

The belief in the model minority disguises real problems which Asian Americans face as a group each and every day. On a local level, for example, UF Student Services holds two welcome receptions for incoming freshmen—well, incoming minority students; one for African Americans, the other for Hispanics. No such comparable service exists for other minorities. We read every day in our college newspaper, *The Alligator*, of the accomplishments of African American and Hispanic student groups and their role models. We see virtually nothing of our own accomplishments. For example, I have right here . . . this happened today, a letter from the chairman of our budget committee and the BSU (Black Student Union) president about how they're willing to set aside a fund for Hispanic and black history—Hispanic Heritage and Black History Month, while completely ignoring any other minority. Asians as a group are keenly aware of this fact, however, due to problems stated earlier, Asians have difficulty unifying themselves to address the situation. That should not, however, excuse the laissez-faire attitude concerning Asian American affairs.

The model minority myth, notwithstanding, there are Asian Americans living in poverty—Asian Americans who have trouble finishing [college] are not exempt from being judged by the way they look and by what our own distinct cultures make us.

Finally, the myth of model minority causes resentment and in some cases violence between other minorities thus hindering the advance of civil rights for all.

. . . I remember a few years ago during some racial tensions that they did make a promise to make *The Alligator*, our newspaper, more diverse, and in a lot of ways they did do that. I can now read a lot of things about African Americans, a lot of things about Hispanics. But, for example, our organization put together an international fes-

tival which extended over a week. It affected—hundreds of people helped out with it, thousands of people participated, and I didn't see one article about it. And that was a slight to everyone who participated in it, who spent hours and hours working. I don't know.

. . . I also have figures here about the student government hearing about the budgets. Concerning the neglect of Asian Americans, the Black Student Union and the Hispanic Student Union have both increased since previous years while my organization has decreased, has actually cut by \$9,000 from 29—well, cut by \$4,000, from \$29,000 to \$24,000 . . . that's \$5,000, excuse my addition. And I've been getting a lot of flack from the Asian students who are underneath this umbrella organization. In fact, many of them have been saying if the only way we can get our money is to form an Asian Student Union, then we'll do it. And I've been—we're going to speak at the Senate hearing tonight to try to get them to understand that, although we are not so visible on campus, we're not as visible as Hispanics or the African Americans, we do exist and we do have needs.

**Richard Santa Maria, President,  
Hispanic Student Association,  
University of Florida**

The most important thing is just like Ben [Sian] said, Hispanics are not one race, one culture. Like the Asians, we're very varied, you know, and it's very difficult to pinpoint anything with them. You know, we come in—we're black, we come from different cultures. We have, you know, everything is different. Our language can even differ. You have Indian languages in South America, and most people don't know this, so there's a lot of racism going on that has to do with ignorance. I think that's the biggest reason for racism is ignorance and that's something that needs to be corrected.

In terms of the racism against Hispanics, it ranges. For people like me I don't experience that much at all. I have a very good accent. I'm very white, you know. I'm pretty well-integrated into the culture. However, for some of my friends in my organization which are maybe from Puerto Rico, or they have a bad accent, or they are darker in skin tone, they are going to receive a lot more

flack than I do. Those are the kinds of problems that we need to solve but they are going to be very hard to solve. We don't have a unified front like the blacks do. We're very, very, you know, spread out. We have different cultures, different colors. The blacks have something that unifies them and that's their history. Like in terms of fighting, we've been having a very hard time. Like has been said by Bret (Berlin) and by Ben (Sian), coverage in the paper hasn't been that good and I do believe that the coverage, that there hasn't been so much in the papers because of their goodness, it's been because of us.

... Hispanics are not international students, we are citizens of this country we wanted the right to be able to der and a proper budget for citizens, for people who are attending the school, and present Hispanic awareness programs. We went from a \$3,000 budget this year to a \$23,000 budget and that's what I would like to see keep happening.

... I come from a Cuban background. Cubans—I don't know if any of you know this—tend to do better. We're—for some reason we have an upper class or a middle-class bearing amongst all the other Hispanics. If you look at the Puerto Ricans they are worse off. But if you look at CEOs and people in high positions, you won't find Hispanics competing in general with whites. If you look at the university, you won't find any deans that are Hispanics. You look at faculty, you'll find maybe, I think the number is about 80, but if you look at the total number of faculty I think there's something like 3,000, 4,000 at the University of Florida, I'm not sure the exact number. That's ridiculous.

### **Nikitah Imani, Prime Minister, Loyal Order of 99, University of Florida**

Ladies and gentlemen, I must first begin by disassociating my remarks from the University of Florida. First, because I do not know if the university would voluntarily claim the remarks that I'm going to deliver, second, because the scope of my comments extend beyond the range of the university itself.

I will not engage in pitting a so-called minority against another so-called minority, since I think that's part of the plan to obscure the reality in 1992 that if you are not white, American, the three Ks, you're engaged in an American night-

mare as opposed to an American dream. I'm going to say some things you will neither like to hear nor wish to deal with, but before my God I will speak the truth.

The problem of black people on this campus and worldwide has little to do with civil rights, but instead with the mechanisms of white world supremacy and their encroaching upon human rights. I'm a doctoral student with three degrees, concentrating in race and ethnic relations, but I have learned nothing about myself that is either true or just. I have been a victim of your justice. My family lived in your subhuman experiments which you call projects. I've been inebriated under the influence of the alcohol and drugs that the labs of this government have developed and hold patents for and which many cities are distributed by the law enforcement itself. I have experienced your miseducation while I was placed in disciplinary programs in special education where my only crime was being more intelligent than my enemies. I remember eating meat on certain days because my family could not afford a decent meal. My health is permanently impaired by my inability to afford health care and my placement in a human services agency that could have cared less about humanity when it came to black people.

I believe in fundamental irrevocable social change. So I want to share with you a few moments in hell right here in North Central Florida, getting experienced by your so-called fellow Americans just because their skin is black. And when I speak for North Central Florida, it could just as well be Harlem, it could just as well be black-bottom Detroit, it could just as well be Watts in Los Angeles, it could just as well be Miami's Overtown, Dixie Hills in Atlanta where I was born and raised, and Washington, D.C.

Let me give you an example of what happens when you deal with the justice system which I call the "just us system." There are more black males in jail in this country than any other country in the world, close to 10 times. In Ocala, Florida, a group of black citizens in conjunction with the NAACP filed a class action suit against the city claiming that they had been discriminated against in the receipt of services and municipal—other municipal prerogatives as citizens, specifically as it relates to water service, electric service, and so on. In retaliation for that lawsuit in which the city was found neglect and told to

comply, the city introduced a rather outdated tax lien law and as a consequence of that tax lien law they are now seizing the land of black people throughout the city in the poor areas on the grounds that the tax liens have not been paid. And I might point out that this lien law went unenforced until such time as the people decided to make a claim before the justice system. You say something, they take your house.

Education—before we get very very glorious about the university it's time to tell the truth. . . . Last year a group of more than 300 black students had to engage in a direct action, seize control of a student government office in order to get Black History Month funded. The student government at that time said the reason it would not be funded was because white people weren't interested in black history.

The curriculum—there is no course or other material that is representative of the African experience or the Afro-American experience in the undergraduate curriculum or the graduate curriculum. The few courses that [are] there are electives and not institutionally supported by the university. The university was on the verge of funding and legitimating the white student union, an organization that had been in conjunction with the skin heads, the Ku Klux Klan, and other assorted white supremacy institutions. This organization was allowed to go around the university and to promulgate the idea that black students were not only intellectually inferior but culturally inferior as well.

Let me talk about drugs. We don't have any planes, we don't have any boats. You mean to tell me that a country that holds all of the patents on the major drugs that we're confronting today doesn't know where the drugs came from? You mean to tell me that a country that can count the number of illegal aliens entering the country, give you an exact figure, cannot seem to find the millions of dollars in cocaine that somehow get into this country? And yet at the same time in the State of Florida they are pursuing the death penalty for drug dealers, most of whom, I might point out, in the inner city areas will be black males. How about the death penalty for the drug importers?

. . . Black people are more likely to be arrested, more likely to be subjected to longer sentences. In the media we're subjected to images of Willie

Horton and lies. And I might point out that some of these lies comes from the Federal Government. It allows them to continue. Black people do not use the most drugs in this society. It's time to throw that lie out the window. Black people do not commit the most violent crimes in this society. It's time to throw that lie out the window.

. . . So I'm here to tell you not what you want to hear, not make flowery statements and put on a suit and get happy, I'm here to tell you that the issue is not about civil rights, really hasn't been, the issue's about human rights. And the right of a human being to have a roof over their head, the right of a human being to [be] able to have effective law enforcement without being a victim of law enforcement, the right of a human being not to have drugs brought into their community, the right of a human being to be able to get a job so that he or she will not be susceptible to that kind of industry, because I can tell you right now I grew up on the streets. I was right around the drug industry. And you know why they use drugs? That just ignores a bit of nonsense. They use drugs because it's the only thing. It's a choice between survival or death. And any human being, including anybody in this room or anybody on this panel would do the same thing. After all the moral pronouncements, the fact of the matter is you have a choice to live or die and you're going to try to live by whatever means is necessary.

So it's time to get real. It's time to get real. I've been to many panels and we sit there and discuss the same thing and we talk about committees and commissions. Committees and commissions will never work unless you start off with the right philosophy and the right philosophy is the right of every person to be treated as a human being, and that's what I had to share with you.

[A question from Alicia Baro, SAC member:] I would like to know what drive made you come as far as you've come and get your good education?

[Mr. Imani responded:] My education was earned on the street. What I'm earning now is credentials because if I say anything—the interesting thing is in society we say we have the right of freedom of speech, but not if I say it as a brother coming from the projects, you know, that doesn't count. But now I'm still a brother coming from the projects, that's where I came from, that's where I am today, I just happen to be sitting here, this time I'm going to have a degree. And if that forces

people to listen to reality, yeah, I'll go through it, I'll go ahead and get my Ph.D, but what I know about reality in America came from the streets.

### **Jabari White, Black Student Union, University of Florida**

I'd just like to give you some examples of some of the problems, some of the real problems at the University of Florida. A lot of them were touched on, but I would like to give you a complete list of some of the things that I think, and I think I speak for a lot of black students here.

... I've been here 3 years. I think one out of every three of my close black friends are gone now, back home, working, you know, menial jobs. A lot of them are facing reality and having to do some immoral things to survive.

... Afro-American Studies is the one class that we do have. There's one teacher. That class is filled every year. There's a waiting list every semester since I've been here to get into that class. I mean, if that's not an example for backing up the resources, the one or two African American teachers that want to do it don't have the time because they are on committees and commissions and they have their other research to do in the beginning, so there's a ... lack of professors to even back up this program in the first place. And I don't see it, I don't see any—I've been here 3 years and I haven't seen any change. I haven't seen any commitment to black professors. And as other people were saying, who do you go to when you have a problem, you know a problem with another professor or a problem that you need some—you look for someone of your own color and they don't exist at the University of Florida.

Next, student government is not—is not open to me and to the people that I represent. I don't feel comfortable in the office. I don't think I've ever felt comfortable in the office, or the offices upstairs, I think it's the third floor of the Reitz Union ... it's like Georgia, it's Georgia or South Carolina, small town, it's a place that people who look like me don't go through or avoid like the plague because you know what's going to happen. You know, you don't expect any pluses at all.

