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CONVERSATION WITH THE  
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

VOLUME I

THE PROFESSIONAL AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

JANUARY 30, 2007

Proceedings taken at THE BASIN  
STREET STATION, 600 Basin Street, New Orleans,  
Louisiana, commencing at 6:10 p.m.

1 COMMISSION CO-CHAIRS:  
2           RUSSELL CARLL  
3           DR. MARGARET MONTGOMERY-RICHARD

4  
5 SPEAKERS:  
6           JUDGE KERN REESE  
7           DR. MAURICE SHOLES  
8           T. MATT BIAGAS  
9           ANTHONY WAYNE RICHARD  
10          KENDAL FRANCIS  
11          PATRICIA HIGHTOWER  
12          EDGAR CHASE  
13          DARREN HARRIS  
14          ROD TEAMER  
15          NELLIE PERRY  
16          MOHAMMAD SADDIG  
17          REYNARD SANDERS  
18          CHARLENE LARCHE-MASON  
19          JAROD BROUSSARD  
20          DR. LINDA BLAKLEY  
21          JAWAD SHAKIR  
22          KEN FERDINAND  
23          LARRY BAGNERIS  
24          EUGENE BANNERMAN  
25          YVONNE MITCHELL-GRUBB

1 SPEAKERS (CONTINUED):  
2           DR. MICHAEL COWAN  
3  
4 COMMISSION MEMBERS:  
5           A. ABDUL-SALAAM  
6           THERESE BADON  
7           FR. WALTER BAER  
8           MICHIE BISSELL  
9           RABBI EDWARD P. COHN  
10          MICHAEL COWAN

11 GEORGE R. GALLIEN  
12 KEN GRAND-PRE'  
13 MARTIN GUTIERREZ  
14 FR. VIEN NGUYEN  
15 FRANCIS KING  
16 DOTTIE REESE  
17 DR. HANA SAFAH  
18 JANE PARKER  
19 CRAIG M. STEWART  
20 PATRICIA BIVINS

21  
22 STAFF:

23 LARRY BAGNERIS  
24 DAWN SEGURA  
25 SYNTHIA DEMONS

4

1 MR. CARLL:  
2 Hello. If everybody would kindly  
3 take their seats. Thank you. Kindly  
4 take your seats.  
5 You all must think this is  
6 church. Everybody is sitting in back.  
7 First off, I want to thank  
8 everybody for coming out tonight, and  
9 I'm going to start it by introducing  
10 the executive director of the Human  
11 Relations Committee for the City of New  
12 Orleans, Larry Bagneris. Larry over  
13 there is who is responsible primarily  
14 for putting this together and the idea  
15 of working with the Commission over the  
16 last year.

17 My name is Russ Carll. I have  
18 the pleasure of being the co-chair  
19 tonight with Dr. Margaret  
20 Montgomery-Richard right here.

21 I want to introduce the other  
22 members of the Commission who are here  
23 this evening. First, Abdul-Salaam, if  
24 you would stand up. There he is in the  
25 back. Therese Badon, where is Therese?

5

1 I know you're here, Darling. Michie  
2 Bissell in the back. Mike Cowan who is  
3 the Chairman of the Commission and does  
4 a super job. Also, Martin Gutierrez,  
5 Martin, and Father Nguyen in the back,  
6 and Dottie Reese who is responsible for  
7 helping us set up this evening. Thank  
8 you, Dottie.

9 And let's see. I think I've  
10 got -- also, I want to recognize Dawn  
11 Segura who is with the City's HRC  
12 attorney. Dawn is here. Thank you,  
13 Dawn. I appreciate it.

14 At this time, I want to remind  
15 you of a few things. If you haven't  
16 already signed in, there is a sign-in  
17 sheet. There is also little dots over  
18 there, and we would like to have  
19 everybody not only sign in with their  
20 e-mail, et cetera, but also put on the  
21 map where you presently are residing in

22 the City of New Orleans, because this  
23 is the first of a series of, actually,  
24 thirteen meetings of different groups  
25 throughout the year and going into next

6

1 year, and, with that, we'll kind of go  
2 over the explanation of it a little bit  
3 later.

4 The other thing is that any time  
5 people feel like getting up and  
6 stretching, no problem. It's going to  
7 be an informal conversation. It's  
8 going to be a listening session. The  
9 other thing, you have refreshments in  
10 the back. For those of you who have  
11 needs during the meeting to go to the  
12 restroom, they're on my right down the  
13 hallway, both men's and women's.

14 So without further ado, I'm going  
15 to ask Margaret to kind of explain the  
16 criteria.

17 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:

18 Before I do that, we would like  
19 to thank Mike Valentino for allowing us  
20 to use his facility. Isn't it  
21 beautiful to look out over the City?  
22 Also, Larry suggested that perhaps that  
23 we have a little ice breaker, that you  
24 introduce yourself to your neighbor,  
25 the person sitting next to you, behind

7

1 you and in front of you if you don't  
2 know them.

3 Just two minutes, you all. I'm  
4 counting everything tonight, okay?  
5 (Discussion off the record).

6 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:

7 You all may take your seats now.  
8 You make may take your seats now.  
9 Thank you.

10 Now that you know the people that  
11 are around you, we would like to get  
12 the evening started, and this is what  
13 the Human Relations Commission calls a  
14 listening session. The HRC is holding  
15 listening sessions with many different  
16 groups in 2007.

17 This is actually the first of  
18 thirteen sessions that we plan to hold.  
19 Concerns emerging in those sessions  
20 will be publicized in the larger  
21 community as part of the HRC's overall  
22 report and action plan on enhancing  
23 respect for and inclusion of diversity  
24 in New Orleans. Based on that report,  
25 the HRC will make specific

8

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

7 track and report their responses to the  
8 public.

9 I think we've had one more person  
10 join us. Ms. Synthia Demons from  
11 Dallas from the Justice Department.

12 I'm going to turn it back over to  
13 Russ, and he's going to talk about the  
14 purpose a little bit.

15 MR. CARLL:

16 Thank you, Margaret.

17 The purpose of the Commission  
18 session this evening is to hear your  
19 thoughts and feelings of the particular  
20 group that is here tonight. The group  
21 here tonight is the first session, and,  
22 of course, every cultural group in the  
23 City has a different perspective of how  
24 they look at things, how they see  
25 things, how they're affected by them,

9

1 so, really -- and to carry on in that,  
2 on what Margaret said, this is going to  
3 give us an opportunity to hear from all  
4 sides, and, hopefully -- I think that I  
5 speak for the Commission -- at the end  
6 of this thirteen months, we're going to  
7 see a common denominator go through all  
8 the sessions and work from that, and,  
9 ultimately, from that -- we will not  
10 respond tonight; in other words, it is  
11 not a debate as far as what should  
12 happen or not happen or what is  
13 happening fast enough and et cetera.  
14 It is strictly a listening session.

15 So I would like to turn it over  
16 now -- and, by the way, it is going to  
17 be strictly informal. There is going  
18 to be time limits involved. In other  
19 words, we're looking at no more than a  
20 maximum of five minutes when you make  
21 your particular point and background,  
22 and what we're looking for is how you  
23 see the perception of race relations in  
24 the City today and what do you see as  
25 improvements to that relationship.

10

1 We're going to start the meeting,  
2 though, by, first off, having the  
3 keynote speaker, I guess you would call  
4 him, and Margaret is going to introduce  
5 him.

6 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:

7 The format we're following for  
8 the listening sessions, and, as I say,  
9 this is the first one, each session or  
10 each co-chair, our responsibility is to  
11 identify some member of the community  
12 that could give you an overview of the  
13 contributions of that ethnic group to  
14 New Orleans, to our City, and, tonight,  
15 we have identified -- and I have to  
16 tell you, I did something to my very  
17 good friend that I should not have

18 done, but, because he is my friend, he  
19 came through. Actually, Bill Rousselle  
20 was to be with us tonight, but Bill is  
21 ill this evening and could not make it,  
22 so I called on an honorable friend. I  
23 used to put things on his honey-do list  
24 before I got my own husband -- don't  
25 put that in the report -- the Honorable

11

1 Judge Kern Reese who has so graciously  
2 agreed to come out tonight and give a  
3 historical perspective of the African  
4 American community in New Orleans, but,  
5 first, a little bit about Kern Reese  
6 and why I think he is the most  
7 appropriate person to come up and share  
8 with you tonight.

