

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

"WE BELIEVE IN NEW ORLEANS"

VOLUME II

THE CAUCASIAN PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY

LISTENING SESSION

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2007

6:00 P.M.

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THERESE BADON AND MICHIE BISSELL,  
CO-CHAIRS

REPORTED BY:  
DIANE W. MATHEWS, CCR

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## HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

LARRY BAGNERIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DAWN SEGURA, HRC ATTORNEY

SYNTHIA DEMONS

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THERESE BADON

FR. WALTER BAER

MICHIE BISSELL

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RABBI EDWARD P. COHN

MICHAEL COWAN

GEORGE R. GALLIEN

KEN GRAND-PRE'

MARTIN GUTIERREZ

FR. VIEN NGUYEN

FRANCIS KING

MARGARET MONTGOMERY-RICHARD

DOTTIE REESE

DR. HANA SAFAH

JANE PARKER

CRAIG M. STEWART

PATRICIA BIVINS

1 MS. BADON:

2 Good evening. I am going to ask everyone  
3 if they would please take their seats so that we can  
4 begin.

5 Thank you.

6 Well good evening, everyone and thank you  
7 so much for taking time out of your busy schedules to be  
8 with the Human Relations Commission this evening. This  
9 is merely a conversation with members of the Human  
10 Relations Commission, but we want to hear from you. We  
11 want to listen to your concerns and issues.

12 I'm Therese Badon; I serve as area  
13 development director for the United Negro College Fund  
14 and a member of the Human Relations Commission. With me  
15 tonight I have Michie Bissell, who is also a member of  
16 the Human Relations Commission. We will be serving as  
17 co-chairs for this session.

18 We have other members of the Human  
19 Relations Commission that are present here tonight. If  
20 you would stand?

21 (Members Comply.)

22 Thank you, thank you for being with Michie  
23 and I this evening.

24 I encourage you, if you haven't already  
25 done so, to please sign in. We do have a map in the

1 back of the room and what we would like for you to do is  
2 to indicate with a dot what area of the city you are  
3 representing. Also, there is a sign in sheet over there  
4 in order to make sure that we have everyone that is here  
5 this evening. There is also a survey that we would  
6 request that each of you complete at the end of the  
7 session; that is our way of being critiqued by you to  
8 let us know areas in which we can improve. Those of you  
9 who have cell phones, now would be a good time to put  
10 them on vibrate, thank you very much. We want to be  
11 able to respect those speakers tonight.

12           Before we get started, this is just a  
13 little small icebreaker, many of you I saw speaking  
14 already, but if you could just turn to your left or your  
15 right, or behind you and introduce yourself to your  
16 neighbor. (Audience complies.) Thank you very much.

17           Now before we get started, I would like to  
18 read to you a statement about the purpose of the  
19 conversations that we are having for the Human Relations  
20 Commission (HRC). The HRC is holding listening sessions  
21 for many different groups in 2007. Concerns emerging in  
22 those sessions will be publicized in the larger  
23 community as part of HRC's overall report and action  
24 plan on enhancing respect for and inclusion of diversity  
25 in New Orleans. Based on that report the HRC will make

1 specific recommendations to the Mayor, City Council and  
2 other business, education and civic leaders about steps  
3 that we must take to acknowledge, respect and include  
4 all groups more fully in the life of our city. Then the  
5 HRC will track and report your responses to the public.

6 I'm going to turn it over to Michie now.

7 MS. BISSELL:

8 Thank you, Therese.

9 The purpose of our listening session this  
10 evening is to hear what your feelings and thoughts are  
11 as one of the special groups. We will be holding 13  
12 sessions like this. We had one last month, which was  
13 for the African American professionals in this city.  
14 And of course, tonight is for the Caucasian  
15 professionals. We will be holding sessions for Muslims,  
16 for the Irish and French, for Hispanic, and it will go  
17 on for 13 sessions. We want to hear what you have to  
18 say. We will not respond, but if you want to talk to  
19 one of the commission members afterward, please feel  
20 free to do so. Or if you would like, you can fill it  
21 in on the survey.

22 I would like to introduce to you tonight,  
23 Dr. Bill Norris, who is a historian. Dr. Norris is  
24 going to give us his overview of how the Caucasians came  
25 to New Orleans and started their various businesses.

1 Bill?

2 DR. NORRIS:

3 Thank you, Michie.

4 Well basically when I look at the  
5 Caucasians in Louisiana, it's a very interesting story.  
6 The French had it for a little over 60 years. The  
7 French king saw that they were not making much money off  
8 of it, so he gave it away to his cousin, the King of  
9 Spain. Which he often thought --

10 MS. BISSELL:

11 Bill, here is the mike.

12 DR. NORRIS:

13 Oh, okay, I was afraid that I might get too  
14 loud.

15 Which he often -- the King of Spain -- he  
16 realized that he had not made adequate money out of it,  
17 there was no gold on the bayou, so he gave it to his  
18 cousin, the King of Spain. It took the King of Spain  
19 six years before he sent a little militia over to take  
20 it away from the local Frenchmen, who really didn't want  
21 to be Spanish. The Spanish had it for 40 years,  
22 Napoleon raised his head. The Spanish hadn't really  
23 made a lot out of it; they didn't find any gold on the  
24 bayou. And so Napoleon said he wanted it back. Rather  
25 than going to war over it, the King of Spain took a

1 little piece of Tuscany and traded the interior of this  
2 continent, Louisiana, New Orleans included.

3 So Louisiana was not really a strong  
4 economic powerhouse, to say the least. But then things  
5 began to change, right when all of this was happening,  
6 when the Americans got it. The first thing that  
7 happened in 1794, a man named Ed Kennedy Borat, who had  
8 a plantation where Audubon Park is, got tired to trying  
9 the traditional Louisiana crop of Indigo by which had  
10 made a blue dye like we use in our blue jeans, but there  
11 was not a lot of margin in it. So he began  
12 experimenting with sugar. Sugar was already here, but  
13 all that had been made with it was molasses, a low grade  
14 of sugar, and rum. So he began experimenting with it,  
15 probably in the kitchen and then out in the barn and  
16 into the backyard. And so he developed the first  
17 commercial process for granulating sugar. And he used  
18 the big, what we know of as sugar carob and they would  
19 line them up, like seven of them up in a row and they  
20 would label the syrup from one to the other. So then  
21 when it came out in the end, it was close to being  
22 granulated sugar, like we know today, it could be put in  
23 a barrel and shipped around the world. He bet the farm  
24 on it; literally, he mortgaged everything that he had,  
25 put in all of the sugar in it he could and bought all of

1 the sugarcane he could. He put it through his process  
2 and made something like 2,000 barrels of sugar, sent it  
3 to the sweet tooth of Europe and ran all the way to the  
4 bank. That was a very significant thing, sugarcane  
5 loves wet feet and Louisiana has got a lot of wet land.  
6 Sugarcane loves hot summer sunshine; Louisiana has a lot  
7 of sunshine. So that was a good combination for South  
8 Louisiana.