I think that the service personnel at the University of Florida, the cleanup crew, is all—or should I say the majority, 90 percent black. These are the custodians, and these are people that clean up the dorm rooms. I know Alachua County

has a large population of black people but I don't think that all of the cleaning people should be black and they are distinguished by a uniform. I think that black people—the black service people wear blue uniforms and most of the whites wear white. And I think the white—the white service people there are mainly construction. It's—it ranges, and that's something that I think definitely needs to be looked into.

Let me say rebel flags in our—when we walk through our—through our campus is not a good sign. Just Thursday, Southern Partisan's Day, I don't know if that's an official day, but I had to jump up in a tree and tear down a rebel flag Thursday walking to class, to my culture diversity class. So, you know, it's those type of hypocrisies.

... Black athletes. Black athletes are, in my experience, are treated as horses and animals. I sit in a class with one or two black athletes and the teachers don't, don't respect them. They don't ask them for any input. They just—they expect them to not do anything. And that perpetuates a reason for thinking that ... they don't want to get an education. Black athletes aren't graduating at our school. Now black athletes aren't even going to the pros at our school. That's really something that needs to be looked into is the athletic department and the sponsoring of black educational athletic programs and making sure they graduate.

Also, I also think that the University of Florida makes a lot of money off of sports on football, on basketball. I think a majority of those teams are black. And that's not—none of that money is going to Black History Month, you know. None of that money is going to the BSU. None of that money is going to a black student center. ... So that's something that really I think needs to be looked at is if you treat someone like—like an animal ... they are going to behave like an animal.

The next was the BSU. And the BSU has been underfunded every year since I guess it's ... existed. I don't think student government allows BSU to be totally independent funded, I'm not sure about that, but as a result BSU has to curb its ways. We can't be politically active. We can't ... we can't demonstrate. And a lot of leaders are scared to be zero-funded. That's a big—that's a big issue.



## **Ida Rawls Reynolds, Director, Equal Opportunity, Alachua County Board of Commissioners**

What I've done with my presentation is to prepare informal, as you requested, a kind of summary, a capsule of some of the incidents that have been reported to our office over the last couple of years.

... I will begin with the incident reported by a student from the University of Florida, since you've had a number of students who have come before you so that I will move beyond that.

The student ... graduated from the University of Florida ... in 1990. But the concern of the student who helped the Alachua County Commission to pull together a local race relations forum to address the problem that they felt had become much larger even when they initially enrolled in the school. At the time the student stated that he was informed by one of his professors that the University of Florida was basically for white males and advised him that he might want to consider attending Florida [State] or [FAMU], and that he would not graduate from the University of Florida. After graduating, or in his senior year, he came to our office, not that he wanted to file a complaint, but he thought that someone should know, and he wanted to work and help develop a local race relations forum, which we did and held for the community.

The next incident that I would like to bring to your attention was one that covers public accommodation. It deals with a young college student from Santa Fe Community College and her boyfriend, who were at the Oaks Mall. While they were in the mall they saw a security guard who had an—one of the beepers they carry. The young man asked her if she thought it was real, if it really worked. She said, "I imagine so, he appears to be speaking in it." And the security guard came up and wanted to know what they were saying. And then told them that he could have them evicted or put off of the mall premises and not allowed to return. And they informed him that he only inquired about whether or not what he was using was authentic because they see people with them all the time. He stated that he could still have them, for no reason because he was the security guard, he could have—they had problems with people like them all the time and he could

have them put off the premises. So a verbal altercation pursued. Some young white—a young white couple walking with them said, "Well, they really didn't do anything, they merely asked what was that that you had and if it was real." He said, "I am the security guard and I can have you put off." He persisted along that vein. So the young man said, "This is just racist, you know, you just don't want us here. And simply because I'm a black male and I pointed and asked that question, that's why this is happening to me."

He then proceeded to call the other security guard and asked him to escort them from the premises. The security guard came. Once again they explained the situation. The witnesses there who were both black and non-black explained the situation. He said, "It is my authority to put you out of the mall and have you not return here again."

The supervisor left and instructed the guards to have them bodily removed from the mall. This happened this year—had them bodily removed from the mall. They explained again, "We didn't do anything." They said, "Yes, but if you don't leave, even though nothing happened, he can call the police and it will be even more embarrassing."

That young couple left the mall, the security guards with them.

... The next incident I will relate to you came from a young man approximately 24 years old, several incidents with the city police department. This young man drives a red Bronco, works for one of the—for Anheuser-Busch, it's called Meadow Container, happens to be one of the ... highest paying employers in the area. He was stopped several times, one time with his brother and his cousin in the car and asked to get out and the police searched the car. And he asked him why, you know, why are you doing this? Why are you doing this? He was embarrassed because his younger brother and his younger cousin, who was visiting the area, was with him. The second time he was stopped they asked him the same thing. The third time he was stopped he was with his wife coming home from a movie and this time they not only stopped him but they had him spread eagle on the van and also turned some big spotlight on him. It was very embarrassing, and he demanded that they either arrest him or let him know what was wrong.

He then went to the police department and reported the incident. They informed him at that time that the reason why he was stopped was because he met the profile for a drug dealer. He was a young black male under the age of 25 in a late—that type of vehicle, traveling toward the northeast side of town. I contacted Chief Clifton. He said that that should not be going on at his station and that he knew of nothing official that would condone that and he would look into the matter, but the way he stopped this from happening to this young man was to take his tag number so that the next time he would not be stopped.

The next incident happened at a service station. I was on my way to make a presentation to a group of prison officials on equal opportunity law. Stopped with my daughter to get fuel from the service station, pulled up behind a—I don't know the age—a black male who was driving a fairly late model car who had been waiting for a while and at the same time another—two other customers came up. The way the service station is set up it appears to be a self-service but actually the attendant does come and provide the service. The attendant ignored the black male that was standing there and went to the other non-black and started to provide the service. So the male said, "Wait, I was here. What's going on? I've been sitting here a few minutes? What's going on?" And it happened to be a female attendant and she ignored him, didn't say anything. So the young man became very, very loud and then the manager became involved and it was about to be a very, very violent situation. The young man went toward his trunk. I had my young daughter in the car and we left.

The next incident deals with three middle school black boys who were walking home from school. They were walking from the area over in northeast Gainesville that—it's from Howard Bishop Middle School. While they were walking home a car carrying several white older males, older than the middle school student(s), began to chase them and called them by racial slurs. This incident was reported to [the police by] their parents. And they were told that because they had no suspect or didn't know who it was there was nothing they could do about it.

... The other area within the public schools that we would probably—I've gotten information concerning the ability to participate in extracur-

ricular activities. It seems that in the integrated school setting many of the minority students have very little opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities. The one that was brought to our attention and—we went in and sat in on the selection because young girls came to us and said that they were unable to be selected as cheerleaders on the teams that cheered for the sports team. So we went and the one that we attended—they did select one individual. But that is very rare and it's usually one individual.

... [Question from Dr. Bradford Brown, Chairperson of SAC:] Let me ask you one short question ... and that is have you seen any increase in these kinds of incidents ... recently ... ?

... [Ms. Reynolds answered:] I would definitely say that I have personally, through our office, seen increases within the last 3, 3 years or more, that they have increased. They were not—I'm sure they have not gone away but they were not so prevalent as they are now.

### **Don Grooms, Native American Representative, Gainesville**

As one of the two Native American spokesmen in Gainesville I'm in somewhat demand. ... As I understand it, do you want to know are there racial tensions in the Gainesville area? Depends on who you talk to. Since I got your letter I've talked to a lot of people. I've talked to students and they say, yes, there's a lot of racial tension. Talk to townspeople, they say, yes, there's racial tension. You talk to people in the ghetto, they say, yes, there's racial tensions. I talked to minority faculty, and they say, no, there's no racial tension.

... I've talked to people who attempt[ed] to rent an apartment; if you're white you can rent it, if you're a person of color you have problems in that area. I've talked to some students who live in the dormitories, and they say it is not uncommon to hear groups of white people sitting around there talking about how we can get rid of the spics and gooks and blacks, so that's a continuing problem.

... Cherokee believe that we are all in this together. Nobody gets ahead unless we all get ahead. So your first obligation is to your family and to your clan and your band, your tribe, your nation, and then the entire world. So the main thing is that we all help one another rather than—or try to make us all one people.

I saw [a letter to the editor in] the *Gainesville Sun* last week, it said why don't those minorities quit squabbling and leave us alone? This is our country, white people. They are the dominant culture, they've got the money, they've got the police, they've got the structure, they've got the courts, and they are enforcing white man's laws. It will probably continue to be that way.

Filing the complaints, really you are filing a complaint against the people who are doing the ugly and of course they are not going to even look at it. That's my—just from looking over the whole area, yes, there's a lot of tension. There are lots of tensions, racial is merely one fragment of it. We got crazy people wandering around killing students. Gainesville is a major crime area ranked in the top 10 for its size. There is a potential for violence here. This is not Liberty City, this is not Watts. There's always the potential. Hearing the anger in some of the voices here today against white racism there is that potential. Those are my comments.

### **Ivan L. Ruiz, Educational Consultant, Race and Gender Training**

I understand that the Florida Advisory [Committee] to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission is here to gather information on the matter of racial and ethnic issues in this area. To this effect I am offering the following testimony of some of my experiences for the treatment of Hispanic people in the city of Gainesville and Alachua County.

My observations are tempered by my personal background and training. I am Puerto Rican. I immigrated to the mainland United States at the age of 7 and I lived most of my life in the Midwest, Chicago and Champaign, University of Illinois. I'm a doctoral candidate in education at the University of Illinois where I was also a fellow in the Institutional Racism Program. I have been in Gainesville during most of the past 2 years, while my wife pursues graduate studies at the University of Florida.

I identify myself as a Latino or as the U.S. Census Bureau has termed us, a Hispanic. I support the position that Latinos or Hispanics are members of a quote "minority group" regardless of the percentage of that group in a particular locality. Without minority status, Hispanics will not enjoy the benefits of equal rights legislation directed to all minority groups including African

Americans, Asians, American Indians, and women. In Gainesville, as well as Alachua County, there's a need to acknowledge Hispanics fully and consistently as a minority group. There is also a need to provide governmental services in the Spanish language as mandated by Federal legislation, and to promote better understanding of the meaning and significance of the status of Hispanics in society today. I will illustrate these needs with several vignettes from both the University of Florida and the city of Gainesville.

Before last summer the University of Florida did not have anyone of Hispanic heritage to represent the concerns of Hispanic students. Due largely to the insistence of Hispanic students, a part-time position was made available in the Student Services Office to attend to the needs of those students. According to the person who holds that position she is performing a full-time job at half-time pay. The responsibilities of the position require that it be full-time. The university administration was made aware of the need for a full-time position several months prior to anyone being hired. I was one of those individuals who went around shopping from office to office, hoping they would make this a full-time position.

... Also at the insistence of Hispanic students the administration made available a position for a Hispanic staff person to represent the interests of Hispanics in the admissions office. To the surprise of Hispanics on campus the candidate chosen for that position was of Brazilian heritage, a recent immigrant without personal experience with issues affecting people of color in the United States. . . . A delegation of concerned Hispanic professors visited the director of admissions, questioning the actions of that office in passing over a very qualified and knowledgeable Hispanic applicant for the candidate that was subsequently hired. . . . Yet, neither Hispanic students nor staff were included in the selection process. Quite interesting. Why someone in the Center for Latin American Studies of the University was not consulted in this matter goes beyond logic. There were people there, including the president himself who is a Spanish American who could have provided the answer to that conundrum, I guess if you want to call it that.