9 Kern is a native New Orleanian.  
10 Of course, he went to school in New  
11 Orleans. He was -- he is a kid of the  
12 '70s, in high school, college grad,  
13 went on to Pomona, and imagine Kern --  
14 and Larry and I had this discussion  
15 about how our little Seventh Ward kind  
16 of looking child with good hair, so to  
17 say, grew an afro. Larry explained  
18 that to me for thirty minutes today.  
19 Kern is one of those guys. Went to St.  
20 Aug, to Pomona and to Loyola Law  
21 School, never left the community, has  
22 been engaged in the community, in  
23 politics, in -- lived in the Seventh  
24 Ward and actually continues to live in  
25 the Seventh Ward. Katrina moved you to

12

1 Baton Rouge for a little while, but  
2 he's all home grown, has been involved  
3 in politics, been involved in the  
4 development of our community, was  
5 involved in the RTA, has two sons that  
6 he's raised in this community and just  
7 loved New Orleans from the bottom of  
8 his heart, and he's a great story  
9 teller. I know tonight he's going to  
10 be able to share some things with you  
11 all that you too will agree that, as  
12 African Americans, we have made a  
13 significant contribution to the  
14 community and want to continue to do  
15 that.

16 At this time, I want you to put  
17 your hands together and welcome Kern  
18 Reese to the dance.

19 JUDGE REESE:

20 No pressure from that, not at  
21 all.

22 Well, you know she gave me a  
23 daunting task on pretty short order:  
24 Give a history of New Orleans, the  
25 contribution of African Americans to

13

1 that history and do it in five to seven  
2 minutes. So I'm hitting the button on

3 the stopwatch --  
4 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:

5 I got it.

6 JUDGE REESE:  
7 -- and we're off.

8 Okay. Let me say that we live in  
9 an absolutely wonderful place and I  
10 think we all know that. There is no  
11 place like this place anywhere in the  
12 world. There is no place that has the  
13 climate of -- well, maybe Taiwan is  
14 kind of the same, I have been there,  
15 but the culture, the cuisine, the  
16 esprit, the joie de vivre, no place has  
17 what we have here in New Orleans. And  
18 it took -- it -- we will be three  
19 hundred years old in 2018. It took us  
20 that long to get where we are now.

21 Katrina has tried to erase that,  
22 but the spirit of the people in this  
23 community will not be denied and will  
24 not be stopped, will not be stifled.  
25 If anything, we will infect America

14

1 with what we have here in New Orleans,  
2 and I firmly believe that. I talked to  
3 our residents that live in all parts of  
4 this country, and they are coopting  
5 their part of the country because they  
6 need a little New Orleans.

7 Jean Baptiste LeMoyne, Sieur de  
8 Bienville sailed down the Mississippi  
9 River and decided this was a great  
10 place to build a city. If it was up to  
11 me, I would have told him go a little  
12 further north, you're in the middle of  
13 a swamp. But, hey, it looked like a  
14 good idea to him, crescent bend in the  
15 river, high ground; he thought it would  
16 work well.

17 He went back to the king of  
18 France and said, I have found a colony  
19 in America, we need to send some  
20 residents. The king said, wonderful,  
21 take the residents of the jail in  
22 Paris, and that is what kind of started  
23 New Orleans for real, and, then,  
24 gradually, the religieuse came, said,  
25 we need to Christianize these heathens

15

1 they have sent over there and build a  
2 place that would be suitable.

3 The girls, the filles la cassette  
4 came and provided wives and had proper  
5 settlers for the New Orleans group.  
6 And most of the City started right here  
7 where the French Quarter is. Rampart  
8 Street is the back of the Quarter.  
9 Those the were the ramparts for the  
10 City fortifications. The first suburb  
11 probably anywhere in America was Treme  
12 because the City, as it expanded,  
13 needed a place for folks who could not

14 live in the Quarter, because the  
15 Creoles controlled the Quarter.

16 For those of you who don't know  
17 what a Creole is, originally, that was  
18 a person of French and Spanish  
19 ancestry. And, then, with the passage  
20 of time, because of the melting pot or  
21 the gumbo pot that New Orleans is, more  
22 ethnic groups got into the mix.

23 Yours truly, my great-great  
24 grandfather was a Frenchman named  
25 Fontenot. My great grandfather on my

16

1 mother's father's side was a  
2 full-blooded Irishman. On my daddy's  
3 side, they were all former slaves, and  
4 we got a little bit of everything else  
5 in the middle, so, you know, that is  
6 kind of why I look like what I look  
7 like, but, hey, that is what we are in  
8 New Orleans. I would like to say we're  
9 all related. If we sat down and talked  
10 long enough, we would figure out how,  
11 but we're all related, and, I mean, all  
12 of us are related, okay?

13 Be that as it may -- I want to  
14 move very quickly. I'm about halfway  
15 through my time. I've really got to  
16 push this. All right.

17 You have the African American  
18 experience in the early 1830s,  
19 antebellum, you have free people of  
20 color who were able to own land, they  
21 were residents of Tremé, the artisans,  
22 the brick masons, the carpenters, the  
23 fine artists, the ironworkers who built  
24 the wonderful latticework balconies,  
25 they were the ones who did those

17

1 things, and their contribution, they  
2 fought with Jackson at the Battle of  
3 New Orleans, they joined the Union Army  
4 when the Civil War came, they provided  
5 all those contributions to the building  
6 up of the City.

7 After the Civil War  
8 Reconstruction, 1874 was a very  
9 monumental battle here, and that was  
10 when the White League took on the  
11 metropolitan police and basically ended  
12 reconstruction in New Orleans, and that  
13 was the beginning of the Jim Crow era.  
14 That lasted in New Orleans maybe not as  
15 virulently as some other places in the  
16 south but it lasted until Brown versus  
17 Board of Education started the  
18 unraveling of Jim Crow. Because of  
19 that, what you had develop at that  
20 point in time was a class of New  
21 Orleanians, a working class, and you  
22 had folks in New Orleans who were  
23 always capable, who always had skills,  
24 trades, who always were able to

25

maintain and who took care of the

18

1 community. They formed benevolent  
2 associations and you see the Odd  
3 Fellows Hall, you see the Zulu Social  
4 Aid and Pleasure Club which lasts to  
5 this day. These are benevolent  
6 associations that people joined  
7 together to take care of themselves and  
8 the members of their community. They  
9 were the insurance companies, the  
10 burial policies and all that and the  
11 churches who helped take care.

12 Now, as we moved forward -- I  
13 want to get into modern day, and I've  
14 got about a minute and a half left.  
15 I'm really pushing this quick.

16 The benchmark was 1969 with the  
17 election of Dutch Morial to the  
18 Louisiana State Legislature, because  
19 Dutch was the first African American  
20 politician to enter the legislature  
21 since reconstruction. He was the  
22 primogenitor. He went to juvenile  
23 court, he was the first black to  
24 graduate from LSU, he was the first  
25 black Assistant U.S. Attorney in this

19

1 jurisdiction, he was the first black  
2 elected to the legislature, he was the  
3 first black elected to juvenile court,  
4 the first black to be elected to the  
5 Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals and, in  
6 1977, the first black man to be elected  
7 mayor of New Orleans, and his  
8 contributions are -- that is why he  
9 became -- I watched him, and it was  
10 like watching a living legend. People  
11 would stop their cars to jump out and  
12 go shake his hand. That is the person  
13 he was.

14 And I've got to go back before  
15 Dutch to '69, because, in '69, with the  
16 election of Moon Landrieu, that was the  
17 entree of African Americans. After the  
18 Civil Rights Act of '64, where they  
19 began to have congenity and a place in  
20 the political hierarchy of New Orleans,  
21 and Moon's election and Moon's  
22 inclusion set the stage for the  
23 development of the political  
24 organizations who could identify  
25 candidates and get them elected that

20

1 ended with the -- culminated with the  
2 election of Dutch, and, since then, you  
3 have a succession of black mayors.