9 Another interesting thing happened in  
10 Savannah, Georgia, Kitty Greene, along with Nathanael  
11 Greene, the great general that fought in the  
12 Revolutionary War with Washington, decided that she  
13 needed help in getting education for the kids in the  
14 neighborhood of her plantation. Miss Greene wrote the  
15 president of Yale University, who was a friend of  
16 theirs, and said, "Would you send us a young man who  
17 would teach the kids in the neighborhood?" Well the  
18 young man was selected; he came down, knocked on the  
19 front door at the plantation and said, "My name is Eli  
20 Whitney." Well everybody knows who Eli Whitney was; he  
21 saw all of the slaves combing out the seeds out of the  
22 lint and out of the cotton. He said, "I can build a  
23 machine that will do that." So sure enough, he built  
24 what he called his cotton engine and we then shortened  
25 it to cotton gin. So here we've got cotton as another

1 major crop for the south.

2 Really from, if you go across Lake  
3 Pontchartrain, from there to Tennessee, what you will  
4 see is magnificent cotton country. Cotton likes dry  
5 seed and hot summer sunshine. Now we've got sugarcane  
6 and cotton right at the end of the Spanish period.

7 The Americans gave; then the last  
8 ingredient falls down from the Americans. In 1812, all  
9 of the stevedores and captains and brokers and bankers  
10 and lawyers who were out on the waterfront in front of  
11 the French Quarter, looked upriver and they described it  
12 as a floating volcano coming down the river. It was the  
13 first steamboat to arrive, appropriately named The New  
14 Orleans. Now for the first time a steamboat had come  
15 down here that could turn around and go back upstream  
16 under its' own power.

17 Sugarcane, cotton, steamboats, Louisiana  
18 then was set for big business. There were no trains to  
19 take the crops from the interior of this continent to  
20 the east coast, everything in the center of this  
21 continent had to come through New Orleans on a  
22 steamboat, be unloaded and then loaded up again on one  
23 of those tall ships to sail to the borders of the world.  
24 Boy when that time came, big time hit New Orleans. A  
25 young man, as did John McDonald, a young man could come

1 down from Baltimore, get off on a tall ship that had  
2 sailed around Florida. Walk down, rather let's say  
3 walked up river to where Canal Street is, stopped and  
4 talked to a steamboat captain and say, "Captain, would  
5 you sell me one bale of cotton?" They would negotiate a  
6 price and he'd get a stevedore to roll it down to where  
7 the strong ships were, down by Esplanade Avenue and say,  
8 "Captain, could you take on one more bale of cotton?"  
9 They would negotiate a price, John would get his money,  
10 walk down to what then was Levee Street and get himself  
11 three dozen oysters on the half shell, wash it down with  
12 a few brandies. Then the next morning he would go back  
13 up to another steamboat and say, "Captain, would you  
14 sell me two bales of cotton?" In 15 years he was  
15 building one of those big houses on St. Charles Avenue,  
16 or in the Garden District. That began the economic  
17 explosion that Louisiana became. And then Tennesseans  
18 and Kentuckians and Marylander's, everyone began to flee  
19 to New Orleans to get involved in the opportunities that  
20 were here.

21                   Consequently, when you read about the  
22 businesses of the early 1800's in New Orleans, there was  
23 the ice; there was the sugar and the cotton and then all  
24 of the infrastructure. So then banking became a major  
25 activity here in New Orleans because there was all of

1 this money changing hands down here. Such was the  
2 impact that three technology events brought about,  
3 sugar, cotton and steamboats.

4 Thank you.

5 (Audience Applause.)

6 MS. BADON:

7 Thank you, Dr. Norris, for that wonderful  
8 summary of what you all have contributed to New Orleans,  
9 we really appreciate it.

10 Now we are at the heart of our session, we  
11 really need to hear from you. As you have heard from  
12 Mr. Norris, this group has contributed a lot to this  
13 great city. So please, come up and share with the  
14 participants here tonight, the specific things that make  
15 you feel disrespected and/or not included in the life of  
16 the city. And if you will, please also suggest concrete  
17 suggestions about how this can be remedied.

18 Each person's comments should be limited to  
19 five minutes, so that in fairness to time limits we can  
20 hear from everyone. We don't have a large group here  
21 tonight, so we might be able to go into a little  
22 overtime, we will play it by ear. You will be given a  
23 one minute warning when you are near your five minute  
24 mark.

25 Before speaking, I want to state that we do

1 have a court reporter here, so I am going to ask that  
2 you please remember to state your name before you take  
3 the microphone. Don't be shy; this is your opportunity  
4 to help make our city a better place, so we need to hear  
5 from you tonight.

6 Who wants to get started?

7 (No response.)

8 Anybody? Does anybody in the room wish to  
9 speak?

10 MR. MEUNIER:

11 The question is: How do we feel  
12 disrespected, or not?

13 MS. BADON:

14 Exactly, how do you feel disrespected as a  
15 Caucasian living in the City of New Orleans; or not  
16 included in the City of New Orleans? Or if there is  
17 something else that you wanted to bring up in regard to  
18 race relations in the City of New Orleans, please do so.

19 MR. MEUNIER:

20 My name is Jerry Meunier and I'm an  
21 attorney. I, as a white professional, I don't feel  
22 disrespected. I say that because I believe that all of  
23 the institutions of this city and in fact, in this  
24 country, are set up to protect and preserve white collar  
25 privilege. Now that is my belief. So as a white person

1 of money, I think I have a lot of advantages because of  
2 the way the system works. But the other part of your  
3 question about disrespect raises a different issue for  
4 me, which I'm disturbed about, that is the extent to  
5 which we elect our political leaders based on race. I'm  
6 disturbed by the extent to which we seem to be unable --  
7 and when I say we, I mean on both sides of the racial  
8 divide, or all of the racial modifications. We seem to  
9 still have difficulty making choices on merits as  
10 opposed to the category of a person, that being racial.

11           And I guess I'm able to say disrespected,  
12 only in the sense that since the 50's this city has been  
13 one in which the whites have the economic power and the  
14 blacks have the political power since the demographics  
15 have led to by and large the election of black judges,  
16 black mayors and a majority black city council. Which  
17 is not in itself anything that I'm complaining about;  
18 it's only that I think we have gotten ourselves into a  
19 pattern where whites distrust the process. And blacks,  
20 blacks are worried about not voting for a black  
21 candidate because they feel that if they don't have the  
22 economic power, they need to have the political power.  
23 And I understand that, if I were black, I would be doing  
24 the same thing. But I think that the concern is,  
25 particularly after Katrina; that if we don't overcome

1 this and the world is watching us as we recover and  
2 rebuild, that I think that we have missed a great  
3 opportunity and stay stuck in the past.

4 MR. DINEDEKER:

5 If you don't mind, let me come up there, I  
6 have a few notes.

7 MS. BADON:

8 Sure.

9 MR. DINEDEKER:

10 I had no idea what the topic was going to  
11 be about when I came here, although I had a vague idea  
12 from comments that a black friend of mine had who was  
13 here last week. He's a friend of mine whom I have  
14 worked with for about the last 15 or 20 years.