Another example, P.K. Yonge, the University of Florida Laboratory School, is another example where the university falls short in addressing the

needs of the Hispanic population. Admission policies to that school are designed to create a student body that represents a cross-section of the community based on a stratified formula. The factors included are income, race, and gender. Hispanic students are classified as white. Now I still don't know how they deal with people such as black Hispanics. . . . I've asked about this and they just told me that's the way we've done it. No provision is made for the inclusion of Hispanic students as the minorities that they are. The formula used for the selection of students into P.K. Yonge precluded the equitable representation of Hispanics, shortchanging this minority group of one of the best school options in Alachua County. This is true.

At a Gainesville driver's license examination station in September 1990 . . . I observed several Spanish-speaking persons experiencing difficulty in taking the written portion of the driver's license examination because of their limited English ability. Later, I heard one in the group state that he had been driving over 20 years and that in spite of that, he would simply not be able to drive in Florida because he could not [pass] the examination in English. Both the written portion of the driver's examination and the Florida driver's handbook are available in Spanish. These facts were not made available to the persons I have cited above by the attending clerk nor were any signs posted to this effect in the facility. A Spanish copy of the driver's license handbook was made available to me only after I requested it, and the Spanish handbook was hidden from public view. Namely it was in here, and she gave it to me at that time.

In the fall of 1991 a case was referred to me of a Puerto Rican woman with limited English ability who had bought a house in Gainesville the previous year and was startled to have received a tax bill on her property amounting to several times the earlier assessment. I'm not sure if it was two times, three times, I know it was at least double the tax. She had failed to file for the yearly homestead exemption because she had not understood the notice about this sent by the Alachua County property appraiser. Her inquiries about this matter were met with unprofessional behavior on behalf of some clerks for her problem and whom mocked her Spanish accent. One of these

clerks advised the woman not to bother filing an appeal. You have to pay to file and appeal also.

. . . It is clear that the interests of Hispanics are not being looked after either at the municipal or county levels. Not only is this state of affairs intolerable, but it also breeds interethnic rivalry which eventually results in behaviors such as prejudice and separation instead of acceptance and togetherness.

. . . [Question from Harriet Brown, Orlando SAC member:] You mention that you have been here 2 years? . . . Could you compare Florida to Illinois?

. . . [Mr. Ruiz answered:] It's like coming back 20 years in many ways. . . . From Champaign even, from Champaign, I mean really. I mean Chicago, of course, but from Champaign even. I found—I mean at least in Champaign at the university there was recognition that Hispanics were a minority as a separate entity. And I have not seen that here, for whatever reasons. And the new president, of course, you know, is making an effort to ensure that Hispanics will be included with other mainstreaming Hispanics in the regular programs. But it's surely slow in coming because I feel that it's like the captain giving orders and the soldiers are just standing there with their arms clasped and saying: "Gee, I don't know if I want to do it." And that's exactly the feeling that I've gotten when I've talked to administrators. They are very recusant about carrying through the policies that the president, President Lombardi wants to set forth.

### **Minerva Casanas-Simon, Coordinator, Student Affairs, University of Florida**

. . . The Simon comes from my Jewish American husband.

. . . My official title is coordinator of student affairs, my popular title is Hispanic student advisor.

. . . I have, you know, I have met [university president] Dr. Lombardi. I know the Provo Sorenson, Miss Jackie Hibbles, the person, the director or vice president of affirmative action. We have no one in affirmative action who represents Hispanic interests. I trust in her that she looks out for us. But from our culture there's no one there to say this is the Hispanic need. I would like to think that one does not need to belong to an ethnic or racial group to be empathetic to the

group, but I also am not blind to the reality that coming from that group and coming from the experience one does have the upper hand.

... We'll blind ourself if we say we're not [characterized by racial] tension, we are, to the fact that last year we had 300 black students [sit-in]. Reality stands that the Hispanic students have had tremendous difficulties among themselves because what it creates is divide and concur. Let them share—fight among resources even between some subgrouping or between ethnic cultures or whatever, and fight and then the community of Alachua doesn't have to worry, as long as we're channeling the energy towards each other. I think that's a sad state of affairs for all of us.

... So I speak to you... from experience of the university. This university has a long way to go. Dr. Lombardi has been a breath of fresh air. But as Ivan [Ruiz] indicated, he's only one among many and it's taking a while. Things are changing but perhaps a little bit too slow before things get worse. The excuse is that monies [are] not available is a legitimate... a good excuse, but it's just not good enough, we have to do something collectively to change it. I hate to see us competing with the black community for resources that we all both need so much.

And as a member of this community, to be frank with you, I'm a bit disappointed, disappointed because when I came here to visit and the real estate agent took me around, that was not the picture I received. The picture I received was very different. And now that I've lived here for 2 years I realize how exclusively to certain neighborhoods I was guided to. My husband happened to be a physician and because he was a physician and he's white we were taken to some of the best neighborhoods around here. I chose not to live in those neighborhoods because I wanted my children to learn too that they are half Hispanic and that's a reality that they are going to have to live with. And I didn't want them to learn about a world that is not all there. And I don't wish dis-

crimination on anyone, but by denying it I don't think we solve the problem.

### **Jacquelyn Hart, Assistant Vice President, University of Florida**

... I'm very appreciative of the work of the Commission. I am hoping, though, that all of the good testimony we received today will be considered in perspective. For an instance, there have been programs in affirmative action at the University of Florida since 1978. Those programs grew out of the revised plan for equalizing educational opportunity in higher education commonly called the desegregation plan. Florida was one of 10 southern States requested and required to remove the vestiges of segregation. And out of that came many many programs that we now have in place. I'm real grateful to the leadership that we have now in finding monies and I want to make an announcement about the increase in scholarships in minority programs for terms 92/93. But in removing those vestiges of segregation which we have not done, we were talking a black-white plan. The difficulty in getting an accurate count of the Hispanic population at the University of Florida is multifaceted. One, it was not popular, and I think the two, four, five people from the university will bear me out, to claim Hispanic origin, now for whatever reason I don't know that, but the university is fortunate over the last year, two, three, where persons who have been in employment over the years are coming forth changing their racial designation. The census didn't help us any last year because they listed the Hispanic population as a culture and not as a race. And there [is] a lot of difficulty in collecting that information. There are a number of people that we still may not know as we say who makes up the administration and who doesn't because we still are suffering from the history where folks self-selected. One of our most outspoken Hispanic faculty changed his designation a few months ago. So we are making an effort to count better, encourage our students and faculty and staff to help us do that. It is a self-selection process.

## Jacksonville Briefing Meeting, July 21, 1992

### **Brian Davis, Chief Assistant State Attorney, Fourth Judicial Circuit, State of Florida**

I am a native of (Jacksonville). I'm presently employed as the chief assistant State attorney here in the fourth judicial circuit. Harry Shorstein is the State attorney (for) whom I work.

As I understand, the purpose of this meeting today is to exam(ine) racial tensions, generally, in the city. As I said, I am a native. I've lived in the city for all of my life with the exception of 10 years I was away studying, and I can safely say that during my adult life in this city, I have never experienced a period in which I believe racial tensions are as high as they are now. I think there is some historical reasons for that. If you examine any sector of the city, any dimension of life in the city, any arena in Jacksonville, what you will find is a disproportionate and negative impact in the African American community.

Health care, for example, is an area that African Americans from Jacksonville suffer disproportionately. If you look at the death rates, the mortality rates, those are painfully evident here in Jacksonville.

If you look at economic development, we have been disproportionately affected (in) that regard. I doesn't take a very long tour of the city for the extent of the disparity to become evident.

If you exam(ine) the criminal justice system, there are a disproportionate number of African Americans unemployed and underemployed. And the sad fact of the matter is that that kind of scenario has persisted all of my adult life.

I think that the tensions recently have been compounded by raised expectations in the African American community that have gone unmet. The most recent example that comes to mind has to do with economic development and very fervent and professional and diligent political and civic effort to bring about some equity in the way that city monies are spent.

As you are probably aware, a set-aside economic development program was challenged in

the courts several years ago. And in response to that challenge, the city leadership conducted a disparity study which was a prerequisite to the creation of a set-aside program which would be court-challenged. And that was, I think, looked to by many people in this community as a step in the right direction. That legislation, after years of preparation and contest, was, at one point, unanimously approved by the city council, vetoed by the mayor, and the veto was not overridden by the city council.

I think that much of the frustration that we are experiencing in the community and the tension that's being experienced has to do with those kinds of signals being sent consistently.

I've had the recent experience of sharing with young people who, unlike most of the people in this room, young African American men, primarily under the age of 25 who, unlike the people in this room, I think, have lost all faith in a system of orderly problem solving. And their comment to me was that they simply mistrust the system, (they) have absolutely no faith in the system. And my fear is that while this room is filled with people who still have some semblance of hope that the system is sensitive to the kind of historical and the present disparity that exists(,) I'm afraid that there are tenfold, if not a hundredfold, if not a thousandfold, in this city who do not share that very small semblance of hope. I think that the tensions are compounded (by) that continual frustration by the history that the city has experienced in its race relations over the years.

I'm afraid that we are at a point where we need to (invest) resources (in) one or two things and I hope that one of the impressions that this Commission will walk away with today is that Los Angeles was described as a disaster area after those frustrations in that community were expressed. And millions of Federal dollars were spent, and are being spent, to remedy a problem.

My hope is that what you will sense from this meeting is the need to spend those kinds of resources—not just financial and economic resources, but human resources—in this community to

avert that kind of disaster because my sense, as a caring member of the community, for all of Jacksonville, is that we are headed in that direction.

### **Ronnie Ferguson, Deputy Mayor of Community Development, City of Jacksonville**

My name is Ronnie Ferguson. I'm currently serving as the Deputy Mayor of Community Development for the city of Jacksonville. Prior to [this] position, which I took in August of '91, I served as president of the Jacksonville Urban League for 9 years.

Our city is a city that certainly has more than its share of racial tension. It's a city of tremendous contrast and diversity. We are a city that has felt this rise in racial tensions over the past 5 years. Each year, we see it escalating. More and more people are suggesting that there is a problem with race; there is a problem with black-white relationships.

Jacksonville, on the other hand, is a city of tremendous opportunity. We are [still] experiencing a growth curve, but that growth, that opportunity, that potential for success, has not been transferred largely to the African American community. There are a number of areas where we see tremendous problems. And I, certainly, concur with every single word that my good friend, attorney Brian Davis, just said. The [myriad] of problems that are facing us certainly give us the potential for continued racial down spiral and potential chaos in our city.

In education, we're concerned about the overall quality of education. And we recognize that as society becomes more and more technological, many of our youths are not getting those skills to necessarily make them employable. So they find other avenues to make themselves successful.

Each night that I go home, I pass and speak to many youths who are experiencing the same kind of frustration that attorney Davis just spoke of.

When I stop to talk to them, usually their first question is: "Do you know of any jobs?" And their second question is: "What do we who have done all that all you adults have asked us to do—the ones who stayed in school, the ones who went on to higher education—what do we do now that we've done what you've asked us to do and we still can't [find] work and we still can't find opportunity?"

I don't have answers other than to [say] that we've all got to keep trying. And that answer, I've been told by them, is not good enough any longer.

There's no secret that our mayor today is in Washington testifying before Congress on the state of our public housing; it is a nightmare. And while we've spent the past year taking greater pains to address this issue, we are continuously finding new problems and finding ourselves further and further behind in our attempts to rectify that situation. Those tenants in public housing don't care who's in charge, don't care where the money is coming from; they want to live decently, safely, and with dignity.