4 You have Marc and, now, Ray  
5 Nagin. You have also had a number of  
6 black councilmen -- I'm not going to  
7 name them all -- started with A.L.  
8 Davis, the first elected in 1976 with  
9 the efforts of Eddie Sapir who went to

10 Municipal Court and had him named  
11 councilman for his district, District  
12 B.

13 Ladies and gentlemen, the  
14 African -- contribution of African  
15 Americans to this city is substantial.  
16 Obviously, I'm not going to do the  
17 chocolate city thing. I was allergic  
18 to chocolate as a child. I will say we  
19 do have a city that swirls with all  
20 kinds of flavors, and the contribution  
21 of the African American community is  
22 irrevocably interwoven in the City of  
23 New Orleans.

24 I love this town. There's no  
25 place in the world I would rather be.

21

1 With all that we face today, it would  
2 be very easy to pack up and go  
3 somewhere else. We are here because we  
4 love this city. We endure what we  
5 endure because we love this city. We  
6 should know where we live. We know who  
7 we are and we continue to do what we  
8 need to do.

9 Thank you for the opportunity.  
10 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:

11 We want to thank Judge Reese for  
12 stepping in and giving us a truly  
13 eloquent historical overview. I can't  
14 leave Dottie out. He knew she was  
15 involved in it, so he couldn't say no.  
16 MR. CARLL:

17 I just want to make one more  
18 brief announcement before we go into  
19 this. Craig Stewart, also a member of  
20 the Commission this evening, Craig in  
21 the back.

22 At this time, I want to give  
23 everybody a breakdown as far as how  
24 we're going to do it.

25 As I mentioned, it is going to be  
22

1 very informal sessions. We're going to  
2 have a timer, and that is the only  
3 thing we're going to do. We're not  
4 going to make comments on anybody's  
5 statements, et cetera, but we want to  
6 hear from you all in the audience as  
7 far as how you perceive today the group  
8 of professional black men and women in  
9 the City, now, how do you see it in  
10 your relationship to race relations in  
11 the City, how do you see it as far as  
12 the future is concerned, and do you  
13 have any suggestions as far as how to  
14 improve relations, and thank you.

15 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:

16 Okay. Some other instructions  
17 here. You need to, when you speak,  
18 state your name because all of our  
19 sessions are being recorded by court  
20 reporters, and we would like for you to

21 name specific things that make members  
22 of your group feel disrespected and/or  
23 not included in life of the City and  
24 suggest, make concrete suggestions  
25 about how we can remedy these

23

1 situations, and, if you're not clear  
2 about what we're looking for, if race  
3 relations is an issue that you're  
4 concerned about, that is good, but what  
5 we need to hear from you, what are the  
6 things that you feel, as a group of  
7 people, African American  
8 professionals -- and you must  
9 understand you're the first group we  
10 decided to bring the men and women  
11 together. At first, it was going to  
12 just be women. I'm glad we decided to  
13 bring men in because the women didn't  
14 show up, but we need to hear from you  
15 as a group of people, but middle class  
16 African Americans in this community,  
17 your voice has basically been silent.  
18 You have been doing things  
19 individually, but, collectively, we  
20 have not moved anything forward. Right  
21 now, in this rebuild process, we're not  
22 playing a prominent role in it.

23 I know many of us are trying to  
24 rebuild our homes and are busy doing  
25 that, trying to work, trying to get

24

1 things going, but we do need to hear  
2 from you and we need you to name some  
3 specific things that you feel, as a  
4 member of the African American  
5 professional community, that make you  
6 feel disrespected and/or not included  
7 in what is going on in our city, and we  
8 need you to make some specific  
9 recommendations on how we can remedy  
10 this situation. That is so important.

11 We're really challenging you  
12 tonight and we're here to listen to you  
13 in terms of what you think, because, as  
14 I said, and we were with Garland  
15 Robinette, he said an African American  
16 man at a football game stopped him and  
17 said, Garland, why don't you ever talk  
18 about middle class African Americans?  
19 Because we don't make a lot of noise,  
20 gang. We just sit quietly and hope  
21 somebody will come along and do  
22 something, so, at this time, I am going  
23 to shut up because my job is to listen,  
24 but I did feel and I think my fellow  
25 Commissioners felt it was important

25

1 that you understand your role in this  
2 conversation tonight, and we do need  
3 you, when you stand up and take the  
4 mike, to state your name because the  
5 court reporters -- and it will go in

6 the record but we should be free now to  
7 say the things we need to say that will  
8 make a difference in our community.

9 And --

10 MR. CARLL:

11 Who would like to start?

12 DR. SHOLES:

13 I'll start.

14 MR. CARLL:

15 If you would, state your name.

16 DR. SHOLES:

17 Sure. I've never been accused of  
18 being shy. I'm Dr. Maurice Sholes,  
19 S-H-O-L-E-S, and I have been in New  
20 Orleans now for two and a half years.  
21 I was recruited here as a physician at  
22 Children's Hospital and work at LSU.

23 The number one thing that I  
24 identify that makes it difficult for me  
25 and my peers that don't live in New

26

1 Orleans that might consider living in  
2 New Orleans is a double-edged sword.  
3 The first part harkens to the  
4 introduction where we heard about the  
5 first black people that were reaching  
6 out and achieving things and, quite  
7 frankly, I feel like, in some ways,  
8 that they see me as the competition as  
9 opposed to their future, and so these  
10 people that accomplished so many things  
11 and blazed so many trails, rather than  
12 looking at me and my peer group and my  
13 age group as the heirs to their success  
14 or those that will build on their  
15 success see us as the people that will  
16 push them out the door or the people  
17 they must directly compete against, and  
18 the result of that is a lack of  
19 mentorship, and, when you have a lack  
20 of mentorship, it is very, very  
21 difficult to walk on hallowed ground or  
22 take the unusual path. That path is  
23 made further difficult by the  
24 extraordinary challenges you have to go  
25 through to be heard.

27

1 I mentioned I'm an on staff at  
2 Children's Hospital where they have  
3 hundreds of physicians that have  
4 privileges and definitely dozens to  
5 tens of dozens that are on regular  
6 faculty, and of the full-time faculty,  
7 there are six blacks. Now, all six of  
8 us, I have an M.D. and a PhD from  
9 Harvard. Evans, the guy over surgery,  
10 trained at the top Children's Hospital  
11 in the world. There is another woman  
12 that trained in -- got a medical  
13 education at an Ivy League institution  
14 before affirmative action, so in 1972,  
15 and they have extraordinary resumes,  
16 and I found that to be interesting when

17 we're surrounded by people that are  
18 fine folks that all went to school here  
19 in New Orleans or went to school at  
20 state schools, and the feeling is that,  
21 just to be heard, you have to go so far  
22 and so much beyond, and, then, once you  
23 do that to be heard, people say, if you  
24 bring it up, you're bragging and trying  
25 to make them feel bad.

28

1 So, to close my comments, I would  
2 like to see the bar opened to folks  
3 that are competent regardless of where  
4 they come from, if they're local or  
5 outsiders that want to be here, and I  
6 think we, as achievers in our  
7 community, need to do a better job of  
8 finding mentors and being a mentor to  
9 continue the progress so that those  
10 people that were the first won't become  
11 the people that were the only.

12 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:

13 Thank you.

14 DR. SHOLES:

15 Thank you for your time.

16 MR. CARLL:

17 Anybody else want to comment on  
18 that?

19 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:

20 It's an open mike situation, so  
21 we would like to hear your concerns  
22 that make you feel disrespected.

23 MR. CARLL:

24 Here we go.

25 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:

29

1 Remember to state your name.

2 MR. BIAGAS:

3 I'm T. Matt Biagas, the owner of  
4 Biagas Enterprises Construction Company  
5 and also chairman of the Coalition of  
6 Minority Contractors.

7 As you heard Judge Kern Reese  
8 say, New Orleans has a rich history of  
9 African American construction workers  
10 and builders here in the City, but let  
11 it be known that, prior to the storm,  
12 that industry was on the brink of  
13 dying. It was tormented and dying. We  
14 lost most of our people to places like  
15 New York. New Orleans started the  
16 industry and construction that no other  
17 city in the world may have had,  
18 particularly like bricklayers. Once  
19 our industry started going down, New  
20 York took them in, nurtured them and  
21 brought them up and created a dying  
22 industry here in the City, and, before  
23 the storm, our industry was going down  
24 and dying, and, now, after the storm,  
25 we have an opportunity to bring that

30

1 industry back.