15 My name is Tom Dinedeker; I'm retired. I  
16 was a banker. I moved here about 35 years ago and  
17 married into a local family and was able, or was invited  
18 to be a member of a number of different organizations  
19 and enjoyed that. And more recently have, I have gotten  
20 out of that, more as a function of age and retirement  
21 than anything else. But let me just comment on how I  
22 kind of see the situation of New Orleans, and I see it  
23 as one of, in broad terms of inclusion and exclusion.  
24 How I would characterize inclusion would be that as a  
25 culture, and I think you could probably take a lot of

1 cultures in the cities and break them down. But in  
2 general ways I would say inclusion is typically more  
3 friendly, typically non judgmental and often results in  
4 a loss of identity for particular groups because you've  
5 got more of a blending of all of the citizens of that  
6 town or municipality. I think it is typically  
7 representative of stronger ego or self confidence on the  
8 part of the individuals that make up that society or  
9 culture. It's more, probably more change, probably more  
10 rapid. There is greater acceptance of it. There is a  
11 welcoming of outsiders, of individuals and companies and  
12 the encouragement of it in any, in every respect, from  
13 banking to tasks to individuals who are included in the  
14 culture of the city and the clubs and society. I think  
15 in an inclusive culture there is more concern about  
16 others. And particularly, I think perhaps on education,  
17 that even though you might be able to provide an  
18 education for your own children, you are probably more  
19 likely to be concerned about the general well being of  
20 all of the children. There is probably also more  
21 spreading of power and wealth in an inclusive  
22 environment.

23 And then I look at exclusion, and I think  
24 that typically as the word would imply, it is more  
25 separate, often more judgmental, protection of identity

1 and customs, and that is a good thing. I mean, in one  
2 case you are able to protect a lot of customs that, that  
3 all groups have. Whereas with inclusion I think you are  
4 more likely to lose that. Often I think there is  
5 asymptomatic or lack of confidence that often excludes  
6 outsiders, and just less likely to care about others.  
7 And again I would go back to education, where it is less  
8 likely that there will be concern about how others are  
9 being educated. There is a greater likelihood of being  
10 worried about holding on to wealth, and not risking it,  
11 less venture capital and generally more provincial.

12 So then how does that apply to New Orleans?  
13 And what I would attempt to explain is why did we go  
14 from 600,000 people to 400,000 prior to Katrina. I  
15 think that in the large part it is because of our  
16 policies of exclusion. Now personally I have  
17 absolutely no qualm with anyone or any one of us forming  
18 any organization that we choose to and set up our own  
19 guidelines as to how we include or exclude people. I  
20 think that is a right that we have under the  
21 constitution. But at the same time I think we have to  
22 recognize that if we have general policies of exclusion,  
23 and I'm applying this to all race and creed. It  
24 certainly is true in the black community as much as it  
25 is in the white community, that we tend to group

1 together as to our organizations and our clubs. I think  
2 that in recent years there has been more of an attempt  
3 to cross that line, but I think it still is a  
4 significant theme in this city. There are many  
5 prominent clubs, both social and athletic, where they  
6 are generally either black or white.

7 One of the impacts of that, which I think  
8 has been severe in New Orleans, is the loss of the  
9 middle class. A lot of us talk about white flight, from  
10 the viewpoint of the white community, but I would -- and  
11 I would love to see the numbers on this. But I would  
12 suggest that there has been every bit as much, if not  
13 more, black flight from the city of the middle class.  
14 When I talk with the few friends that I do have in the  
15 black community, I typically hear that all of their  
16 friends from St. Aug, one or two are here, all of the  
17 rest are gone. So I'm not offering suggestions on how  
18 we change that, but I think that if we clearly  
19 understand where we are and how we got here, then, and  
20 if you agree with that, then we probably have a heck of  
21 a lot better chance of facing the issue and dealing with  
22 it and moving forward.

23 How do I see relations, black, white, race?  
24 Um, I see very little crossover. Um, I think very few  
25 in the white community on a regular basis have had

1 blacks into their home or have had dinner on a regular  
2 basis out with blacks. It just, it just doesn't happen.  
3 I think that in my, my daughter's community that is much  
4 more common, much more accepted, it's not an issue. But  
5 I certainly think that it is an issue in the old group  
6 that I'm a part of and that is the group that I can  
7 speak to.

8 I think there is tremendous fear of black  
9 youth. The crime wave going on, you know, we don't know  
10 really what the numbers are. How many kids are really  
11 perpetrating this? Is it limited to just that limited  
12 number of black youths in the drug trade? We don't have  
13 that, because there certainly in the white community is  
14 immense fear of the black youth. And I'm afraid that it  
15 will, unless we can a control over that, it is going to  
16 have an increasingly disastrous impact on the city, on  
17 our universities and our lifestyle here.

18 You know, I can say this personally, and I  
19 think that I can speak for other whites, that  
20 generality, and sometimes it's an urban myth, but that  
21 tired of taking care of me, um, tired of hearing that  
22 slavery is an excuse for why this or why that. I  
23 personally believe that if you want to be a victim, you  
24 can be a hell of a good victim, but that is what you are  
25 going to be is a victim. So in my mind, some of that is

1 reason for the black community to redefine themselves,  
2 not, and none of this is a generalization in a very  
3 broad way, but when you fall back on that it's a reason  
4 or an explanation for why things are, it's a hard box to  
5 get out of.

6 Mr. Menuier made a comment about the  
7 politics. I think we also have to look at to who  
8 provided the funding for a lot of the judges and a lot  
9 of the other elected officers and mayors that have been  
10 put in place. And much of that has come from the white  
11 community because I think that when we are honest with  
12 ourselves, I think that we have realized that we have  
13 enjoyed the ability to get tickets fixed for our  
14 daughters or to get our assessment altered, or to have  
15 any number of zoning changes effected for us. So I  
16 think we are all in this pot together, this is not just  
17 the black politicians, I think a lot of whites have  
18 wanted to continue to have this sort of laissez faire,  
19 whatever you want to call it, attitude where we can get  
20 what we want by supporting the politicians whom we feel  
21 will do our wish. That is a big problem.

22 Where do we go from here? I think that  
23 forums such as this; obviously are wonderful. I don't  
24 have an answer as to how do we change that mindset to  
25 one of inclusion where we are out there welcoming our

1 neighbors, welcoming individuals from other cities,  
2 being more inclusive. It's a minor, it's a major  
3 change, but unless it begins to happen, particular in  
4 these post Katrina days, I think it's going to be very,  
5 very difficult, to progress and be progressive and be  
6 inclusive as a society and to be in a place where we  
7 want to live.

8 I will make one comment. I think that that  
9 the idea, um, I do not feel disrespected. I do not feel  
10 not included. So maybe you will want to look at the  
11 topic for these forums in a more general sense. You  
12 know, how to do you feel about race, how do you feel  
13 about the other races? You know, how can we improve on  
14 that? But, that's it.