Attorney Davis mentioned economic development. There is no question at all in this community, the African American community feels generally left out of the economy pie of the city. Attorney Davis mentioned the set-aside ordinance. The city is torn apart and I think that if anything is breaking us apart [it] is the fact that that bill was vetoed; we don't have a bill. And it's not an issue of who's right and who's wrong on this issue. It's an issue of people need[ing] to go to work. All of us need to turn all of our attention to getting this bill satisfied in this community and doing what it is supposed to do in very short order.

On the other side of the coin, Jacksonville is a city that I feel truly cares about its problems and its people, although there is certainly a credibility [gap that] has to be overcome. We have many organizations doing various thing[s] to bring racism and people and agendas—bring issues together and to the forefront.

First, there was Jacksonville Together. We had a chief judge here who made some embarrassing, disparaging racial remarks against blacks and females. He was subsequently sanctioned and taken out of that office, but his words stung and left a terrible scar in this city. In an attempt to heal that, the mayor called together community organizations and people of concern around this community and asked them to attack that problem and submit to him and to the council president, recommendations on how to solve the problems.

In order to get there, though, we're going to have to overcome two things, two major, big challenges: The first, the city leaders, and I'm talking public and private, must first reconnect with our youth and rebuild in them a feeling of hope, a

feeling of trust, and a feeling of concern. That can't be done by one person, one agency, or one group. That has to be done with a total city effort.

Secondly, we have got to recognize that we are split among racial lines. People have given up. People don't trust. And communities have to connect with one another to share experiences and needs and meet each other on common ground to say I recognize that you are a person, that you feel, wish, desire, live and breathe, as I do, all of us have to share together. That feeling does not exist in our city right now. We've got to change that. And it can only be changed by positive action, not words or plans.

**Vivian C. Jackson, Executive Director,  
Jacksonville Community Relations  
Commission**

Discrimination is very costly, not only in human terms, but in sheer dollars. It is a costly system. And it would seem that in 1992 better gains and more forward-thinking people, visionaries among us, would have realized by now, when we talk about cost effectiveness and when we talk about utilizing all of our resources including our human resources, that the best way to approach that, perhaps, is to be all inclusive. . . .

When I returned [to Jacksonville, after holding the position of executive director for the Lieutenant Governor of the State of New York] in September of 1989 . . . I was making the assimilation into the established mainstream existing in the city. Having that third eye, because I had not fully reassimilated, I was able to see that the behaviors and the practices had not changed, had not, in fact, kept up with the physical growth of the city. This is a huge city. I am still amazed by the size of it. I applaud its physical growth and its potential for further physical economic development, but we're in a time warp. And that time warp, that has been described to you so ably by these two gentlemen [before me], has long historical antecedents and we have not gotten beyond them. And I can only underscore the deputy mayor's words that we must, in fact, get beyond those behaviors and practices. Notice that I purposely [did] not say attitudes and sensitivities because I have had enough of those kinds of disappointments. . . .

In our [Jacksonville Community Relations Commission] office, just last year, during the 1990-91 fiscal year, we had a total of 1,184 people in this city walk through our doors.

Because we are also Jacksonville Equal Opportunity Commission, we break down those that are complainants, those that are citizens of Duval County who come through our doors to make complaints with regard to discrimination, be it for race, age, gender, et cetera. So in the area of employment, of that 1,184, 1,051 of them were in employment, that is, charges of complaints regarding discrimination in employment.

For this [fiscal] year, beginning October [1991] through the end of June 1992, the number of cases is already at 1,154. Remember, I said 1,184 for all of last year. We are, before the end of our fiscal year, this year, already approaching numbers that took us last year a full 12 months to reach. That is an indication of the growing unrest and people's desire to seek relief. Of that number, this year's number, 1,154, 1,118 of them have been in employment. . . .

Jacksonville, as has been stated, and as I have attempted to indicate, certainly needs to be about the business not only of healing itself, but I think, more particularly, [of] looking at what is happening to us. And while it is true that many of these incidents are occurring around the country, and that perhaps Jacksonville is not unique, and surely it is not unique, I think that Jacksonville and the citizens of Jacksonville do this city and themselves a disservice if we do not begin to take more seriously and attend with much more thought and consideration than it appears we have given in the past to these problems that do confront us.

If not, without being inflammatory at all, I think here, and you will hear it, I believe, throughout these proceedings, we are possibly sitting on a powder keg and Los Angeles may move itself to the east coast, particularly to our little State of Florida.

**Anna Scheu, Vice President for  
Community Affairs, Jacksonville  
Chamber of Commerce**

I've been with the chamber for 18 years, and I'll read this statement to you: Like cities across America, Jacksonville is experiencing a surge in racial tensions. Unlike many other cities, we



acknowledge that it exists and we know why. What will set Jacksonville apart from all other communities, what will make Jacksonville a great city, is the sincere desire on the part of concerned business and civic leaders and grass-roots effort to change the way things are. . . .

We at the chamber have recognized for some time that racial inequity in Jacksonville is an economic inequality. As an organization dedicated to the promotion of commerce, we are mandated by [our mission] statement to achieve economic growth in business and industry, improve the quality of life, [and] promote responsible principles for the conduct of business in government.

We take this charge very seriously. We believe it relates to the community as a whole, black and white, young and old, Christian and Jew. Long before the events that forced Jacksonville to take a look at racial tensions, the chamber had established a department to promote economic development of the minority community. We had been working with the NAACP, with minority enterprises, with businesses, educators, churches, and civic leaders because we recognize that disparity.

Long before racial tensions reached the edge in late December [1991], the chamber, working in partnership with the city, [had] created a consensus-building block to help Jacksonville residents to identify problems and opportunities for growth. We are working to open the channels of communication because understanding is critical to overcoming prejudice.

When Judge John Santora's remarks ignited the tensions, the chamber recognized the importance of letting the community know this antiquated mind set was unacceptable. We issued the following declaration of community values:

We believe in the dignity and goodness of all people. Prejudice has no place in our community. As one of [Florida's] finest cities, we could tolerate no less. The citizens of Jacksonville had the courage and the conviction to affect a positive difference. To be successful, everyone must have a chance to succeed. This is our pledge. This is our hope. This is our future.

### **Lewis Carter, Director, Institute for Urban Studies, Edward Waters College**

I think the broad question here that we have been asked to discuss is the notion of racial tension. And I will state as firmly as I know how that

I see the state of African Americans in the community of Jacksonville almost in a perpetual state of regression. It's kind of sad because somewhere, somehow, the partnership that should be evoked has not occurred here.

And I'm not going to sit in front of this group, and I cannot sit in front of this group, and suggest that there has been anything of any significance that says that the economic and social and political flavor of the African American community has advanced itself in this community. That is not to say that there are not persons of good spirit, good heart, good content, who are attempting to make these things happen. But the excuses that exist here create a rather forlorn and difficult task for those persons who may want to identify [direction for] social change.

### **Willie F. Dennis, President, Jacksonville Branch of the NAACP**

I am a native of Jacksonville. I have served as president of the Jacksonville branch of the NAACP since 1984. At the end of 1991, we had received and responded to 2,562 complaints and all without any paid staff, all volunteers. Those calls consisted of complaints with regard to job discrimination, age discrimination, sex discrimination, housing discrimination, police brutality, and crime. . . .

Under economic development, we have taken on the banks and have attempted to deal with the Humbler reports. When the Humbler reports came out and we sought to analyze them, we discovered that there were very few loans made to minorities and blacks. I want to deal specifically with the small number of loans offered to black folks. And I think it's important to note that there was one family who was featured in a news article after the Humbler reports came out who had resources, home, with a good amount of equity in their home, a good job—I think the man had been retired from one job—and he could not get a loan, which speaks of the problems of many of us who attempt to get loans. . . .

We [the NAACP] have taken practically all of the bankers in Jacksonville on tours of not only the inner city, but of the public housing projects and many other areas of Jacksonville where people of different hues, different colors, different economic resources reside. And many times, the persons who go on those tours are in shock when

they see various parts of the city. In fact, I think it might be good . . . if this panel could go on a tour to see the differences in the neighbor[hoods] of Jacksonville. There is quite a disparity in the residential areas of Jacksonville. If I were to compare residential areas, we would also determine why there is so much racial tension in this city.

**Reverend Perry C. Robinson,  
President, Baptist Ministers  
Conference of Duval County**

. . . In going and sitting down with some of the city officials, one of the most insulting things they ask us is what do we want. I think that's an insult to ask me what do I want. I sat down with the mayor of this city. He asked the same question. So I told him, "I want what you want. That's all we want." We want just as much for our children as he has for his. In our city of Jacksonville, there is racial tension. . . . It's amazing that before any city [makes a move], you've got to have somebody that's got to tear our city up or some lives got to be lost. That really do(esn't) make sense. Anytime that happens here, they pass billions of dollars to go in. Why can't we do it before that happens? But Jacksonville seems like that they—we are on the verge of having the same problem here, [as in Los Angeles].

**Robert Ingram, Executive Director, The  
HELP Center**

I think that what this commission has heard today has been a cross section of individuals with one major concern. And that concern is that we are all concerned about our community and our future. I think that you will find a common thread to be sewn with all of us understanding that Jacksonville is a city almost divided unto itself, one black and one white. We are a city that has not been as responsive as we should be, as we could be, to the African American community.

We have a community that's decaying. We have a community that is falling apart from within because those from the external community have not done what's necessary to help hold the community together, a community that's been totally neglected. Our infrastructure is in a sad condition. When it rains, we almost have to have boats in order to come out of our homes. If we live in public housing, public housing deteriorates so bad

and we cannot find maintenance personnel to do minor repairs. So, therefore, it causes major concerns.

. . . And Judge Santora's comments certainly indicated that he is an individual, and it's hard to separate an individual from his profession. And as chief judge, he said that he felt that we were not qualified to sit and have certain advantages within the community. That caused this community great grief and pain. We have not healed from the wounds inflicted by the Santora event before we find ourselves on the heel of having a minority set-aside program vetoed. The timing was really bad in that area. . . .

When we look at our overall community, including our education system, we find that the African American community has paid the greatest price in the area of integration. It has been our children that have had to be bused from one end of this community to another. As a result, we have found that our children have suffered for a lack of education and in many cases have been under-educated. That is a serious problem within our society and a problem that needs a resolution brought to it. . . . What I'm trying to say is that we have a pattern of separate and unequal participation within this community. We find ourselves not being able to share in the overall progress that this community should be making. Jacksonville, I believe, has the potential of being a great city. But it is not standing up to the cause that's necessary for it to be the great city that's necessary.

We all have got to come together. We all must sit together. We all must work together to make this community a community that is acceptable to all. We cannot afford to have Northpoint looking totally different from Southpoint. If we ride in Southpoint, we think that we are in a whole different city. And when we ride in Northpoint, we find that the city is deteriorating from the core. This community, if it is to be what it should be, what it ought to be, and what it must be, must change its attitude towards its citizens overall.

**Jessie Nipper, Chairperson,  
Concerned Citizens of the Northwest  
Quadrant**

I am a determined and concerned citizen for the Northwest Quadrant . . . I, too, was born and reared in this community . . . I've seen experiences

of segregation. As a kid growing up in this community, I saw police fire at young men and said, "Dance, nigger, dance." That was in the fifties. And believe you me, the attitudes today, the physical atrocities may not be occurring as it did then, but the attitudes are no different. In fact, they are worse.