2 We have a very unique opportunity  
3 to bring it back because, after all, we  
4 did have a president of United States  
5 come here to Jackson Square, and he  
6 made a statement that there will be a  
7 priority place for Louisiana and New  
8 Orleans contractors in the construction  
9 industry. We heard the governor say,  
10 we heard our mayor say. They said, but  
11 where are the plans for implementing --  
12 to implement those words? Where is the  
13 enforcement to keep it going in the  
14 right track? Because, like I say, we  
15 have a very unique opportunity to  
16 build, to rebuild an industry to  
17 surpass any in the country, and that is  
18 not being shallow. I mean any in the  
19 country.

20 I had the unique opportunity to  
21 sit on the State licensing board for  
22 about three, four years, and it gave me  
23 a bird's eye perspective of what was  
24 going on in the State to sit there and  
25 get a report. Everybody would not

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1 believe, on the amount of money that  
2 was spent in construction, \$7.4 billion  
3 around the State and, then, when you  
4 look at the statistics, okay, how much  
5 of that money was going to African  
6 American contractors? Less than  
7 1 percent of 10 percent. There aren't  
8 that many of us in the industry.

9 Then you ask yourself why. All  
10 the programs we have, we had the Open  
11 Access Plan, we had the set-aside  
12 programs. If these programs were  
13 designed to work, then, in actuality,  
14 you wouldn't really need them after a  
15 period of ten years with that much  
16 money being floating around the City,  
17 but yet we have a dying art, and  
18 construction is an art. It is an art  
19 and a science. We have a dying art, so  
20 what I would like to see there is the  
21 words that the president spoke, the  
22 words the governor spoke, the words  
23 that the mayor spoke, there will be a  
24 preference, put some teeth behind it.  
25 The only way we can do that is through

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1 legislation, I believe.

2 Thank you, T. Matt Biagas.

3 MR. CARLL:

4 Next?

5 MR. RICHARD:

6 Thank you very much. My name is  
7 Anthony Wayne Richard, and I'm a native  
8 New Orleanian, but, I know, it's kind  
9 of weird, but I actually have two  
10 professions. I am a social worker, I  
11 have a Master's in social work and I  
12 have been working for -- doing social

13 work for social service agencies for  
14 about the last twenty years or so, but  
15 I'm also in counselling, and I have a  
16 small business that I operate basically  
17 working with small businesses and  
18 particularly African American small  
19 businesses. I could probably tell you  
20 a lot of folks five minutes talking  
21 about how I feel personally about the  
22 relationships, racial relationships in  
23 the City, and it goes back to the  
24 people. We could talk about the laws.  
25 I'm old enough to remember when the

33

1 Civil Rights Bill was passed, and I'm  
2 still waiting to see it come around to  
3 full fruition in my lifetime,  
4 hopefully, but, to be specific, within  
5 my five minutes, I want to talk about  
6 some contracts that we tried to secure  
7 since post Katrina.

8 I got together with some of my  
9 truck driving clients who own their own  
10 rigs, and, initially, we tried to see  
11 if we couldn't enter into contractual  
12 agreements picking up the debris, and  
13 it seems as though, like the doctor  
14 made reference to earlier, you always  
15 need to go, you know, that extra yard,  
16 a little bit further. You always got  
17 to be twice as better. So we were  
18 saying what is so hard picking up  
19 debris? We understood you had to have  
20 license and insurance and, you know,  
21 the gentlemen had everything they  
22 needed but the contracts. The  
23 contracts had already been issued.  
24 They had been left out of the mix, and  
25 the bottom line is, to my knowledge,

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1 none of them, you know, were able to  
2 get any of the contracts to do that.

3 It just seems as though, whether  
4 it was contracts for that type of work  
5 or whether it was contracts for some  
6 other type of services, when the  
7 proposals had to be submitted, you  
8 know, the guidelines were already set  
9 or the specifications were already set  
10 in such a manner that many African  
11 Americans, qualified African Americans  
12 were just left out of the mix.

13 What I would like to see happen  
14 is that more opportunities are given  
15 for African Americans to have an  
16 opportunity to carry out the contracts.  
17 Many of our counterparts have gotten  
18 experience from trying, you know,  
19 whether they failed that first time or  
20 not, but it seems as though we get that  
21 one effort, that one opportunity and,  
22 if it doesn't work, then that is the  
23 end of it. I really would like to see

24 specifically that more opportunities  
25 are given to African Americans to

35

1 actually get the contracts, and like  
2 the other gentleman said, we don't have  
3 just a lot of rhetoric about what we  
4 want you to have and the bottom line is  
5 we never get it.

6 Thank you.

7 MR. CARLL:

8 Another comment? I know this  
9 isn't a bunch of shy people.

10 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:

11 I see a lot of thoughts, I see a  
12 lot of brows wrinkly.

13 MR. FRANCIS:

14 I'm Kendal Francis, originally  
15 from outside Jacksonville, Florida,  
16 have been a resident of the area about  
17 ten years now. I'm completely  
18 infatuated with the area of New  
19 Orleans. Almost -- I don't want to  
20 give up where I'm from, but at the same  
21 time, I think it is strange not to love  
22 this place. I know there are a lot of  
23 problems, but, as the community  
24 continues to survive everything and  
25 every one it's been through, I think it

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1 is a very, very special place.

2 I have said all of that to say I  
3 currently give a majority of my extra  
4 time, sometimes time I don't even have  
5 and volunteer at Cafe Reconcile. We  
6 received a lot of recognition lately  
7 from Laura Bush's visit. We were  
8 invited to see The White House for the  
9 State of the Union Address, and I see  
10 how New Orleans can be misunderstood  
11 sometimes, because, even when the First  
12 Lady visited Cafe Reconcile, as much  
13 planning as they did for the visit, she  
14 managed to call every child there  
15 homeless because the view was bleak,  
16 but even though what we do is great at  
17 Cafe Reconcile, we work with at-risk  
18 youth.

19 What I spend the majority of time  
20 trying to do is show you're not at risk  
21 for only things that are negative but  
22 also positives. You're at risk for  
23 doing anything you choose to do, but  
24 where my problem is, when I was  
25 approached by a young lady and young

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1 man who pretty much changed my life was  
2 when they asked me, Mr. Francis, what  
3 do you have for kids like me, and I  
4 asked, what does that mean? They feel  
5 excluded because they didn't want to  
6 drop out of school, nor did they have  
7 any criminal trouble.

8 Even at school, there aren't any

9 programs for good kids who have not  
10 been in trouble and are looking to  
11 complete high school and possibly  
12 further their education in college.  
13 That is a challenge I'm trying to  
14 figure out myself, and, hopefully, this  
15 group can help me with that. As a  
16 young African American professional in  
17 the City, I'm hoping we can kind of  
18 harness our resources, organize in some  
19 sort of fashion to where there can be  
20 one place we can all use our resources  
21 to help those who are looking for it.

22 The young lady I'm speaking of,  
23 her father is an alcoholic; her mother  
24 is completely illiterate. She's grown  
25 tired of being an adult, telling Mom, I

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1 need two hundred dollars to pay this  
2 bill, we need to go to this particular  
3 home ownership class, things of that  
4 nature. One young man sent off to  
5 college after graduating St. Aug, the  
6 whole neighborhood made sure he never  
7 had tuition trouble. Now, he's off to  
8 college and scared to come home because  
9 of the mentality. That is a huge  
10 problem, and I actually don't have a  
11 solution for it, but I'm actually  
12 asking for assistance to address that  
13 problem.

14 We have lots of programs in this  
15 city that are great, and we're trying  
16 to get kids back up to speed who have  
17 fallen short, but, for those children  
18 who are doing the right thing, holding  
19 their heads up high every day, have  
20 dysfunctional homes, I believe that is  
21 going to be our problem. Obviously,  
22 New Orleans has produced very, very  
23 great people. These children have the  
24 potential to be great people. We  
25 already have programs for kids working

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1 from behind the eight ball. What about  
2 those who don't want to fall behind the  
3 eight ball?