15 I appreciate it, thanks.

16 (Audience Applause.)

17 MS. BADON:

18 Thank you.

19 MR. TWITCHELL:

20 My name is Keith Twitchell.

21 I just want to echo what this gentleman  
22 said, that as a white male in the 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
23 America, I agree that I live in a society that is  
24 basically designed for my benefit. And I want to say  
25 that the experiences I have had where I was disrespected

1 personally because of being white were really eloquent  
2 stories scholastically, mine were minor personal  
3 irritations. Being ignored in a store, that is not  
4 significant in the overall scheme of things.

5           Professionally though it has somewhat, it  
6 has been a little more troublesome. A little less than  
7 three years ago I took over as President of Committee  
8 For a Better New Orleans. It could have been said that  
9 my credentials for that position at that time were a  
10 little bit thin. I spent most of my life self employed  
11 as a writer. The only organization of any substance  
12 that I was involved with at that time was the Krewe du  
13 Vieux. And yet the only question anybody had about  
14 whether I was qualified for that job or not was if I was  
15 white. And I just, well, what has been interesting is  
16 that that has turned out to sometimes be a valid point,  
17 because there are times when -- and my organization is  
18 very a broad based, multi racial, multi generational  
19 group. Yet because I am the face of the organization,  
20 more than any of my board members or co-chairs, there  
21 are times when my organization was distrusted and  
22 disrespected because I'm white and I'm up front with it.

23           I have been in situations post Katrina  
24 where the attempts to be broadly inclusive in projects  
25 and programs and efforts going forth, um, actually get,

1 I don't want to say derailed, but have been halted or  
2 held up and opportunities missed because there is  
3 incredible emphasis on we have got to have everybody at  
4 the table. That is what I have seen; we've got to have  
5 everybody on the train. Well the train is never going  
6 to leave the station if you wait for everybody to get on  
7 the train. Now, I also value as my core and throughout  
8 my organization, diversity and inclusiveness. So I  
9 don't have the answers, but I think that the really,  
10 really important question is: How do we work on  
11 inclusiveness and work on balance and work on coming  
12 together without paralyzing important things that must  
13 go forward.

14 Thank you.

15 MR. GRANADA:

16 My name is Gary Granada.

17 I want to echo that I like this theme of  
18 inclusion and exclusion. When I first came to New  
19 Orleans in '91, I came to Jazz Fest and I fell in love  
20 with New Orleans. This place is so inclusive culturally  
21 that my wife and I were so enriched by it that I  
22 couldn't wait to get back down here and eventually I  
23 made my way back down here. I felt that there were a  
24 lot of opportunities for me and then I started  
25 understanding the professional exclusions down here.

1           I will tell you a little bit about me,  
2 professionally. My undergraduate is in Music and  
3 English Education. I grew up on the college campus, the  
4 son of a professor, I stayed in school. I got a  
5 master's in nutrition, I'm a registered dietician. And  
6 then I went on to Georgia State and I got my PhD in  
7 Exercise Physiology with a concentration in sports  
8 nutrition. I know it all sounds really fancy but  
9 actually nutrition is in a degree in home ec and  
10 exercise physiology is a degree in P.E.

11           (Audience laughter.)

12           In P.E. we all teach a lot of future  
13 education courses. And as a graduate's assistant I was  
14 given a course that nobody else wanted to teach but  
15 every student in the college had to take about health  
16 education. And being in Atlanta I had the opportunity  
17 to this fabulous resource, the Centers for Disease and  
18 Control and Prevention that monitors risk behaviors  
19 amongst youth and adults across the country and compiles  
20 incredible data. They also have a division of  
21 adolescent school of health and they have taken that  
22 database and they have developed a coordinated and  
23 integrated school of health model that used the health  
24 of its students, of the individual, as the center of the  
25 school curriculum experience and the school is the

1 center of the community. I then took that approach  
2 toward the college education, this required class that  
3 three or 400 students had to take the course. It became  
4 an incredible experience of empowering kids of using  
5 these skills to work in their community and to work in  
6 their schools.

7 So when I finished my PhD and having the  
8 combination of nutrition at that time, which was a  
9 unique combination, I had several offers on the table  
10 and one was to come down to New Orleans to the  
11 University of New Orleans. Well what better place to  
12 come to? A city that I love, and if you're going to be  
13 a health professional, a place that has the highest rate  
14 of youth obesity, the highest youth risk behaviors in  
15 the country. One of the issues that I thought about,  
16 after the romance of coming here had worn off -- well  
17 the romance of coming here hadn't worn off -- but once I  
18 opened my eyes and realized that this is a lot like my  
19 hometown in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. I realized that there  
20 were a lot of big fish in a small pond that don't want  
21 change. It's still the plantation. And I have been  
22 frustrated by trying to find out, well okay, where do we  
23 implement this program? It's implemented in about 20  
24 states, which are progressive states. It is successful  
25 and opens up all kinds of funding and it puts the

1 schools in the community's hands. It puts the  
2 educational experience in the youth's hands to do what  
3 they will do. So that when you give them those skills,  
4 they will change their community.

5 I have been talking to myself here over the  
6 last seven or eight years. After Katrina, I had offers  
7 across the country for some very high paying jobs. And  
8 I actually moved out to Denver to take one of those. I  
9 had to come back, because I'm a part of this community.  
10 I'm now an unemployed part of this community because do  
11 I want to live in the city that I love or do I want to  
12 pursue the career. And actually the community is more  
13 important than the career. My day-to-day life here is  
14 more important, because this is where I feel comfortable  
15 living each day.

16 I hear of the recovery school districts, I  
17 hear of charter schools. I hear all of these great  
18 things that are supposedly happening. I go seek them  
19 out. I have 20 years experience and an advanced degree.  
20 Nobody calls me. It just continues to be amazing that -  
21 - well, I'm no longer amazed by it -- that we basically  
22 have gone back to the way it was before. We talk about  
23 all of this change. I see that all Katrina has done is  
24 reshuffle the deck. It's still the same people trying  
25 to keep their own jobs and not wanting to excel. It's

1 still the big fish in the small pond. And that is  
2 unfortunate, because there are so many marvelous things  
3 that can be done.

4           There are probably -- this is not Gary  
5 Granada's program, this is the Center for Disease  
6 Control, the Department for Adolescent School of Health.  
7 I have a lot of credentials, but I'm just smart enough  
8 to know who is smarter than me and I do what they do.

9           I came here tonight to say that there are  
10 creative programs out there. There are people doing the  
11 things that I hear folks around here talking about  
12 doing, but I don't see any of it being done. My  
13 question is: When are we going to allow people with  
14 skills, that aren't necessarily from New Orleans, that  
15 don't have the connections? They don't know somebody  
16 who actually awards jobs based on merit, not on just who  
17 you are and who you know.