### **Reverend John Allen Newman, Jacksonville Together**

I am here . . . to represent the Jacksonville Together process. I want to say, first of all, that perhaps Jacksonville, Florida, is the most racist city in the United States of America. It has produced some very strong feelings in the African American community. If you're looking for an accident waiting to happen, Jacksonville is it. And if there's ever been a powder keg waiting to explode, Jacksonville is it. . . .

We have, as you've already probably heard, we have the chief justice of this fourth circuit to make some very pejorative and negative statements about African American children. And what really got the ire of our community is when he said that it's the fault of their mamas, daddies, and ancestors. Strong feelings have been created. . . .

And Jacksonville is perhaps the only city left that I know of where a chief executive officer could not only run, but win and not have to give [up] his membership to an all-white club that excluded blacks and made no bones about it. . . . Another thing is there's no identifiable symbol of Renaissance in the northwest area. You can travel all over this city and see symbols of Renaissance, Southpoint, Mandarin, Baymeadows, you can see symbols of Renaissance. But there are no identifiable symbols of Renaissance in this community. . . .

After Chief Justice [Santora] was removed, death threats came to me and bomb threats to my church and I guess it was just about as personal as it gets. The city is sick with racism; it oozes racism. Jacksonville is a community in which it is okay to be racist. It is okay to be insensitive. It is okay to be uncaring about what happens to African Americans. Perhaps you're saying that, well, this is repetitive and I'm sorry. Perhaps we're all singing the same song because we're all in the same choir. It's sad, but, unfortunately, it happens to be true.

### **Malachi Bo Beyah, Community Activist**

I would like to extend my appreciation for letting me address . . . the issue of racial tension. And I promise you, we have not shared notes with the other panelists. However, if we examined whom and what really caused this racial tension, I think we will find at the very root of racial tension, racists and racism, racism that oppresses and oppresses in a position of power and control, power and control that denies a group of people access to the fundamental necessities to enhance movement outward and upward in this society. . . .

If we look at this city's government and its attitudes toward African American business as reflected in a recent disparity study covering this city's procurement practices over the last 10 years, the results reveal that the city spent less than 1 percent of \$2.2 billion with African American businesses, less than 1 percent. Some agencies had less than 0.1 percent. . . .

And I don't think that we can sit here and fool ourselves that racial tensions are good. From my standpoint, how I see it, it's in bad shape.

### **Ernest McDuffie, Vice President, Florida First Coast Chapter, National Business League**

I'm [also] vice president of the National Business League and also a member of the board for the Florida First Coast Black Businesses. I'm here today to show a pattern of deliberate, systematic discrimination when it comes to affirmative action in Jacksonville and the State of Florida.

In 1980 we organized a group, a minority group in Jacksonville, trying to do some work with HUD [U.S. Housing and Urban Development]. We went down and applied to be on the HUD list and they told me that I had to be a State certified contractor. I went back to school for 2 years and got my State certification license as a residential contractor, a general contractor, and a roofing contractor. Then [we] bid[ded] on a job in 1983 and they said you have to have a bond. We got in touch with the Small Business Administration . . . [and] a bond specialist . . . who showed us what we had to do. I became a contractor in 1984. I worked out of town for about [a year].

I came back to Jacksonville in 1985. If you look at the Jacksonville Electrical Authority (JEA) list in 1985, there were no black contractors on the list. I became certified and went on the JEA list. In 1987 I bid on a JEA job. They refused to give it to us. They held the job for over a year and they rebid the job . . .

Today we have a copy of the whole affirmative action disparate study for the city of Jacksonville. . . . The same problem is over this whole State. This State gets a . . . tremendous amount of Federal funds. Within the State of Florida, you don't have but five successful black contractors. . . .

### **Tony Florenfinoa, City Government Liaison, Asian American Voters League**

I came here purposely to address my concern which affects the Asian American community. . . . The Asian experience says that racial prejudice and discrimination knows no time boundaries. . . . The same inequitable practices of racial prejudice is not . . . only of the years gone by, but it [is] still very much alive, [and] part of the present.

But Asians are no longer to be denied a voice in the shaping of their lives. . . . Their voice demands the attainment of the ideal of life, liberty, and the fulfillment of happiness.

. . . In the workplace, for an Asian American working, and there is an opening for a promotion, the Asian American has a degree and with experience, what does the system do? Give it to somebody else from the outside, maybe black or somebody else. Poor Asian Americans do not have the opportunity for progress. And that . . . is very common in private as well as in public offices.

### **Gwendolyn Gibson, Jacksonville Conference of Black Elected Officials**

Something is wrong in the city. Someone has dropped the ball. And as a result of that, this community is suffering. The black community is suffering. The young people are suffering. All minorities in this community are suffering while the majority of the community moves forward. At this

point in time, we want to know whose responsibility it is to be sure that if [Executive Order] 11246 is, in fact, the law, whose responsibility is it to implement it? Whose responsibility is it to be sure that the reports that are going to the Civil Rights Commission and all of [the] other agencies outside of this city actually reflect what's happening here because something, evidently, has happened over the years or someone is saying something outside of this city that is not the truth. . . .

Discrimination is rampant in every area of this city and the community has suffered as a result of it.

### **Marvin Kramer, Attorney-at-Law, Jacksonville, Florida**

I appreciate . . . the opportunity. I know the time is going late so I'll try to keep this as short as I possibly can. I'm a former Federal and State prosecutor. I've worked with the division of the Internal Revenue Service. And also, at the age of 29, I was confirmed by Congress as a deputy chief of the office of emergency planning. . . . I was also born in Jacksonville. . . .

This town, somebody mentioned, is dropping the ball. I think it's more like dropping the bomb. I don't mean to be intimidating or being dramatic or anything else. . . .

The games being played that Mrs. Gibson was talking about have been played in the past. I think they've intensified this year. These games are dangerous games. I know Mr. [Arthur] Fletcher from the Civil Rights Commission said there are certain elements in America—I'm quoting him—that are trying to stymie black people's progress. And he said the way they've done it is counterattacking every attempted move to really increase the civil rights of blacks. That, he said, really created the L.A. riots. I think L.A., and I have not been in L.A. to any extent, I think they were created from these counterattacks. I don't know if it was intentionally to create the riots or a movement to cause that big a problem. I'm suggesting in Jacksonville, Florida, there's a movement to cause just that problem.

## St. Petersburg Briefing Meeting, March 24, 1993

### **Sevell C. Brown III, President, Southern Christian Leaders'p Conference, St. Petersburg Chapter**

I come before you at this particular time in terms of what we feel in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference [SCLC] should be . . . [We feel] that the exacerbation of racism has reached unprecedented heights within the St. Petersburg and the Tampa Bay area. And I say this to you in no uncertain terms . . . I want you to understand that the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, some 22 months ago, proceeded in holding national hearings in the country. One of the [hearings] we held was here in St. Petersburg, Florida, with regards to police . . . brutality—police brutality and whatnot.

As a result of those hearings, it was finally documented for the first time in this city, those cases that basically, overwhelmingly gave evidence of the fact that we had that [alleged brutality] going on in the police department here in St. Petersburg, Florida. . . . Until Dr. [Joseph] Lowery [national president of SCLC] himself came to St. Petersburg, basically to appeal for a civilian review board and to appeal [for] sensitivity training, we were being stonewalled.

We need the Federal Government and the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights to basically listen to our plea and our cries to help in some way turn this whole process around.

And so essentially these are the things that we're facing here, these are the things that disturb us. And it goes to the heart of this. And essentially everything that we fight, everything that we're stonewalled against in this city that leads to the exacerbation of racism to unprecedented heights is a direct result of that seeming cloak and protective buffer that is placed on our one position, chief of police.

### **Reverend Cate, Pastor, Palm Bay Christian Church**

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for letting us appear.

I am a pastor of the Palm Bay Christian Church. . . . I now chair the Round Table Housing for the Housing Process of the City. And I chair the Reconciliation Committee, which was a committee made up of all of the various segments that we've already heard, and anything about, from Sevell Brown, including Police Benevolent and all the factions appointed by the city manager and the mayor, last year, when we first got in our crisis of the police chief. . . .

One of the most critical things I think [Mr. Brown] said was that at the conclusion, conclusion, conclusion—he concluded three times as far as sermons go—when he said all is not wrong, but all is not well. And that is—that is very accurate. All is not well in St. Petersburg, but all is not wrong at the same time.

. . . Despite my distrust and dislike and fear of what was happening in splitting our committee over the [police chief] Curtsinger issue, the gentleman is very charismatic, has a way of attracting votes to what he is saying. And people listen to those kind[s] of people sometimes. And when they're saying, I am not a racist, and he probably doesn't think he is, they follow that. . . .

I and many other leaders in the community, for many years, thought that racial harmony existed in our community. We were naive enough, I guess, to believe that, particularly for some of us who had a strong relationship with—pastors in relationship to one another, and we discovered over last year's police chief situation, when the community did find itself divided, that all was not well as we had led ourselves to pretend. There are many things that are occurring to try and deal with that. . . .

I've already been in conversations yesterday and today, where do we go from here? How do we put Humpty Dumpty back together? And I guess I've inherited that job, whether I wanted it or not, as chair of the Reconciliation Committee.

Reconciliation, you are familiar with the word. If you want the most basic definition, it is bringing that which is in discord back into harmony. That's the task of the Reconciliation Committee. We will

be doing everything that we can to bring that which is in discord back into harmony. Hopefully that is one of the objectives that can be accomplished by your very existence here in our city.

Cultural diversity groups are underway. . . . We have had 24 clergy, already, go through that diversity training. Many of the businesses have been doing it. We wanted to know how to get it out of the business community and get it into the community itself. We have begun with pastors, because there's so many organized churches, you have a place to begin. Since those 24 pastors, we now have approximately 30 other pastors, black and white, who have already signed up that their church will begin this process. . . .

So things are . . . taking place. We hope that out of that—and we realize that that is not something that will occur between now and May or between now and May of 1995, it will be a continuous thing, it will take a number of years, but we feel the cultural diversity courses are the beginning of the process and the answer where people begin to learn about people. That's where the problem lies.

We don't know one another. We fooled ourselves into thinking we do. We don't understand one another's culture. When one says something the other doesn't understand, it takes offense and vice versa.

### **Don McRae, Assistant City Manager, City of St. Petersburg**

. . . I think the question [of the police-civilian review board] goes more to whether it's allowable under State law, and talks about policemen's bill of rights, and whether you can then subpoena police officers to testify before a body of that sort. It's been tried in other communities and I don't think it's been universally acceptable, but that's where our training is. . . .

I think that in fairness—I think it needs to be said that the model that we have in place, while it reviews cases after it has been through the process, we think it brings with it a certain amount of power that's associated with outside agencies having to be a structured review and report to the mayor and the city council on their, on their thinking about the fairness or appropriateness or thoroughness of the investigation.

And it's our belief that that kind of scrutiny will . . . motivate the people who are involved in the process to do a better job, because we televised the

review efforts complete and let the public know what's going on with it and all those kinds of things.

### **Mayor David J. Fischer, City of St. Petersburg**

I thank you all very much for taking the time out to come to our city, and I would like to address some of the things that you've seen and some of the things that we're doing.

We've got some great neighborhood planning programs. I don't know whether you've heard about those or not, but it's very important to us that we uplift our neighborhoods, that when you go by and see the windows that have been boarded up and the deterioration, the neighborhood loses hope and loses pride. . . .