4 So that is my time.

5 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:

6 Would you restate your name,  
7 please?

8 MR. FRANCIS:

9 First name is Kendall,  
10 K-E-N-D-A-L, last name is Francis,  
11 F-R-A-N-C-I-S.

12 MS. HIGHTOWER:

13 My name is Patricia Hightower. I  
14 guess the biggest concern I have  
15 regarding race relations is, recently,  
16 since Katrina, it appears that, for us,  
17 my husband, myself, my kids, my  
18 parents, that the City, living here, we  
19 seem to be moving backwards fast, fast

20 in terms of the way blacks and whites  
21 respond to each other in our world.  
22 We live on South Rampart. Prior  
23 to living on South Rampart, we lived on  
24 Esplanade and, before the hurricane,  
25 lived in New Orleans East. Our world

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1 before the hurricane was a world in  
2 which we had friends and family and a  
3 great network in place, and I think  
4 that is what we miss the most. That is  
5 the greatest loss we have had with  
6 Katrina is that network, and I see a  
7 lot of people shaking their heads. I  
8 think that I can speak for a lot of my  
9 friends and family, for the middle  
10 class African Americans, and, if you  
11 disagree, just say no, and I  
12 understand, that is fine, but I think  
13 that is what we had here in New  
14 Orleans.

15 I know, when we lived elsewhere,  
16 when we evacuated in Birmingham, they  
17 didn't have that. I mean, it was a  
18 different sense of camaraderie. I  
19 mean, we just picked up kids, dropped  
20 off kids. I mean, it was just so  
21 different, and so that is not in place.

22 And the race -- with regard to  
23 race, we were standing on Esplanade  
24 talking, myself and two white gentlemen  
25 who were working for me repairing a

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1 rental property. A young black man  
2 came up to us to ask directions to the  
3 black museum, the African American  
4 Museum. I mean, he just walked up, was  
5 in jeans and a T shirt.

6 The two white guys were taken  
7 aback. I mean, they were like scared,  
8 as if they didn't know what he was  
9 coming up for. He was simply coming up  
10 for directions, but that was just a  
11 sign of -- a body language sign of fear  
12 that communicated to me clearly of what  
13 goes on. My reaction was he needs  
14 something. Nothing, I mean, no fear.  
15 What does he need? Their reaction was  
16 what does he want. Two different  
17 responses. So that is a concern for me  
18 in terms of a red flag about what is  
19 going on with race relations.

20 What is the solution or possible  
21 solution? I have no sociology  
22 training; I have no clue besides some  
23 dialogue and some honest dialogue, some  
24 honest communications. I think that  
25 needs to happen. It needs to be beyond

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1 the politicians, beyond the religious.  
2 It needs to be moms, dads, neighbors,  
3 you know, just regular folk who -- like  
4 me, who sit in my house and the

5 policeman stops somebody way beyond,  
6 before the crime got out of control,  
7 just yank this little young man out of  
8 his car, tore his car up, I mean, just  
9 searching his car, found nothing, but,  
10 I mean, he was out there like an hour  
11 and something, you know, didn't -- and  
12 I understand crime is bad, but we saw  
13 no -- I mean, I don't know -- I have no  
14 idea what it was about, but, in the  
15 end, there was nothing. He was allowed  
16 to go on. And we've seen this on South  
17 Rampart, and we live behind Majestic  
18 Funeral Home, not the best  
19 neighborhood, but I can tell you, out  
20 of the times we've seen it, we have  
21 seen one young man taken away one time,  
22 so there is some -- to me, some clear  
23 racial profiling going on and some  
24 serious racial problems in this city.  
25 I don't have a solution.

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1 Thank you.  
2 MR. CARLL:  
3 Next?  
4 MR. CHASE:  
5 I'm Edgar Chase with Dillard  
6 University. I'm vice president of  
7 facilities. We have a lot of  
8 construction opportunities there, but I  
9 think what I see is that we have to be,  
10 as a city, a group of citizens of a  
11 city that puts issues of race and class  
12 behind us and begin to focus on human  
13 beings in a city to try to make the  
14 city better. Now, that is an ideal  
15 statement because I do believe racism  
16 is prevalent here, but until we make a  
17 conscious effort to get beyond race and  
18 class, I don't think there is much  
19 long-term hope that our city will be a  
20 world class city.  
21 Now, I do think that, because we  
22 have problems of crime in our city and  
23 because it has the image of being  
24 black-on-black crime, it makes -- it  
25 takes all of us who are African

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1 Americans no matter what class, and it  
2 makes everyone afraid, and that fear is  
3 impacting our economy, so no matter who  
4 you work for or what you do in this  
5 city, until we get that aspect of our  
6 community free of crime, it's going to  
7 hurt all of us no matter what race we  
8 are or what class we -- socioeconomic  
9 class we're in. And I don't think that  
10 we, as a community -- I think when we  
11 start to divide ourselves into race and  
12 class and ignore the real killer of all  
13 of us, which is crime in our city, and  
14 educational opportunity in our city for  
15 all of our citizens, then we're hurting

16 ourselves.  
17 MS. HIGHTOWER:  
18 I just would like to respond  
19 quickly because I just want to say --  
20 yes, please, I just want to say clearly  
21 to everybody, I completely agree with  
22 you 100 percent. If, at any point, I  
23 didn't communicate that I feel that  
24 way, I want everybody to know I feel  
25 exactly the same way, but I just want

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1 to put out on the table, I think what  
2 people talk about behind closed doors,  
3 I think that is kind of the point of  
4 this. I don't want to polarize but I  
5 want everybody to just be very clear  
6 and open, but I completely agree.

7 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:  
8 And your name again?

9 MS. HIGHTOWER:  
10 Patricia Hightower.

11 MR. HARRIS:  
12 Good evening. My name is Darren  
13 Harris. I'm the pastor of Freedom  
14 Fellowship Ministries at Greater New  
15 Orleans, and currently we're having  
16 services on North Rampart at the  
17 Covenant House Chapel.

18 I want to talk to the disrespect  
19 portion of it real quickly.

20 I see her setting the time  
21 because preachers tend to be  
22 longwinded.

23 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:  
24 We gave you a mike.

25 MR. HARRIS:

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1 As a young African American  
2 professional, I do feel disrespected  
3 because, I'll be honest with you, I'm a  
4 native of New Orleans, I left New  
5 Orleans and I was gone from home for  
6 about ten years and I felt guilty being  
7 away from home because I love this  
8 city. This was the city where I was  
9 born, raised, and, upon coming back to  
10 the City, I realized that nothing  
11 changed, and what I realized is that,  
12 if we do nothing differently, then  
13 nothing different ever happens, and  
14 what is happening is we have this cycle  
15 that is continuing on and on and on  
16 again, so I hear us talking about crime  
17 and I hear us talking about the  
18 different racial, I guess,  
19 non-inclusion and different things like  
20 that happening, but the bottom line to  
21 me is, when I look at our society and I  
22 look at our city, one of the things  
23 that really upsets me and I feel  
24 disrespected is the fact that we have  
25 not addressed poverty, and, when we

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1 look at the issue of poverty, there is  
2 a lot of things that happen because of  
3 poverty. And, when I can live in my  
4 neighborhood, and I live in the Marigny  
5 and I understand that poverty has not  
6 been addressed effectively here and  
7 what my suggestion is is that we look  
8 at the causes and the effects of  
9 poverty in this city and, once we look  
10 at the effects and the causes of  
11 poverty, we need to come up with a  
12 plan.

13 Once we come up with a plan, we  
14 need to implement that plan and follow  
15 through, we need to monitor the plan  
16 and, once we monitor the plan, we need  
17 to evaluate the plan. These are the  
18 things I look at, because poverty  
19 causes a lot of things. The fact we  
20 don't have kids with good educations is  
21 because of poverty, racism, classism,  
22 sexism, all the isms, and when we  
23 really look at it, poverty is one of  
24 the issues that causes these things.  
25 That is one of the things I hope this

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1 Commission looks at and starts to talk  
2 about, poverty as an issue within our  
3 city.