18           Thank you.

19           MR. MEUNIER:

20           Can you be more specific about what stands  
21 in the way of implementing the use of CDC programs here?  
22 Give me a concrete example of what doesn't happen and  
23 what does happen to implement the program?

24           MR. GRANADA:

25           Well first, you know, somebody - well let

1 me go back to the podium.

2 I guess I really can't answer that because  
3 for these type programs I have tried numerous avenues  
4 for getting help on it, for getting chokeholds, whether  
5 it was the University of New Orleans, where I was  
6 employed. Some of these charter schools, volunteering  
7 at local churches and always seem to be running into the  
8 politics. And it's never, "Let's move forward." It's  
9 always, "Well that sounds interesting." Because it's so  
10 foreign to down here, one thing, getting back to CDC  
11 monitors behaviors. And after I got all of my knowledge  
12 about nutrition and knowledge about exercise science,  
13 there was still a big piece missing. And that is when I  
14 started studying behaviors.

15 We can have, everybody has all of the  
16 knowledge that you need to live a healthy lifestyle, so  
17 why don't you do it? I mean, sedentary lifestyle,  
18 cigarette smoking, high fat diet, I don't think that I  
19 have said anything new, I believe, including risk  
20 factors for cardiovascular disease. Yet people are  
21 still smoking. We still have more kids that smoke daily  
22 rather than exercise three times a week for 20 minutes  
23 at a rate that would increase heart rate. It's  
24 attitudes and belief systems that can change behaviors;  
25 and that is a hard one to get out. To actually change

1 somebody's culture, to change mindset and change those  
2 attitudes and beliefs, to then foster the change in  
3 behavior. I know how to do that within school systems,  
4 but to do that in political systems, especially small  
5 type political systems, where you quite frequently run  
6 into people who may have minimum qualifications for  
7 their job, yet they are in a supervisory position.

8 So those are my experiences, because I will  
9 tell you right now that none of the giants in the field  
10 of exercise science, nutrition and wellness behavior  
11 change, they are not in Louisiana. I'm not one of them,  
12 but I have had the good fortune of being a student for  
13 some of them and I know what their programs are. They  
14 are not here, but there are people here that have those  
15 positions under which those programs could get started.

16 Thank you.

17 MR. MENUIER:

18 Thank you.

19 MS. BADON:

20 Anybody else?

21 MR. GROOME:

22 My name is Bill Groome.

23 I'm also retired and I've been mostly a  
24 business man and I've also taught. I would also like to  
25 say that I don't feel excluded. I don't feel

1 disrespected. And I don't, I don't know, I guess since  
2 that is the topic, I would just say that if it does  
3 happen to me and somebody disrespects me, it's not  
4 because of my gender or my race or my age, or even where  
5 I'm from. If they are being disrespectful, I just try  
6 to protect myself and I say something back. I regret  
7 the premise that everybody; or every group should feel  
8 disrespected, I'm not sure that that is a fact.

9 I think that in terms of race relations or  
10 issues here; what comes to my mind first of all is that  
11 the black community in this country has had a terrible,  
12 terrible experience. It's just, what has happened to  
13 the blacks is incorrigible and we will never ever get  
14 over it. It is the worse, it is the principle, the  
15 worse thing that ever happened in this country. It will  
16 never go away; I don't believe that race will never not  
17 be a factor in this country. It will always be one, I  
18 think.

19 I am very, very lucky to have had a strong  
20 father who taught me, taught me well, a good education  
21 and I have been lucky. I've been respected at my work,  
22 I've been lucky in that. So for me to put myself in the  
23 shoes of a black person, it's difficult. I think that  
24 the black people have certainly not had the  
25 opportunities in the past that we have. I think that

1 the citizens of New Orleans and the vast majority of  
2 people in this country wish the black community  
3 particularly well. We have been well educated about how  
4 poorly they were treated in the days of slavery, the  
5 days of segregation, we understand that and we know  
6 that. We really, I think that most of the people that I  
7 know, most of the people who, if they would say  
8 something, would like to see more blacks in power, more  
9 blacks doing well. I think certainly that there are  
10 some people who don't want that, but on the whole,  
11 corporations in this country want that. I think that  
12 the governors' wants that. I think that on the whole we  
13 are well served by the black community doing better.

14 To the extent that we have an underclass in  
15 this country, the underclass is predominately black and  
16 that is a stain on us and it is a problem. If we  
17 continue to define it as a problem, the problem as a  
18 race problem, I don't think that we are going to get  
19 away from that. My best -- my best suggestions and I  
20 guess they are a bit naïve, but I would just ask that  
21 the leadership, particularly in the black community, to  
22 quit stirring the pot. I don't think that it is a good  
23 idea for people to consider themselves' victims. If you  
24 are a victim, you have no control of what is happening  
25 to you. And if you don't have control of what is

1 happening to you, you get depressed. That is true, that  
2 depressed people don't have control over their lives.  
3 If you feel that you have been so poorly treated in your  
4 life that you feel like you are a victim, a victim  
5 consistently, in the long term for you to feel like  
6 that, a victim.

7 I mean; the premise of this is how do you  
8 feel disrespected? I don't feel disrespected. And that  
9 is not to say that plenty of black people aren't  
10 disrespected, haven't been disrespected. I know some  
11 have been and some have not been. But I don't think  
12 that it helps to not point out -- look in this city, the  
13 power in this city, the economic power in this city  
14 primarily is white but the head of the largest  
15 corporation in this city is a black man. He is being  
16 succeeded by another black man. The mayor, the police  
17 chief, the city council is all predominately black; our  
18 majority black city council. Take in this country, the  
19 largest communication company in this country, Time  
20 Warner, is run by a black man. The largest financial  
21 organizations in this country, American Express, Merrill  
22 Lynch are run by black men. I think that you can look  
23 at that; it is how you look at things. Those people  
24 didn't get there because of affirmative action. The  
25 head of Merrill Lynch; the head of American Express; the

1 Secretary of State of this country; the last Secretary  
2 of State in this country; the top general of this  
3 country. These people got there because of their  
4 ability to do things and they didn't look upon  
5 themselves as victims.

6 So I guess that would be my point. I think  
7 that there are so many reasons to believe in optimism.  
8 I really don't do well in giving people advice, but I  
9 would just say that things like leaders in the community  
10 talking about Chocolate City and things like that is not  
11 constructive.

12 Thank you.

13 MS. BADON:

14 Thank you. Anyone else?

15 (No response.)

16 Well let me ask this question, and I have  
17 heard from this side (indicating) of the room, but what  
18 about some of you from this side?

19 Some of you over here, do you feel like we  
20 have a race relation issue in the City of New Orleans?  
21 You do?

22 MS. FREEMAN:

23 I do.

24 MS. BADON:

25 Can I hear from you?

1 MS. FREEMAN:

2 I would rather speak from up there because  
3 I don't like to talk with people behind me, I would  
4 rather face everyone.