We attacked the deteriorating housing situation. And we are launching what I think is an astounding, affordable housing program. We've been limping along, using about \$2½ million of funds every year to try to just keep abreast with deterioration of housing. . . .

And with the new CRA [Community Reinvestment Act], now the banks are going to be participating in a good way. I've been over to the Tampa side and talked to all the major banks, which are a lot of our regional headquarters now, plus our local banks here, and they have bought into our program, which we call WIN.

And that's to improve the neighborhoods, working to improve neighborhoods. And we're going to have over \$20 million this—next year into this program, and we will jump from 300 [housing] units to about 2,000 units. And for the first time this will catch a whole group of individuals that really have families, they've got jobs, and can't get the bank loans. And they'll have an opportunity to buy the existing houses or build a new house.

And actually, that would benefit the whole city, but the target areas that I've described, those in deterioration, would—actually will have a bank assigned to that area. There will be a banker there, there will be a real estate broker there, there will be a city [representative]—someone from our . . . housing department will there. And then we'll have neighborhood representatives.

And they will be the monitoring committee to make sure the people know where to get the loans. We'll have a one-stop shopping center at a WIN

desk, and they will be told how to go and get the loans. And that will be an attack on the deteriorating housing there. . . .

[We have a] Summer Youth Job Program, where when we heard that Federal funds were going to be available, almost double what they were the year before, the city council also put \$¼ million into the program.

And we lifted our participation in that Summer Youth Program from 400 to 1,200 overnight. And we had the funds to do that. But if you remember, maybe reading in some of the national news media, some of the cities couldn't apply the funds because they didn't have the network to get the jobs.

And our corporations stepped forward. And so, all the young people that applied for these jobs, and . . . [of the approximately] 2,000 applications that we were able to take . . . [we placed] about 1,200 . . . They actually had jobs. The corporations jumped in there and got the jobs. . . .

So these are some of the things that we're doing that I think are a lot different that we did a year ago, and making that type of progress. So I think we're on our way in this city, in a big healing. And I think the city is going to come together. We've had a tremendous participation in this election in our African American communities, brought leaders out that—and people worked together that maybe haven't worked together in a lot of years. . . .

When I took office, the black business enterprises' participation in city construction work was less than 2 percent, it was like 1.9 percent. And we set a goal of 8 percent. And we exceeded that goal. We went flying right through it. And last year, we did 10 percent. So—you know, we're going to keep going. But we had dramatic improvement and a different attitude, and it really went fine.

### **Alvelita Waller Donaldson, Local Branch President, National People's Democratic Uhuru Movement**

. . . Thank you for inviting me to speak here today. My name is Alvelita Donaldson. I am the local branch president of the National People's Democratic Uhuru Movement, which is a Swahili word which means freedom. And I greet you Uhuru. . . .

First of all, we believe that there is—it is not a coincidence that the situation in St. Pete, as in communities like ours around the country are, where we have a high rise of racial tension happening. . . .

And I say that because in the city of St. Petersburg, we've seen it here, in this most recent controversial period since the coming of the new police chief, Ernest Curtsinger here.

St. Petersburg had problems before Mr. Curtsinger came here. He was the manifestation of what already existed here. The problem here is not that white people are racists, the problem here is that black people have no power. We have absolutely no power. We're not in control of our own lives, other people who are often hostile, whether they're doing it willingly or unwillingly, whether they're conscious or unconscious of it. We're not [in power]—the problem isn't that they're racist, it is that because of whatever these attitudes or perceptions that there are, this whole notion of superiority of one race of people, or nationality or people over another, is that because of it, we are the recipients of the substandard of living conditions that exist here in the city of St. Petersburg, as it does in the community like ours throughout the country. . . .

We believe that there is violence brewing inside this community, and that is not being incited by the African community. I think conditions will breed that kind of thing, that we will have rebellions, uprisings, if you please, inside the community if conditions do not change. . . .

We'll be watching [Mayor] Fischer, those newly elected officials, those people who are incumbents now, we'll be watching the city administration to see what is going to be the future. We're seeing that we must have jobs, not only for our youth, but all of us must have jobs.

I've been blackballed. I may never work again, and I really don't care, if that's the way it has to be. And I see that the future of the black people means more to me than anything. Threats on my life, and I've had those, through this police department, none of that, none of it matters. Because I hope that my death, if it comes, won't be in vain. If I never work again, that my people some day will have all the rights enjoyed by others in the city and throughout this country.

## **Gregory Durden, Chief of Civil Rights, Attorney General's Office, State of Florida**

I've been on board [at the Florida attorney general's office] for several months now, and the attorney general's office, unlike the Federal component of it, [it] is primarily civil in nature. . . .

We got a lot of problems, I see, and one of the main ones seems to be that there is a lot of ignorance around. . . . We're losing the battle to ignorance. When you throw on top of that, hard economic times, you get more discrimination, you get spin-off discrimination like the skinheads here [demonstrating outside and in the audience of the briefing meeting]. . . .

What we saw in L.A. was the—and it's widespread—is that we're willing now, anymore, to accept violence as a reasonable way to resolve a problem.

And what we're seeing is that—is that there's a certain level of hopelessness and frustration in the poor neighborhoods.

## **Sister Margaret Freeman, Community Activist**

I worked with the St. Petersburg Free Clinic here in St. Petersburg for almost 17 years. And the [mission] of the St. Petersburg Free Clinic was to do things in the community that nobody else was doing. . . . And needless to say, there was never any shortage of need, there was never any shortage of clients. . . .

And I think what I would like to stress more than anything else, not the negatives of what we haven't done, but perhaps some of the positives which are now going on and what we can do in the future. There can be no question that much of the difficulties within the African American community is due to the terrible abuses of the past, due to the lack of economic possibilities and socio-economic conditions, the almost automatic barrier that is there and which is very hard to control. . . . We, as communities, do not trust each other. . . .

This is part of that residue of resistance of inbred fear, prejudice, bigotry, which we are all affected with. . . . Some of the things that are going on which I think are very positive in this area and which I was a part of in the last 6 months or year, has been with—due to some activities with the

Clergy Association, which I have a very active part, and with the Ministerial Alliance, which is the black ministers association. We got together to try and establish some kind of relationship, because the Ministerial Alliance is here, the Clergy Association is here, and ne'er the two shall meet.

Anyway, after the initial meeting, which was not a very comfortable affair for any of us, things really moved in a much more comfortable kind of a situation. And then the mayor's Reconciliation Committee was formed, because at that time there was a recognition of the fact of the difficulties with the police department, et cetera, that something needed to be done. . . . But it didn't get very far. . . .

But the greatest thing that is happening, because of this organization and this movement forward, is that the individuals, individual people are talking to each other, at extended visits, to find out who we are, how do I—how am I similar, what are my likes, are they the same as your likes, what can we do together to become—to establish some kind of bond of communication and mutual interest and get to the point where we can actually work together.

And the principal problem to get the—what do I call them—mainline churches, the mainline churches involved. And I think that what we really need to do is to somehow work fiercely to bring this whole community into an understanding of the tremendous need in St. Petersburg.

## **Susanna Martin, Member, Bethel Metropolitan Baptist Church**

I was taught that when you tell the truth, you don't have to remember, and when you tell the truth, you don't have to prepare. So I'm here.

. . . This past election was a good awakening for St. Petersburg. I've lived here for 8 years and I've been a member of Bethel Metropolitan for 7½ of the 8 years. Bethel Metropolitan Baptist Church is a predominantly black church down in South St. Pete. There are two nonblack members, which is myself and another gentlemen. . . .

And when I'm telling you that I have witnessed racism here in St. Petersburg, I have witnessed it mostly from the white community against the black community. And I can tell you in all honesty, because I lived both worlds. I work in a white environment and I worship in a black environ-



ment. And I hear the truest of hearts in both sides.

There's a very quiet kind of racism here in St. Petersburg, and that is the most dangerous kind. We need to—this—this [mayoral] election brought out a lot of what was going on and a lot of the feeling, and it brought out a lot of the—it ended a lot of the quietness. It allowed us to speak out and know what was in our hearts.

Racism is an illness and in order to find a cure for the illness, first we have to diagnose it. So this is—I hope this is what we're doing here.

### **Catherine Heron, President, St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce**

I'm here because I am the president of the St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce. I am also vice president of administration for the *St. Petersburg Times*.

I also am currently serving on Reverend Cate's Reconciliation Committee, and have previously served on the Community Alliance in our town.

I'd like to first reference back to a phrase that Sevell Brown used, all is not wrong but all is not well, and attribute it to the chamber of commerce in me.

The [*St. Petersburg Times*] editorial today said, as a result of yesterday's election, that the worst is over. I don't think we can let this stop here. . . .

We need to take these last 2 years as warning and learn from it and use it and not allow ourselves to simply return to our segregated, satisfied lives, but rather force ourselves to face and discuss the issues of difference, of economic opportunity, of racism that these events [elections] have aired. A [*St. Petersburg Times*] column that St. Petersburg, in the last couple of years, had broken the tacit truth between black and white residents and redeclared the racial cold war.

I contend that the tacit truth resulted in repressed and obscured problems in a cupboard of silence and politically correct avoidance of the topic.

I also quote again from Elijah Cohen, "Black and white people don't see the need anymore to pretend they like and respect each other." I contend that if we were only pretending, as I believe we were, that no problems would be solved. We

need to stop pretending and air the reasons behind our feelings of distrust.

But unfortunately the structure—the structures of our lives don't easily serve this simple need. We live segregated in St. Petersburg, we worship segregated. Many work segregated; and we die segregated. The only hope in this chain of life institution is that our children have learned integrated, but even this seems under attack, and it isn't supported in the continuum of life, either before or after, with our segregated ways.

So what is good and positive about St. Petersburg and about the recent events that we've been through? And I believe there is much that is good about St. Petersburg and positive about these painful events. Let me give you some examples. And I think you've heard some other examples today and you've inquired about some of them, as well.

We did begin last year a summertime youth employment program. It was a partnership between governmental funding and business funding that resulted in, granted short-term jobs . . . and I think it will be doubled this year. We do have, despite the flaws of not having single-member districts, a diversity council and diversity in the senior management of our—of our city government. We have something that hasn't been mentioned here, which I think is a good indicator of the goodness of our community, called SPIFF, the St. Petersburg International Folk Fair. That is an organization that's been here for decades that rejoices and celebrates the differences present in every type of different culture, from the Polish immigrants in our community to all sorts of different types of culturally diverse people. . . .

We do have the Community Alliance which was created by the Chamber of Commerce about 24 years ago. This is a group of individuals who meet every other week, 21 whites and 21 blacks, and they deal with, on a regular basis, all of the major issues that they feel are important, be it drugs in the workplace, be it education, be it crime.

Last year during the issue regarding our chief of police, they dealt head-on with that and came out with a recommendation that he could no longer be here, from their opinion. . . .

I believe, as a community, after this period of time, to say we are going to really work on this as a community for a very long time. And we have to avoid the tacit truth of political correctness. We

mustn't be rude or disrespectful, but we must discuss the issue of race and not shove it under the rug, or else we will be back here and you will be back here with the same division, the same unresolved issues either 2 years or 10 years or 20 years from now.

**Darrel W. Stephens, Chief, St. Petersburg Police Department**

... I want to thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee this afternoon, not only because it's the opportunity for me to make some remarks about this issue, but having been here since the [meeting] started, it was also another opportunity for me to learn about this community, since I am a new member of the community.