4 MR. CARLL:

5 Next.

6 MR. TEAMER:

7 Good evening. My name is Rod  
8 Teamer. One of the things that -- a  
9 couple of things that I will share this  
10 evening that bother me about New  
11 Orleans right now in the metro area is  
12 just our overall neglect, a couple of  
13 things. Educational system, to the  
14 extent that it's racially motivated, I  
15 don't know, some people who are  
16 smarter need to figure that out, but,  
17 before Katrina, the public school  
18 system in Orleans Parish was horrible  
19 and we were not educating our kids. It  
20 contributes to the poverty that is  
21 prevalent in our community, the crime  
22 and poverty that leads people to have  
23 to get menial jobs. That is No. 1.

24 No. 2, the recreational system  
25 here, the parks. It is just -- in

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1 America today, I think that the park  
2 system in New Orleans, the New Orleans  
3 Recreational Department -- I hope the  
4 director isn't here, I hate to step on  
5 their toes, but, bottom line, the park  
6 system has been poorly run, it's been  
7 neglected. You go to other cities  
8 across the country and you recognize  
9 that the park systems are much more  
10 advanced than ours. Kids don't have an  
11 opportunity to play sports, football,

12 basketball, baseball, soccer, dancing,  
13 arts, cultural things, beyond just the,  
14 you know, picking up a baseball or a  
15 bat.

16 And, finally, I think, as a  
17 community, as an African American, you  
18 know, we have got to learn to stop  
19 pointing outward and saying, hey, that  
20 is, you know, what those folks are  
21 doing to me. We've got to look inward  
22 and start, you know, taking care of our  
23 own business internally. Some of us  
24 get education, get wealth and don't  
25 give back. Others get -- have

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1 opportunities for education and  
2 squander those opportunities. For ten  
3 or eleven years, I worked with young  
4 people in the community getting  
5 internships, access to careers, but, at  
6 the end of the day, some of them were  
7 not motivated properly to take  
8 advantage of the opportunities that  
9 were in front of them.

10 So, as a community, we've got to  
11 step back and say, am I doing all that  
12 I can do to make a difference for my  
13 family and for my community or is it  
14 all about me? Am I going to be the  
15 businessman or the politician that  
16 signs the deal, makes the thousands but  
17 I don't spread it around the community  
18 by hiring other people? I mean, it  
19 seems like, the last twenty plus years,  
20 we have had leadership in positions,  
21 not to, again, point fingers at the  
22 leadership but you look at other cities  
23 throughout the south where the  
24 so-called black middle class has  
25 expanded. What has our middle class

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1 done? Stagnant. Shrinking. I look at  
2 my peers, graduated from some of the  
3 best schools in the community, first  
4 thing smoking, they are out of here.  
5 They see a better way. So, again,  
6 those of us that are left, we need to  
7 show better. I think there is an old  
8 saying, you do better, show better,  
9 something like that.

10 Anyway, that is it, Russ.

11 MR. SADDIG:

12 She can be first, ain't no  
13 problem.

14 MS. PERRY:

15 Chivalry is not dead.

16 My name is Nellie Perry, and I  
17 work for a major nonprofit in the City,  
18 and my area of expertise is in --

19 MR. CARLL:

20 Put the mike a little closer.

21 MS. PERRY:

22 And my area of expertise, I like

23 to call it, is employment, so what I  
24 want to talk about is the economy. You  
25 know, I got an e-mail today and it's

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1 about the lieutenant governor's  
2 cultural summit. And I tried -- you  
3 know, I'm a black person. I'm  
4 cultural, you know what I mean, but the  
5 bottom line, what it looked to me as,  
6 and don't get me wrong because tourism  
7 means money for us, but are we going  
8 to, even after Katrina, put all of our  
9 eggs in the same basket? Are we going  
10 to put all our eggs in the same basket?

11 I lived in Houston for many  
12 years. You know, when the oil boom  
13 went bust in Houston, you know what  
14 they started doing? They started  
15 diversifying. Now, you can go to  
16 Houston. They get all the best shows,  
17 all the best plays. You know, they  
18 have a thriving, diversified economy.

19 I think we have the opportunity,  
20 with Katrina and Rita happening to us,  
21 to think outside the box economically,  
22 because, if we put our eggs in the same  
23 basket again, tourism, service industry  
24 jobs, how many white folks you all seen  
25 changing beds at the hotel or cleaning

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1 the rooms? No disrespect to my white  
2 brothers and sisters, but let's just be  
3 real. You know, when we talk to people  
4 about coming back to New Orleans, well,  
5 everybody is not a carpenter, everybody  
6 is not a contractor, and all we have to  
7 offer them is service industry jobs.  
8 Then why do I want to come back here?  
9 This is an opportunity, I think, and us  
10 as African American professionals, it's  
11 time for us to step up too. We need to  
12 offer our children something better  
13 than working in one of those hotels.

14 Don't get me wrong. For those  
15 who are inclined toward that industry,  
16 it's wonderful, hospitality, wonderful,  
17 if you got a knack for it, wonderful.  
18 I got a friend of mine, one of these  
19 regional managers at the Popeyes and  
20 stuff like that makes grand theft  
21 money, but that is his niche, but we  
22 need to offer our children more than  
23 that, to offer them a diversified  
24 economy where we can offer our children  
25 something more than hospitality

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1 economics, and that is how we get them  
2 to stay. That is how we attract big  
3 talent here, and, until we do that, if  
4 we put our eggs all back in the same  
5 basket, what -- Rita and Katrina was  
6 God's business. So, if another one  
7 should occur, that is God's business.

8 But we have an opportunity to make a  
9 difference, and that is what it is  
10 about.  
11 On the downside, it is about  
12 making a difference, for me. I mean,  
13 hell, I'm not running around with the  
14 Donald Trumps of the world now, so that  
15 is over, but I want to make a  
16 difference so, when -- our children,  
17 they will reap the benefits of Rita and  
18 Katrina.

19 I'm finished, Margaret, thank  
20 you.

21 MR. SADDIG:

22 Good afternoon.

23 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:

24 State your name.

25 MR. SADDIG:

55

1 My name is Mohammad Saddig. I  
2 grew up in the Lafitte Project not too  
3 far from here, and I heard this  
4 gentleman talk about different  
5 programs, NORD programs that --  
6 athletic programs that they don't have,  
7 but, when I grew up in that project,  
8 the only child, no father, Lehmann  
9 Playground was all we had. Back in  
10 those days, they said that, if you come  
11 across Claiborne Street, you came to  
12 the white park. If you stayed on that  
13 side of the street, you was in the  
14 black park.

15 I heard him talk about education.  
16 This young lady here went to Clark. I  
17 went to Clark. We fared out all right.

18 I know Mr. Chase there. We used  
19 to go to his mother's restaurant and  
20 get a potato sandwich, fifty-cent. Oh,  
21 yes. A fifty-cent potato sandwich on  
22 French bread, and, as people -- I hear  
23 people talking, you know, the  
24 relationship between black and white,  
25 it was bad then and it's bad now.

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1 Also, I heard the gentleman say  
2 education. I'm in the educational  
3 system. They took my job. I didn't  
4 lose my job. They took it. Today, I  
5 don't have insurance, I don't have no  
6 medical, I don't have no dental, I  
7 don't have no vision, I don't have  
8 anything. After the storm, they said  
9 we didn't have a job, but, in order for  
10 me to get a job, they told me I would  
11 have to take a test to get back to  
12 where I started from. It's not  
13 happening.

14 You know, the Lord done blessed  
15 me. You know, right now, I can't work  
16 because I had two back surgeries, and I  
17 teach PE so I can't do anything right  
18 now.

19 I know this gentleman right here;  
20 I know his son. You know, they come a  
21 long way, you know. They got another  
22 brother in here I know, but, to me, you  
23 know, a lot of things need to be done,  
24 but, in order for us to get things  
25 done, we got to do it ourselves.

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1 First, you got to do yourself first  
2 before you can help anybody else. If  
3 you don't do yourself, how you going to  
4 help somebody else?

5 Now, I don't belong to an  
6 organization, but, if anyone wants me  
7 to help them with anything, my phone  
8 number is 722-9173. 504-722-9173.