5 MS. BADON:

6 Sure, come on up.

7 MS. FREEMAN:

8 My name is Aimee Freeman and I am a small  
9 business owner.

10 I am a lifelong resident although I have  
11 lived somewhere else for about six years when I went to  
12 college and I went to D.C. As a small business owner  
13 and somebody who has worked really hard to build my own  
14 business. I travel and I do a lot of work outside of  
15 the city, my main clients are not here. I do a lot of  
16 travel; I see a lot of people. I teach workshops for  
17 eight people and I see an incredible blend of people at  
18 these workshops. I see this internal mixture of  
19 different races or economic mixture in other companies  
20 in areas of the United States that I don't see here.  
21 And I don't feel, although I look for it and I wonder  
22 where is it and why it doesn't come together here. I  
23 don't love the idea of the victim and I'm not sure how  
24 we come together here. I think there are opportunities  
25 on an individual basis. I have made friends with other

1 races and I've been put in positions where I can help  
2 people and they can help me. I think there are  
3 opportunities and putting people in groups, we are going  
4 to divide and when you divide people, you may end up  
5 having people end up venting and I don't believe in  
6 venting, it doesn't help. The only recommendation I  
7 would have tonight is to rather than have separate  
8 groups, to bring the groups together, not divide them.

9 I don't believe in the question, am I  
10 being disrespected, maybe it's just not relevant to me.  
11 I know that a couple of people have said that. I think  
12 that we should be looking for a solution towards going  
13 forward as a city. How do we do that? I don't have the  
14 solutions, I wish I did. I think that one of the things  
15 that we could do after you have these 13 sessions, the  
16 one suggestion that I would make is that there would be  
17 a 14<sup>th</sup> session where you bring in everybody and have them  
18 talking together, that would be a solution. If you just  
19 all talk independently, that would just make us mad and  
20 we are just venting. I know that everybody has to vent  
21 at times, of course, but I don't believe in coming  
22 forward to vent, I really like to see solutions. So I  
23 don't know if that answers your specific question.

24 MS. BADON:

25 It does.

1 MS. FREEMAN:

2 I mean, not that I don't vent. There are  
3 days when I want to just move away because I'm  
4 frustrated with politics but then by the end of the day  
5 I think about what keeps me here, not just my business,  
6 my family, the culture. I do think that there are  
7 opportunities here, it's a fabulous culture, and food,  
8 things like that; you can't get it any other place.

9 MS. BADON:

10 Thank you. Anyone else?

11 MR. RAZOUR:

12 My name is John Razour. I am an engineer  
13 and I have been here for about six years and I manage a  
14 company called Petrotech.

15 I want to start off by saying that, as for  
16 me, I don't feel disrespected, however I do see a race  
17 problem. I came here and then probably a month later  
18 Mardi Gras came about and that is the first time when I  
19 started to notice things. I saw that it didn't fail  
20 that in almost every one of the parades of the school  
21 bands were either 100 percent white or black almost 100  
22 percent. Then I thought, what is wrong with this  
23 system? Even though in the groups now and then you may  
24 have a token black or a token white in the school  
25 groups. So the system is broken, an image from the

1 outside and probably people foresee it as such.

2           However I don't agree with the person who  
3 said that the system is stacked in our favor. I don't  
4 see anything that is stacked in my favor as a white  
5 person. I do believe however that we do hold our  
6 organizations accountable, that they cannot really be  
7 exclusive of the other races. I don't hold it as very  
8 normal for the parade groups or the school system to say  
9 that I want all white or all black, it's almost immoral  
10 to talk about it as such. Unless we are going to hold  
11 the school system, or whoever is in charge, accountable,  
12 they are not going to change it.

13           The second thing, I think that the best  
14 thing that happened to us is that the school system is  
15 falling apart because of Katrina. I think that  
16 privatization would enable the people who could do  
17 better and work with our schools, instead of forcing  
18 kids to a failed school system in which they were not  
19 able to learn, that was not working. I also don't  
20 believe we have to have a lot of sympathy just because  
21 they are black or white, it should not matter, I think  
22 we should hold them accountable. Whether they are  
23 underprivileged or rich, we need a school system that  
24 works. Based on the news, there are funds; they should  
25 be accountable to teach our children, I do see the

1 problem; I don't think we have something that is  
2 structurally broken in our favor, however I do believe  
3 that in the current system some of the blacks believe  
4 that they are underprivileged and that is part of the  
5 problem, because that lessens the self-esteem or lessens  
6 aspiration of the group. And by us, by the white person  
7 thinking that they really need a hand, that is not  
8 really helping them, I think it is increasing their  
9 dependency. So I tend to be a little bit more critical  
10 of this from the dependency issue.

11 I also worry that our politicians are way  
12 out of line, you're right (indicating), administratively  
13 there really shouldn't be what was mentioned, the  
14 Chocolate Factory, or Chocolate City, whatever. That is  
15 not appropriate from any governmental official in any  
16 place to openly say I am marketing for a certain group  
17 of people based on race. I was very disappointed in the  
18 crossover like that, just having the mayor say that. I  
19 am an outside person; I don't feel that is okay, either  
20 for whites or for blacks. I was very disappointed in  
21 the amount of blacks that voted for the whites because  
22 the candidates were somewhat a pretty good  
23 representation of the society in that. So the problem  
24 has manifested itself in this format. And is there an  
25 advantage that is in store for us from all of that? No,

1 I do think that the perception there should have been  
2 addressed.

3 I don't tend to coin that -- I have lived  
4 in other cities, in Chicago, I have lived in  
5 Philadelphia, I have lived in Houston and I have lived  
6 in Pittsburgh -- and all of them have a pretty  
7 significant black minority that did not necessary view  
8 themselves as either being dependency of the system. In  
9 my first job, my boss was a black engineer and he was  
10 probably the best engineer that I have ever worked with,  
11 I worked with him for eight years. I never looked at  
12 him as black person, just as a good engineer. And I  
13 don't think that any person here should look at a person  
14 as being black or white. That is my take on the  
15 subject.

16 MS. BADON:

17 Thank you.

18 MR. TWITCHELL:

19 Keith Twitchell. I just want to respond to  
20 the most startling term that I know of, to say that I  
21 have never, ever, ever in my life been pulled over while  
22 driving a car and been asked, "What are you doing in  
23 this neighborhood?" And I do not have a single African  
24 American friend who has not been pulled over for DWD, so  
25 if that is not systemic bias, I don't know what is.

1 MS. BADON:

2 Any more comments?

3 (No response.)

4 No more comments? Okay, Michie?

5 MS. BISSELL:

6 I want to thank everyone for coming this  
7 evening and thank you for sharing your thoughts and  
8 feelings. I think we have gotten a lot of good ideas  
9 tonight.

10 At this time I would also like to ask Larry  
11 Bagneris, our Executive Director, to come up and say a  
12 few words before we conclude this listening session.

13 MR. BAGNERIS:

14 Before I do that, I would just ask everyone  
15 to give a hand for Michie and Therese for doing a  
16 wonderful job tonight as co-chairs.

17 (Audience Applause.)