Your mission today and the past several months, I believe, is critical to the future of our city, the State of Florida, and to America, as well, the issue of race and the ethnic tension is one that has been of increasing concern to me as police executive over the past 5 to 10 years. I'm the newly appointed chief in the city of St. Petersburg. I was appointed December 14, 1992, and assumed my responsibilities on a full-time basis on January 25, 1993.

Being new, I do not bring lengthy experience of addressing these issues in the city of St. Petersburg. I do bring the experience of working on these issues in several communities as a police chief, and my 6 1/2 years as the executive director of a group in Washington, D.C., called the Police Executive Research Forum, that has focused on these issues and others in an effort to improve policing in America. . . .

Being new to the community does allow me to make some observations about what I've seen on racial and ethnic tension, through the eyes of a stranger that's trying very hard to learn this community so that I might be an effective police chief. . . .

Two days following the primary [mayoral] election in the city of St. Petersburg, the *St. Petersburg Times* put a map in the newspaper that showed the voting patterns of our citizens. The map clearly showed the voting patterns of our citizens. The map clearly reflected a white-black split in the votes, clear racial divisions along voting lines. That made a big impression on me. . . .

What I see in the city of St. Petersburg is a city that's much like others in America, a city where many in the white community had felt that the problems of racial and ethnic tension were solved in the 1960s and the 1970s. As we all know, the problems haven't been solved. In St. Petersburg, the issues that are present in many other cities have come to the surface around the police department and the firing of the former chief. These issues have been kept at the surface because of the debate over the form of government and the debate over the choice for the mayor of the city.

Although most of our citizens would not want to repeat the past 2 years, these events, in my mind, present us with the opportunity to recognize that we have a problem and the obligation to do the hard work that's required, to use the diversity of our community as the strength that it should be rather than a source of tension. I would like to speak briefly to the issues of policing—in the city of St. Petersburg. I found, in our department, that we do have racial tension within our organization. I found in our department that we have gender tension within our organization. . . .

The problem with gender tension is equally important because it's part and parcel of the same issues of people not being sensitive to the needs of others and not being sensitive to the different points of view that come as a result of being in a different race or a different sex or a different background. . . . We're working on those problems very hard in our organization. . . . and making a sincere commitment to try to work through the issues that we have in our organization, in a way that we, as a police department, can make diversity a strength. . . .

... Every employee in our department is attending cultural diversity training that's being offered by the Criminal Justice Institute in St. Petersburg Junior College. I want to emphasize, every employee—that's all 726. . . .

We've developed a policy on racial and sexual harassment that I believe provides good, clear guidance on our expectations to our employees and their relationship with each other, and how they are to serve the people in our community. I can't stress how important it is that we have good, clear policy guidance, and although many would assume that that exists in most of our cities and most of our organizations, I don't think that's the case. . . .

Our representation of women at the upper levels of the department is not where it should be. Our representation of African Americans and Hispanics and Asians in supervisory and middle-level management of our department is not where it should be. We continue to make that a priority and have made a commitment to be as reflective as our community.

I'm making every effort as the police chief in our department to be the right type of role model to our employees, to set the tone, to set the example on the kind of behavior that I would like to see our employees engage in. And I think to an extent that I can serve as a role model for our community, as well, by being frank and open and honest on the issues of racial and ethnic tension within our community. We're working very hard as a department to expand the community policing philosophy which carries with it the basic principles and fundamental values that the police department should work with the community, as a team, in the identification of problems, the resolution or solution, to try to understand the environment that exists there and develop approaches and procedures and programs and initiative aimed at trying to change the environment where crime, drug abuse, violence exists. . . .

If I may, I would like to make several recommendations to the Commission that I think affect us as a community. But to your larger purpose of making a contribution at the State and national level. I think there's a couple of points that I would like to make and would urge you to give consideration to as you prepare your report for the United States Commission [on Civil Rights].

First, I think it's of critical importance that the Commission on Civil Rights continue to do, and maybe even redouble their efforts through hearings, reports, recommendations, to keep this issue of racial and ethnic tension on the forefront of our minds and action throughout America.

I think that one of the things that happened throughout the eighties was a sense that these problems had been solved. . . . So it is important that you help do what you can to keep this on the forefront.

Second, I really believe that the Commission . . . should recommend to the President, the creation of a national commission on violence in America. I think this problem is the source of much of the racial and ethnic tension that we have in our

communities throughout America. Until we learn to deal with the violence that we have, until we understand it, until we look for solutions that solve, more than building prison beds, until we've looked to a comprehensive, thoughtful approach to how young men grow up and end up, you know, killing each other, that until we do that, we're not going to solve the problem of racial and ethnic tension, and we're going to continue to lose a generation of people to violence and drug abuse.

Finally, the issue of civilian review boards has been mentioned on several occasions this afternoon. And I think it would be helpful if the Commission on Civil Rights would support and encourage some real research into the impact and the effects of civilian review boards.

Over the past 4 of 5 years, we've seen, in the 50 largest cities in America, a growth from 15 to 30 civilian review boards; past couple of years you can add three or four more to that. . . .

They may very well be part of the solution of controlling police officer behavior, but what little inquiry has been made suggests that they're not the panacea everyone believes they are, and—and I think in some respects gives our citizens a sense of false hope and, later, frustration when a mechanism that was designed to do something, doesn't achieve that. . . .

Thank you again for the opportunity to learn this afternoon and for the opportunity to speak to you.

### **Jim Yates, Director, Human Relations Department, City of St. Petersburg**

My office is responsible for—mainly for enforcing the city's human rights ordinances. [Are] there racial tensions in St. Petersburg? Of course there are. . . .

As long as we continue to be passive in guaranteeing equal rights to all citizens, regardless of race, then we're going to continue to have racial tension. We must deal with the elements that cause racial tension. . . .

In the recent election process, especially the mayoral election, I've never seen an election in this city that was so one-sided as—relating to the black community. It is almost inconceivable to me that in some of the—of the predominantly black precincts that Mr. Curtsinger would get less than 50 votes out of that whole group of precincts. I've never seen anything so, so pervasive in one way.

These are the things that attempt to bring on other, some other racial tension.

That particular act did bring on racial tension because the black community could not understand why such a large segment of the white community in St. Petersburg would support a man which the black community totally rejected, and for legitimate reasons. It was felt strongly by the black community that Mr. Curtsinger could not represent the black community fairly, even among the city employees, my friends, black and white. . . .

A black city manager fired a white police chief. The black manager had everything going for him, everything on his side. He had the legal authority to do what he did. He had the reason, good reason to do what he did. The city charter gave him exclusive responsibility for what he did. Precedence had already been set. And what I'm speaking of there is, other city managers have been fired, or police chiefs have been fired with no fanfare. He worked tirelessly to correct the weaknesses of this chief. His elected officials supported what he did. He was not—he did not make a reckless decision, he tried very hard to correct the problem.

And probably more important than anything else, he was respected by black and white citizens alike in this community. But when the chief was fired, I've never seen such a reaction to almost anything in government as what I saw the day the chief was terminated.

A very large segment of the white community literally stormed City Hall to protest the chief's firing. The firing of that chief brought the most explosive racial tensions that I've seen in St. Petersburg in recent times.

The only difference that the black community, especially—and I've talked with several people—the only difference in the firing of this person and police chiefs in the past was that this time the man was black who fired him.

. . . So racial tension will remain in this community and, as it is all over communities, until people feel that equality is a reality. You just cannot fool people anymore today, you have to make them feel that equality is a reality.

But I believe, as I said in the beginning, that we have enough mandates that we can go forward together and rebuild and pull people closer and move on from the almost great loss that we had yesterday. But we're willing and we're able and we're going to do it. Thank you.

## Tallahassee Briefing Meeting, September 30, 1993

### **Thomas R. Coe, Assistant Chief, Tallahassee Police Department**

In reference to racial tension in our community, I think you definitely could say we are a reflection of society in general, and we do have more racial tensions than we did a few years ago.

There is no doubt about that. I think that's witnessed by those who have been very active, and I'm sure we have all heard horror stories throughout the State. . . .

When William Lozano's [the Miami police officer accused of a motorcyclist's manslaughter] trial was scheduled to be moved here it heightened our racial tensions significantly, and we had a lot of programs to deescalate feelings and went into the school systems and talked to children, talked to the parents, and tried to deescalate this by that means. . . .

I think any time you have cultural diversity and [people don't know each other], generally they don't trust people until they have worked [or lived] around [each other] long enough to develop trust. I think that's one of the problems in this community. We live together, but I'm not sure we trust each other as much as we should.

For example, we have a significant juvenile crime problem right now, and that's primarily [viewed] as a black male problem. Well, that's not altogether true. But it's easy to understand [why people have that perception].

When the news media covered the tourist murders in Florida . . . the majority of which were committed by black males, [it reinforced many people's perception that most black males are criminals].

[On television, when you see] arrests that are primarily for stolen vehicles and burglaries, you [often] see black males. The average white citizen begins to believe all crime is committed by black males. Not true, but that is their perception and so they begin to fear all black males when they are walking down the street. It's a stereotype. It's how someone feels. . . .

Police brutality, the same way. I will guarantee you there are a lot of black citizens, so if a poor

black person was severely being beat(en) and on the other side are a lot a whites, he's thought of as a criminal who was trying to flee from the police. And I think the key issue is suspicion in racial tension.

I guess the old saying, "Where to stand depends on where you sit," and from a standpoint it's how you perceive your own position in society.

As far as the police department, I think our calls [involving] racial tension have escalated. . . . We had a . . . situation here a couple of years ago . . . in Worthington Park where we had a party that developed into a small civil disorder. A couple of [White] people were driving through the complex. . . . They were pulled out of their vehicles and severely beaten . . . [by a group of blacks from the party. When the officers responded, the crowd began to chant. "Rodney King" and they accused the officers of brutality. The officers were subsequently cleared of any misconduct].

We had [another] situation 10 days ago at Florida A&M University . . . when a [black male was] shot to death by another black male. [A White] officer responded to the [call] and tried to administer CPR. . . . Some [of the black] students . . . [started hitting, kicking, and pushing the officer, telling] him to get away from the [victim] . . . . [In essence, they told the officer if the victim had] been white . . . [the officer would try] harder to save his life. [Again], not true, but this [is some black people's perception of white police officers]. This situation . . . almost erupted into a civil disorder. . . .

. . . Tensions are high [due to] . . . a lot of reasons . . . such as . . . poor housing, education, medical care, and a lack of job opportunities. . . . I think all of these increase [racial] tension in our community. . . .

### **George Manning, Assistant Director, Department of Community Improvement, City of Tallahassee**

. . . I'd like to bring greetings on behalf of our department and the city of Tallahassee. Our department is basically involved in housing, code

enforcement, providing service centers, and working with the community at large to help facilitate various programs and activities for our youth, our elderly, and our general population.

We find that with respect to the topic today, a lot, I think a lot of the tensions that exist come out of the housing situation. People are living in squalid conditions, dilapidated housing, substandard housing. They have lost hope in a lot of instances . . . and I think that the police department can attest to this, that our public housing is in a state that most of the units are in such bad condition that it just festers a lot of people's thoughts as to how they should live.

Heightened tensions . . . do exist.

I think it is permeated throughout the system so far as our young people and, especially, the recent conditions and events, as well as those who are out of work, the unemployed.

That has a significant impact on what's happening in our community.

. . . We have two universities [Florida State and Florida A&M], a major size junior college, [and] community college, but we have very little manufacturing enterprises. Mostly your businesses are usually in government or in the service industries at minimum wage, so those things tend to breed a lot of, I guess, hopelessness in some people, that they can't get ahead, they can't rise above that particular level where they are, that they have no new opportunities for them to look for, even though they go to school or to special vocational programs or whatever. When they come out there are no jobs.