9 Thank you.

10 MR. SANDERS:

11 My name is Reynard Sanders, and I  
12 would like to talk about Mr. Teamer and  
13 Mr. Grissom and that is our perennial  
14 problem in New Orleans is our inability  
15 to educate poor people, and while it  
16 affects the African American community  
17 only because we dominate the system, we  
18 do not provide any adequate kind of  
19 conducive learning experience for poor  
20 kids. That may not affect your kids in  
21 here, but it affects us all, and it may  
22 not affect us -- those -- those of us  
23 that are Caucasian in here, but, if we  
24 do not provide a conducive learning  
25 environment for poor kids, there is no

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1 economic development, there is no  
2 growth in this city and we can't  
3 continually put kids on the street who  
4 have no skills, nowhere to go and  
5 nothing to do, and while we complained  
6 about the school district, now the  
7 school district is changed, we still  
8 have a school district that is  
9 separated by race and also separated by  
10 class, so, until we do something about  
11 that, we will go nowhere as a  
12 community. The City leadership, the  
13 State leadership needs to rethink what  
14 we're doing with public education,  
15 particularly for poor kids, period. We  
16 got to get it right.

17 MR. CARLL:

18 Thank you.

19 Next?

20 MS. LARCHE-MASON:

21 My name is Charlene Larche-Mason,  
22 and my concern piggybacks off several  
23 that have been mentioned, but we  
24 definitely have got to focus on a  
25 realistic view of fighting crime. You

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1 watch television and crime is on the  
2 local news, on the national news,  
3 depending on who has actually been the

4 victim at that point. But in order to  
5 effectively fight crime, we have to  
6 start with education.

7 There are several schools in this  
8 city that the juvenile judges can tell  
9 you children don't have books as late  
10 as November. They're going to school.  
11 Their effort is genuine. They want an  
12 education, but they're sitting and  
13 they're marking time. There are  
14 schools that have no lunch at all, that  
15 have no books, and you have schools  
16 also that are charter schools and, when  
17 we talk about race and making  
18 differences between certain classes of  
19 people, there are certain charter  
20 schools that have two sets of books.  
21 There is a set that the kids keep at  
22 home or they can take home and a set  
23 that can only stay at school. When you  
24 get to November and December in a  
25 school year and there are other schools

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1 that have no books, there is no one  
2 that can say that is fair.

3 We have to look on what level are  
4 we trying to deal, because you look on  
5 when it was the Orleans Parish School  
6 Board, they couldn't do anything right.  
7 It was horrible. Granted, we have  
8 problems with our system. Now, you  
9 have the Recovery School Board  
10 District, and they may be trying;  
11 however, their efforts do not seem to  
12 be making that much of a difference,  
13 but no one seems to address that. It  
14 floats by as though everything is okay,  
15 and nobody is saying anything. You  
16 actually read in the paper that they're  
17 doing a fine job. When you talk to  
18 those children that I represented in  
19 the past, they don't have any books,  
20 and these are kids that come from the  
21 broken homes but are getting up, going  
22 to school and learning only what the  
23 teacher can make up to teach them.  
24 Those are things we need to address.

25 Talking about crime, you can't

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1 fight crime. That is really just for  
2 television purposes to say we're  
3 fighting crime. The youth are on the  
4 street, but you're not addressing  
5 anything to make anything any better  
6 for them or to do anything different  
7 for any of them.

8 When you speak about race  
9 relations between blacks and whites  
10 with regards to murders, murder/suicide  
11 or just murders, because it has become  
12 the expected norm that black-on-black  
13 crime is going to exist in this city,  
14 it does not matter when there is a

15 situation. I have had an opportunity  
16 to interact with some officers that  
17 pretty much knew who had done the  
18 killing. Because it was black on  
19 black, until today, those crimes have  
20 still not been rectified. When you  
21 have a black-on-white crime or perhaps  
22 a murder of a tourist, whether they're  
23 catching the right guy or not, I don't  
24 know, I'm not that involved with it,  
25 but it's national news or they make

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1 sure they found somebody, be it the  
2 right person or not.

3 Situations in the particular case  
4 I'm talking about, I won't mention  
5 names but a preacher was murdered and  
6 absolutely, I mean a very nice guy but  
7 nothing done almost a year later and  
8 nothing addressed, so, if we're going  
9 to talk about fighting crime, we have  
10 to work with achieving equality across  
11 the board. When we talk about our  
12 youth, and they're the ones that are  
13 the predominant people that are  
14 involved in this crime, address the  
15 fact they're here with no parents,  
16 address the fact they're here with no  
17 schools. I mean, anybody is going to  
18 get bored if they're not being taught  
19 anything. We don't want to send them  
20 somewhere to mark time, and, as the  
21 gentleman before me stated, they come  
22 out, have no skills and nowhere to go  
23 and no ability to do anything other  
24 than what they know, and that is  
25 usually on the advice of a drug dealer.

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1 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:

2 Thank you.

3 MR. BROUSSARD:

4 Good evening. My name is Jarod  
5 Broussard, and I have been listening to  
6 a lot of the, you know, problems that  
7 we have in our city and, you know,  
8 thinking about -- thinking about --  
9 thinking about the problems that we  
10 have in our city. I'm going to keep  
11 talking -- thinking about it and one of  
12 the, you know, things that keeps coming  
13 up is education, and I'm not going to  
14 go into a long detail about it, but,  
15 basically, I went to the Community  
16 Congress too and overheard a discussion  
17 that Richard Blakely had with some  
18 people at my table. He's the recovery  
19 czar the mayor just hired.

20 He was asking what is the problem  
21 with education in New Orleans, and we  
22 said, well, resources, because there  
23 seems to be no resources. You have  
24 schools with no books, you have schools  
25 without lunches, and he said, no, it's

1 not resources. The Recovery District  
2 had four hundred seventy million  
3 dollars to deal with education, and our  
4 problem in the City --

5 MR. BAGNERIS:

6 Swap with me.

7 MR. BROUSSARD:

8 Our problem in the City is  
9 implementation and the fact that we --  
10 when we do get the resources, we don't  
11 manage them correctly. We pay dead  
12 teachers, we mismanage contracts, and  
13 some of the problems, and these are  
14 indicative and systemic throughout the  
15 City in the way the City does business  
16 and one of the things that has to  
17 happen, we have to stop giving away  
18 money without bids, large amounts of  
19 money without bids to people. We need  
20 to not have a set-aside program that,  
21 one, has no teeth, and, two, is almost  
22 impossible for a small business to  
23 handle and deal with. I have actually  
24 gone through small business  
25 certifications for a technology company

1 I had, and one of the questions I  
2 asked, is, well, do the large companies  
3 that get contracts with this entity  
4 have to provide you with all of this  
5 information, have to provide you  
6 quarterly updates, provide you with  
7 monitoring? The answer is, no, they  
8 get the contracts and they go and, as  
9 long as they're performing, we don't  
10 impose these things on them, and so  
11 they -- the discrimination is actually  
12 sometimes in the programs, and we don't  
13 want to create programs that, in turn,  
14 discriminate against the people that  
15 they're supposed to be helping.

16 One of the things that I do want  
17 to talk about in education is that  
18 we're failing our kids by not teaching  
19 them, and I don't know what the answer  
20 is. I know that we don't let religion  
21 come into public schools. I'm not here  
22 to preach, but we need something,  
23 philosophy, ethics, law, values,  
24 something that teaches these kids the  
25 value of human life, because what we

1 need to do, we need to create more of  
2 the kind of people this gentleman was  
3 talking about who hold their heads up  
4 high, who can go through life and make  
5 it and have the potential, because,  
6 right now, those kids are the minority.  
7 You've got the very few coming out who  
8 can do that, and, if we teach these  
9 kids the value of human life, maybe  
10 they will begin to see the value of

11 their own lives and see -- they will be  
12 able to create the opportunity that may  
13 or may not be there.

14 That is basically all I have to  
15 say. Thank you.

16 MR. CARLL:

17 Next?

18 JUDGE REESE:

19 It's not that I didn't get enough  
20 time the first time, but, you know, I  
21 have been listening to the conversation  
22 and I can't be a citizen of this city  
23 when there are so many problems that  
24 have to be dealt with, but, you know,  
25 I -- one thing I want to say is that

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1 the one problem that we have had, and I  
2 have noted this since I returned to New  
3 Orleans in 1974, is that, a lot of  
4 times, we're afraid to fail, and you  
5 can't be. You know, there is a very  
6 irascible, surly judge on the Federal  
7 court, Judge Mitchell, and he had a  
8 motto I adopted: I may be wrong but  
9 I'm never in doubt.