18 I want to introduce Bill Knecht with the  
19 Eracism group. Bill, I would like for you to come up  
20 and share a few comments.

21 MR. KNECHT:

22 I'm a little shy, I did sneak into the  
23 meeting.

24 MR. BAGNERIS:

25 If you would like to share a couple of

1        comments before I do the closing comments?

2                MR. KNECHT:

3                Okay. I won't make any professional  
4        comments on behalf of the organization, but I will make  
5        some personal comments.

6                I came here about 15 years ago from the  
7        northeast having never really lived or grown up around  
8        black folks. So about nine years ago I saw an ad in the  
9        paper that there was a meeting for Eracism. I didn't  
10       really know how I felt about black people or how I was  
11       prejudiced, or whatever. So I went to a meeting about  
12       eight years ago and I got hooked. I have been to over  
13       700 meetings where black folks and white folks are  
14       sitting down and talking about these issues that you are  
15       talking about today.

16               So I don't speak for the organization, but  
17       what I am going to tell you is my personal experiences  
18       from what I have learned from those over 700 meetings.  
19       Number one, I do believe now that there is such a thing  
20       as white privilege. That, as the gentleman said, I  
21       haven't had the experience of being followed around in  
22       the store for example. And there are other stories that  
23       I hear about all of the time from black folks. One,  
24       that clearly not only white privileges exist, but the  
25       legacy of slavery still exists, I hear stories every

1 week about how, for example, the Willie Litch speech  
2 that was made in 1700 about how plantation owners could  
3 keep the slaves down by pitting them against each other,  
4 by class, by whether they are on the field, or rather  
5 they are in the house, or rather by color, or age. And  
6 this still goes on in this community today. I hear  
7 stories about it all of the time.

8           The other thing that we talked about a lot  
9 is how can there still be racism in this community if  
10 the mayor is black and the judges are black and so forth  
11 and so on. But I can tell you that the suspicion of the  
12 people in the black community is that still there are  
13 white men behind the scenes that are controlling  
14 everything. And to the extent that, for example, the  
15 Danzinger Bridge, well how come there were two black  
16 officers on the bridge that may have been shooting  
17 people, the government, can they be racist? Well we  
18 have come to the conclusion of it; the answer is yes,  
19 because they are tied up on the whole systemic response  
20 that still exists in this community.

21           The other -- I had some other thoughts as  
22 well, but I would just say that my hope of a general  
23 solution, for example, is that when there is racism  
24 going on in this community, the best example that I can  
25 think of systemic racism is the state that the public

1 school systems are in, the state that the public housing  
2 is in and the crime in this community. The black on  
3 black crime in this community, where when you hear about  
4 that it's on the seventh page, but when it's somebody  
5 who is white and is the victim of crime, that is on the  
6 front page and you have protests and so forth and so on.

7 So that is some of the things that I have  
8 learned by going to these meetings. That is what we do,  
9 is to try to bring folks together to talk about these  
10 things. To talk with each other as opposed to at each  
11 other or about each other.

12 MR. MEUNIER:

13 Excuse me, may I say something?

14 MS. BADON:

15 Sure.

16 MR. MEUNIER:

17 I didn't want the meeting to end without  
18 saying something that is a bit responsive to what I  
19 heard from my friend over here about not feeling that as  
20 a white person he has any advantages. With all due  
21 respect, I couldn't disagree more, but we need to have  
22 this discussion. And this is what I want to say, if the  
23 different races cannot sit down in the same room and  
24 begin to have these conversations we are in big trouble  
25 in this city and in this country. I would hope that

1 this group would eventually bring together the Caucasian  
2 professionals, the African American professionals and  
3 the growing group of Hispanics. The first thing I would  
4 like to say is that as a lawyer, one of the things we  
5 will deal with is words. We don't even have an agreed  
6 upon definition of racism. If you ask a person of color  
7 what he or she thinks of racism, they will speak in  
8 systemic terms. They will tell you stories, like my  
9 black lawyer friend was carrying a television and the  
10 police over and stopped him as a suspicious person and  
11 that never happening to a white guy. So you will hear  
12 their story, they don't care whether you are a bigot or  
13 not, individually, that is not the issue here. When you  
14 go talk over here and talk to a white person and ask  
15 them, "What do you think about racism?" The first thing  
16 they will tell you is, "I'm not bigot. I don't see  
17 color. Everybody is the same to me." They bring it  
18 down to their individual life and defend themselves. So  
19 we don't even begin the conversation on the same page.  
20 Which as a lawyer, I can tell that this case will never  
21 settle just because you will never even be able to tell  
22 the jury what the law is, it won't happen.

23 As a lawyer, my hope is, look I came here  
24 tonight prepared to talk about all of the things that  
25 are broken and all of the hopes about education, and

1 infrastructure, politics, housing and jobs, the  
2 diversified economy. I didn't know where this was going  
3 to lead, but the one overriding thing is that I was  
4 hoping that we would talk about that has really  
5 dominated tonight is racism. And my hope is that we  
6 can have conversations in this post Katrina city that we  
7 all love together that has put us in the same room, get  
8 on the same page and understand the working definition  
9 that we're dealing with.

10 White people must realize that they are as  
11 broken by it as blacks. We're as broken by racism as  
12 blacks are. The fact that we're privileged doesn't mean  
13 that we're free of it. We're as much enslaved by racism  
14 as blacks are, it's a spiritual slavery. I'm walking  
15 around with a knapsack on my back because I'm white,  
16 full of privilege; that is the way it is. I see it in  
17 the legal system, the managing system, the educational  
18 system and we're kidding ourselves. And look, everybody  
19 stands up and says, "Oh, we shouldn't be in the victim  
20 hood and there are blacks in charge of Merrill Lynch."  
21 You know, that is wonderful, but you know slavery was  
22 pretty recent in the scheme of things. We are kidding  
23 ourselves if we think that racism and the carrying over  
24 of slavery is gone.

25 Racism is systemic; it's built in the

1 institutions of this whole country. And New Orleans has  
2 an opportunity because we are a gumbo. We get together  
3 at festivals; we can get together at Jazz Fest. We've  
4 got so many things that we can build on. It's  
5 disheartening to see us not doing that and, my God, I  
6 hope that this group can maybe be a catalyst of some  
7 sort of conversation with everyone in the room agreeing  
8 to what it means and how it fits.

9 Thank you.

10 (Audience applause.)

11 MR. BAGNERIS:

12 Thank you. The first thing I want to do  
13 is, I know how valuable people's times are -- somebody  
14 else wants to speak?

15 MS. BADON:

16 Mr. Norris.

17 MR. BAGNERIS:

18 Please, please come forward.

19 MR. NORRIS:

20 I just wanted to say that if we don't like  
21 the issues, how can we make a difference ourselves? We  
22 talk about the problems and we hear all of these issues,  
23 how can we make a difference ourselves.