### **Althemese Barnes, State Secretary, Florida State Conference of NAACP, Tallahassee Chapter**

. . . The Florida State Conference of NAACP Branches has identified a number of issues which are crucial to the citizens of the State of Florida. These issues have implications for every Florida resident. However, our concern is that in many instances they are of paramount importance to the African American community and other minority group citizens.

These issues we feel affect the status and have for some time [and added to] . . . racial and ethnic tensions in Florida.

. . . [One is] the proliferation of interracial tensions in schools throughout the State indicates the need for human relations or intergroup relations in our elementary and secondary schools across the State.

. . . The NAACP is also looking into another law which we feel will have impact on minority citizens, and all of this would affect racial tensions, and this [Federal mandatory minimum sentencing] law deals with the type of illegal substance and the penalties that are applied.

The penalties are stiffer for crack cocaine, as opposed to powder cocaine, because the latter is considered to be a middle to upper class type drug, and the former is more of the street type, cheaper drugs. We look upon that as disparity, and we need to take a look at that.

. . . [Another issue is] bias in the judicial system. The State has already undertaken to increase the number of minority and female judges in court offices. In large part these efforts depend on increased appointment of minorities and females to the Judicial Nominating Commission.

. . . [Also], excessive use of force by police agencies. [Use of force] illustrate[s] the need for better recruitment, training, and equipment of our law enforcement agencies. Excessive or inappropriate use of force is a constant source of [tension] between the Florida police agencies and the minority communities all across the State.

. . . The issue of environmental legislation [is another issue]. The siting of toxic waste dumps and other hazardous industries in poor and minority neighborhoods is a major health problem I know here in Tallahassee, and I'm pretty sure across the State.

Whether it's phosphate waste in Hillsborough County or toxic wastes and chemicals in Escambia County, the practice continues to leave minority communities with high levels of cancer and respiratory disease. This must be addressed.

. . . Improving conditions for migrant workers. Housing, education, [and] health care continue to be areas where migrants suffer in the State of Florida. The combination of low wages, pesticide poisoning, exploitation, and discrimination continue to take their toll on the State's agricultural workers. Conditions exist which really resemble slavery and need to be addressed.

[And lastly,] labor force training and employment rights. The State must take the lead in

retraining our work force. The loss of manufacturing jobs and the increased need for a more technically skilled work force is leaving many of Florida's workers out in the cold. This ties in quite a bit with the education deprivation.

We have many youth on the street now who are the offspring of other African Americans who early in the system were either kicked out, dropped out, [or] pushed out, and therefore the parents have not been able to provide adequate education, parenting skills, and it is felt that this is being played out to some degree in this crime and violence we are experiencing.

... This list is obviously not exhaustive. However, it gives a good indication of the many issues facing the citizens of Florida. One final issue that must be addressed is the continued perception fostered by public officials, law enforcement officers, and the media that all of the crime and all of the problems of this State are caused by young black males. There is no doubt that young black males are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system in the State; however, the crime problem cuts across race, ethnic, and gender lines. The problem is [all] inclusive and therefore solutions must be [all] inclusive.

In the final analysis there is an urgent need to deal with the problems of poverty, unemployment, and underemployment, education, and health if we are to make a difference in the status of racial unrest.

### **Dr. William R. Jones, Director of Black Studies, Florida State University**

... We have been saying for the past 20 years that the conflict between groups will maybe expand and explode and it's going to get worse, because we have not come up yet with the proper diagnosis of the problem, and we keep applying inadequate therapy. It's going to get worse.

... You are presupposing that the playing field has been made level. It has not been made level.

... My final point and I am finished. Whenever I come before a place like this two things stand out in my mind, one from Frederick Douglass and John [F. Kennedy].

Douglass said, "Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where anyone who's in the society feels that that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress it," and this is his punch line, "neither person nor property will ever be safe."

We are in this situation where persons and property are not safe. Douglass' diagnosis is "what is the cause of this neither person/neither property being a safe situation?" He said, "An oppression." And until you reduce oppression you will have that outcome.

Kennedy said the following, "Those who make nonviolent change impossible make violent . . .", and I want to add counterviolent, ". . . change inevitable."

### **Representative Al Lawson, Jr., Florida Legislator, State District 8**

I'd like to welcome you to the city of Tallahassee on behalf of the legislature and on behalf of the Conference of Black State Legislators.

... What we have had for a long time is we have had a separation of the races in the communities and a lack of economic development in the historically black communities, and those families that have been there for many, many years, the kids are now living in the same community with no economic progress. . . .

... If you can't resolve racial tensions as adults, what do you expect, how are you going to resolve it with students?

Because in the seventies there was always a situation with [a] merger of the institutions and that blacks were going to have to give up their institutions, and it created a lot of hostility and concern within the community. That same hostility exists today. It's very alive and well.

The racial tension in the community is . . . [had] because of . . . a lack of opportunity and a lack of sound leadership.

You have to have leadership within, from the leaders of the community, business community as well as the university community, to recognize there is a problem, and then work towards resolving these issues. That's what we have not been able to see.

**Gwendolyn Durham, Community Relations Housing Coordinator, Florida Commission on Human Relations**

I'm here on behalf of 12 commissioners of the Florida Commission on Human Relations, Ronald McElrath, our executive director, myself, and the rest of our staff.

... I just simply want to say good afternoon, greetings, welcome, and I hope you will get some insight into the tensions that we have in this community as we have all over the United States of America, and it isn't really getting any better.

... What you don't know that the commission does probably, other than employment and housing discrimination, which is comparable to title VII and title VIII of the Federal law in discrimination, is that our statute, chapter 760, does address the commission attempting to make better conditions in the community between the police and community.

... The Commission is funded at \$1.5 million. That has not increased since 1969 when the legislators saw fit to put in the statute legislation that would mandate conditions under which we could work. So that's very poor.

... We only have a very small staff of 36 persons and we handle 10,000 complaints in employment discrimination. ...

... We have no funding for community relations and for individuals trying to address this. We have to be innovative to address [surviving] without funds, and we do that by working as closely as we can with local human relations offices and other community activists in order to

stay abreast and try to see what we can do with minimum funds to assist those communities.

... There are so many complaints that we could handle ... there are so many complaints in the State of Florida in employment as well as in housing that we are not able to handle, because we don't have the staff, and we can't address it.

**Sharon Ofauni, Equal Opportunity Department, City of Tallahassee**

... [A report completed by the Tallahassee Community Relations Council was compiled by a citizens group convened by the city commission which held] community meetings throughout the community, primarily using our high schools, and we tried to get across every section of the community.

We talked to over 150 people—and this report pretty much—we tried to capture the testimony, and we have done that as best we could, and it's certainly included in the report, and the earlier parts of the report tried to summarize that.

What we found in terms of the community and what they have to say about racial tension, that indeed there is racial tension in Tallahassee, as you have already heard, we categorized what the tensions were primarily, and we ended up with about, I believe, nine categories that people had concerns about.

Those categories [of concern] were ... perceptions, economic development, education, employment, housing, media, religion, government, [and] police relations ... with a special focus ... on youth community relations. ...



## Conclusion

Throughout the briefing meetings, in every city, from both public officials and community people, the responses were emphatic that racial and ethnic tensions had increased in recent years. The litany of emphasis on the existence of harassment and the lack of equal opportunity in education, employment, housing, business opportunities, financial access, disaster relief, the justice system, and in immigration issues could only remind the Committee of the Kerner Commission's warning of a perpetuation of a separate and unequal America. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights captured this sense in the title of its Miami study in the early 1980s "Confronting Racial Isolation in Miami." This current isolation in the 1990s was strongly reflected in virtually all of the statements addressing the social, political, and economic conditions of the African American, Asian, Haitian, and Hispanic communities throughout the State of Florida.

Generally, participants in Miami cited disaster relief, immigration, and the general socio-economic plight of various ethnic groups, including Haitians, Asians, Puerto Ricans, Nicaraguans, and Cubans, along with rising tensions in the area of race relations in epidemic terms. Participants in Gainesville cited long-term student divisiveness and lack of equal treatment on the campus at the University of Florida. They were joined by participants in Jacksonville in expressing general frustration with efforts to improve race relations, minority employment opportunities and official responses to crucial problems in the areas of police-community relations, housing, and minority business opportunities in both the public and private sector. Participants in St. Petersburg, many of them confronted by demonstrating Nazis and Klansmen, voiced concern about insensitive and misguided public policy (especially within the police department) which neglects real issues confronting local citizens, thereby exacerbating race relations. Participants in Tallahassee, the State capital, expressed concern about State officials' lack of leadership in addressing the apparent increase in racial and ethnic

tensions, perceived by many Floridians as a top priority issue that can no longer be ignored.

Specifically, the Asian American community was represented by several individuals in Miami and in several of the other cities. Individuals from this community emphasized that they were often ignored in civil rights issues. Particular examples involved their elimination from local governments' minority business opportunities. Although, Asian American coalitions are in existence and working hard, the diversity of this community was considered by presenters to not be recognized by others, resulting in a lack of attention to civil rights concerns. Also, in Miami, immigration was of major concern to several presenters in that briefing meeting. The contrast of the treatment of Haitian and Cuban immigrants was considered to be a key factor in racial and ethnic tensions. Language issues were also raised, as was the difficult adjustment by Miami to this large influx of immigrants. In addition, Hurricane Andrew relief was a focus of the second Miami meeting. The black community was stated to be the hardest hit in terms of the number of individuals made homeless, but the focus of attention appeared to be elsewhere. The black community was said not to be benefiting from the business opportunities in the cleanup. FEMA, it was noted, did not have the knowledge to most effectively address these disparities. Housing discrimination was said to have increased after the storm. Lack of opportunities for full participation in the economic sector was a consistent theme. However, it reached its peak in Jacksonville. The lack of affirmative action in government contracts was critical to that community. Minority contractors, it was said, felt barred from the expanding construction opportunities. Efforts in the private sector reportedly were aimed at addressing this issue generically but the failure of local government officials to act positively with regard to minority business was seen as a severe problem by community participants at that meeting. Individuals reported racial and ethnic harassment in schools at all levels and in places such as malls,

radio talk shows, and public streets. This was particularly important in the college dominated town of Gainesville.

St. Petersburg participants spoke of efforts to address community relations that had recently been initiated after an extremely racial polarizing election, preceded by a volatile controversy surrounding the police chief. The critical importance of police actions was expressed over and over again. The lack of respect in police treatment of citizens was cited as critical to racial and ethnic tensions. It was indeed evident that police actions can be the spark that sets off a confrontation and that despite some efforts to address these problems they are still of paramount concern.

And finally, though the Advisory Committee is encouraged by the candor, apparent sensitivity, and commitment by some public officials in the

cities of St. Petersburg, Jacksonville, Miami, and Tallahassee, the Committee is equally discouraged by the lack of cooperation from other public officials in those cities and Gainesville. The Advisory Committee is also concerned about the State's apparent lack of sufficient financial resources for human relations endeavors as is reflected in the meager resources allocated to its top human relations agency, the Florida Commission on Human Relations, based in the capitol city of Tallahassee.

The Advisory Committee therefore strongly urges all Floridians, to impress upon State and local officials and citizens at-large, to refocus their attention and resources towards finding solutions to what has become, arguably, the most critical problem in Florida—racial and ethnic tensions.