24 Betty and I were aware of this problem  
25 after living in New Orleans and completely being

1 separate from race as far as social relationships,  
2 which means other relationships to me. So we made a  
3 decision ourselves that we were going to find some  
4 involvement with African Americans that would bring us  
5 into a dialogue. So we had both taken training to  
6 become tour guides so we found some individuals that  
7 looked like they had the skills to put together a tour  
8 that would be unique for African Americans and we  
9 brought them together. We met regularly, once a week,  
10 in our home in the French Quarter for a year, I guess it  
11 was, as we made plans for this.

12 We rolled out a tour called Freedom's  
13 Journey. For the most part, we, African Americans were  
14 asked to take the tour because when somebody comes to  
15 New Orleans and they want to take an African American  
16 tour they want to hear what a New Orleanian thought,  
17 which was most interesting. One of the nicest things  
18 that ever happened is that one day a lady called and she  
19 would like to take the tour. I always just called and  
20 made an assignment for a tour guide to take out the tour  
21 but this time none of the four tour guides were  
22 available. So I called her back and I told her that one  
23 of the tour guys is a white guy and you got him and she  
24 said, "Okay." I gave her the tour, we had a great time,  
25 when it was over she gave me a big hug.

1           But that is one way; we all need to get  
2 personally involved in some way across the lines as that  
3 is where the dialogue begins.

4           MR. BAGNERIS:

5           First of all, I know how valuable your time  
6 is. I want to tell you how much we appreciate the time  
7 that you have taken this evening, we really and truly  
8 do. And I want to tell you about some of the groups  
9 that will be coming to the listening sessions; in  
10 particular, I want to answer that lady's question about  
11 getting us all together. At some point and time we  
12 will. We started out some ten months ago, 18 of us,  
13 trying to come up with a format. As a matter of fact,  
14 this particular group, we argued about this for two  
15 months, how we can call people Caucasians.

16           (Audience laughter.)

17           The Caucasians came behind the African  
18 American Professionals and so we wanted to balance that  
19 with Caucasian Professionals. And you have shown up and  
20 we have heard you this evening. Behind this group are  
21 the Italian, Irish and French influences in New Orleans.  
22 In April, we are going to group African Americans and  
23 all community activists. In May we are going to hear  
24 from the Hispanics. June, we are going to hear from the  
25 Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual community. July, we are going

1 to hear from the African American housing developments.  
2 In August, the Asian community. In September, the New  
3 Orleans working class. In October, we are going to hear  
4 from the German and Greek communities. In November we  
5 are going to do the religious communities, we are going  
6 to bring together, Jews, Muslims and Christians. In  
7 December, we are going to hear from Lebanese, Saudi  
8 Arabian, et cetera. And then in January, we're going to  
9 say that if you didn't feel that you belong to any of  
10 these groups, come join us in that one gumbo group that  
11 we're going to hear from everybody.

12           What you have said here this evening is  
13 incredible. I want to tell you a real short story; I  
14 want you to understand that from what I heard tonight  
15 about victims and empowerment. My mother used to get up  
16 and dress three kids; that is in the days when you used  
17 to iron the khaki's from wet starch in order to get them  
18 to stand up. We would put on a khaki shirt, khaki pants  
19 and tie. Comb my sister's hair with curls, that is when  
20 I had good hair, as they call it in the black community.  
21 My brother, who was the baby, and sister, and my job was  
22 to protect them. And because New Orleans neighborhoods  
23 have always been integrated, I would walk out that door  
24 and two blocks down there were the kids in the white  
25 community with bad teeth, raggedy clothes, screaming out

1 the door, the "N" word. "N" word, "N" word, "N" word.  
2 Something in my mind told me that there is something  
3 wrong with this picture, I'm the clean one and they are  
4 the dirty ones. That is what you call not being  
5 victimized. Step two; when I got to school it was the  
6 white nuns or the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament that  
7 taught me and reaffirmed that thought. Step three; it  
8 was the priests at St. Aug that taught me that I have a  
9 right to sit at those counters, those restrooms and  
10 those counters. They taught me that I had a right to  
11 use those restrooms and sit at those counters; I had a  
12 right to have a meal.

13 We need to come together as one community.  
14 The reason why we separated everybody was to be able to  
15 have a dialogue. We need to understand where each of us  
16 is coming from, but we also need to understand that we  
17 are competing with the Dallas', the Houston's, the  
18 Miami's and the New York's. For our economy to survive,  
19 we have to take those race things off the table and  
20 become one New Orleans. We are headed in that  
21 direction, this is our second meeting. We are delighted  
22 that you all showed up this evening. Your dialogue has  
23 been put into a paper, it will be available to be  
24 viewed. Once we compile those 13 dialogues, we will  
25 offer, with the backing of the City Council and the

1 Mayor's office, changes to the City of New Orleans to  
2 influence our dialogue. Once we dialogue and come  
3 together with all of the 13 groups, we will bring  
4 everybody that has been here tonight. From all of the  
5 13 groups together, so that we can all look at each  
6 other and see that wonderful gumbo that New Orleans has  
7 made over the years. See the progress that we have made  
8 as far as we know to this City and show to the world  
9 that it was New Orleans, Louisiana, that taught  
10 multiculturalism 300 years ago before the Americans  
11 bought us and started dividing us by numbers, one-third  
12 black part, two-thirds this, three-thirds that.

13 So I want to ensure you that the dialogue  
14 tonight has not been in vain, that the work that these  
15 two ladies have done has not been in vain, and your  
16 contributions this evening have not been in vain.

17 We thank you for coming this evening. We  
18 have a heck of a lot of cookies and drinks back there;  
19 please don't make us carry that out. Sit down and enjoy  
20 yourself and have a snack and have a dialogue amongst  
21 your friends. If you have any other comments, we will  
22 be open as Human Relations Committee members.

23 I have to introduce one of the guys that  
24 has been here from the very beginning of the Human  
25 Relations Commission, when it was originally established

1 in 1978 that is John Westlake. Also, I would like to  
2 acknowledge Rabbi Cohen, who is also here.

3 Are there any other comments that anyone  
4 else would like to make before we close this session?  
5 Don't be bashful, I know that it's hard to speak in  
6 front of groups; it took me years to get to be able to  
7 get to this point.

8 (No response.)

9 Again, thank you all for coming tonight and  
10 giving us your dialogue.

11 MS. BADON:

12 Larry, we want to remind everybody to  
13 please complete your survey and drop them off, we would  
14 really appreciate it. Thank you.

15 MR. BAGNERIS:

16 Remember, everyone, One New Orleans for all  
17 of us.

18 (END OF SESSION.)

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## CERTIFICATE

I, the undersigned reporter, do hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a true and correct transcription of the stenographic notes of the proceedings herein, taken down by me and transcribed under my supervision, at the time and place hereinbefore noted, in the above-entitled and numbered cause(s).

I further certify that the witness(es) was duly sworn by me in my capacity as Certified Court Reporter for the State of Louisiana; that I am not of counsel nor related to any of the counsel or any of the parties, nor in the employ of any of them, and that I have no interest in the outcome of this action(s).

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Diane W. Mathews