10 You get the best information  
11 available and you decide what you're  
12 going to do and you do it, and, if it  
13 doesn't work, then you try something  
14 else, but, if you get locked in  
15 lethargy, nothing ever happens, and,  
16 too often, we get locked in lethargy,  
17 mired. Like the school district, I  
18 agree with the gentleman that just  
19 spoke: Management was a serious issue.  
20 No accounting company would sign on for  
21 an audit. They didn't know how much  
22 money they had and where it was going.  
23 Construction projects, there was a big  
24 scandal with the construction because  
25 we were paying two to three times what

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1 other jurisdictions were paying for the  
2 construction projects. That is  
3 outrageous.

4 It is a matter of accounting.  
5 Manage your books. You know, with --  
6 Matt was talking about the construction  
7 industry, and I, years ago, decided to  
8 try to get a license to do bonding  
9 because I saw a niche market for  
10 minority contractors to provide  
11 construction bonding. That is how you  
12 hit glass ceilings. If you can't bond  
13 the job beyond a certain capacity, you  
14 can't get the job, run the job, expand  
15 to the next level. You know, something  
16 that I think that the City government  
17 can do is go in to the financial  
18 institutions and say, look, access to  
19 capital is a problem for minority  
20 entrepreneurs and entry level  
21 entrepreneurs in the City. Capital has

22 to be made available to allow the  
23 entrepreneurial class to develop.  
24 Small business is the backbone of the  
25 economy. That is where most jobs come

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1 from, and people go on to major things.  
2 We don't have a lot of Fortune 500  
3 companies in the town. We have one and  
4 they're in Chapter 11, Entergy New  
5 Orleans. We have an opportunity to  
6 diversify and we can climb back up but  
7 we can't be afraid to fail.

8 One thing to do, very simply, if  
9 everybody in here took on one part of  
10 the community, one school, one program,  
11 one charity and would say, I'm going to  
12 allocate some time to that to move that  
13 along, that would mightily assist in  
14 moving this along, but those are the  
15 kinds of things I think we need to do  
16 as a community to get us into a better  
17 place, and, needless to say, folks like  
18 myself who are elected need to be held  
19 accountable, and I'm all for that  
20 because I do my share of that as well.

21 Thank you.

22 MR. CARLL:

23 Next?

24 DR. BLAKLEY:

25 Dr. Linda Blakley. I teach at

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1 Xavier University at the College of  
2 Pharmacology.

3 A number of issues coming across  
4 here are educationally related. I  
5 think that the core of the issues  
6 relating to education, public education  
7 in particular, is lack of acknowledging  
8 cultural competency in the public  
9 school system. We have social,  
10 economic issues to deal with with  
11 students that are in the public school  
12 system and, in the education that  
13 they're going to receive, if it doesn't  
14 properly address those issues, we're  
15 going to continue to have problems, and  
16 I think cultural competency has to be a  
17 core component of whatever educational  
18 system will evolve from the current  
19 systems.

20 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:

21 You have more time if you have  
22 more to say.

23 DR. BLAKLEY:

24 That is it.

25 MR. CARLL:

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1 Next, raise your hand?

2 MR. SHAKIR:

3 My name is Jawad Shakir,  
4 J-A-W-A-D S-H-A-K-I-R. Usually, I have  
5 to say that because people look at me  
6 and say, why you got to have that name?

7 I'm going to tell you why.

8 I have a beautiful connection  
9 with this city. I was born here but  
10 grew up most of my teenage years in --  
11 on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi, a  
12 little town called Pass Christian,  
13 Mississippi, but my people are here,  
14 are from here. My father's people are  
15 from Gerttown; my mother's people are  
16 from Plaquemines Parish, and my father  
17 and mother lived here, actually,  
18 seventeen years and come back and  
19 forth.

20 I came here, went to Dillard  
21 University, graduated and just stayed  
22 here because it's home, but my  
23 experience at Dillard when I was there,  
24 I encountered the -- at that time, the  
25 Nation of Islam and I became a member,

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1 so I have been a Moslem now about  
2 thirty-five years and a member of the  
3 Islamic community here in New Orleans.  
4 We have enjoyed quite a good  
5 relationship with the community, mainly  
6 because we connected to those who are  
7 dispossessed and downtrodden, and most  
8 of our work has been there and, in the  
9 community right now, as we sit in these  
10 lofty towers, there is a powder keg out  
11 here in the streets. There is some  
12 things going on out here in the  
13 streets, if we don't correct and  
14 correct soon, we won't have a New  
15 Orleans.

16 The criminal justice system is,  
17 as Kern is well aware of, being a  
18 judge, is broken. It's been destroyed,  
19 and I have had opportunity to work in  
20 the criminal justice system myself, and  
21 we're doing some things now with the  
22 Crime Summit and things are moving  
23 along real good. I applaud Councilman  
24 James Carter for the work he's doing  
25 with that because we're trying to

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1 really correct this criminal justice  
2 system, and to just give you some  
3 really startling statistics, and please  
4 think about this, right now, in the  
5 State of Louisiana, we have almost  
6 fifty-nine, close to sixty thousand  
7 people in the penal institutions in  
8 Louisiana. As we speak here, people  
9 are planning to build more prisons. As  
10 we sit here, people are planning to  
11 build private prisons. There are  
12 private prisons in New Orleans. The  
13 prison industrial complex is well and  
14 alive and is growing.

15 The failed education system  
16 brings more clients into the prison  
17 industrial complex because the

18 educational system has failed our kids.  
19 If we don't turn this around, the kids  
20 who we're failing in the education  
21 system will find their way in the penal  
22 system to overthrow this system. Great  
23 revolutions have come out of the penal  
24 system. We look at Castro and the  
25 movement down there, so we have got

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1 something on our hands to correct what  
2 is happening out here because we have  
3 failed our kids. We have terribly  
4 failed them, and, if you go on any  
5 given day and time down to Tulane and  
6 Broad, juvenile court, you'll see  
7 almost 95 percent African American  
8 youth in the system, getting ready to  
9 go into the system.

10 Just one other point I would like  
11 to make. Males between the age of  
12 twenty-five -- eighteen and  
13 thirty-five, almost 40 percent of them  
14 now are in the criminal justice system,  
15 either on probation, parole or in the  
16 institution. Now, the growing thing  
17 that is happening is that you have  
18 females, African American females who  
19 are coming into the criminal justice  
20 system at an alarming rate. What we've  
21 got to do, middle class folks, is to  
22 take off some of those suits, get out  
23 in the street, do something in the  
24 recreation, education, religious  
25 groups, because the other thing too,

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1 some of these kids have been destroyed.  
2 They don't even go to church, don't  
3 participate in religion, don't believe  
4 in God, period, so, if they don't  
5 believe in God, they don't believe in  
6 nothing. We -- I mean, it is a serious  
7 thing out here, so everybody has got to  
8 do their part, as Kern said.

9 And, in closing, I just want to  
10 say one thing: Kern, I don't know  
11 how -- I'm trying to imagine you with  
12 that afro. I had one, and I called it  
13 a stingy afro. I couldn't grow but two  
14 inches, but that is all I have to say,  
15 thank you.

16 MR. CARLL:

17 Next?

18 MR. BIAGAS:

19 In going around the second time,  
20 if you don't mind, now that I got the  
21 construction out of the way, you know,  
22 I think, when you want to get down to  
23 the bottom -- I would like to get to  
24 the root of all causes. I want to try  
25 to make an attempt to say I have a

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1 solution to the racism -- I'm T. Matt  
2 Biagas, by the way, but, to me, I think

3 racism is perception, and what I mean  
4 by that is, you know, after the storm,  
5 it gave us a lot of insight. It took  
6 us around the world, so to say. I was  
7 in Lafayette watching the storm on TV.  
8 I was one of the fortunate ones to be  
9 able to get out and get out by the skin  
10 of my teeth because there was a lot, a  
11 lot of people that were left behind  
12 that didn't get out, and the Superdome  
13 and Convention Center showed that, but  
14 what else did it show?

15 When we were looking at  
16 television, they had a reporter, I  
17 forget his name but I think a sports  
18 commentator doing the news and the  
19 perception he gave of New Orleans was  
20 that we were a gang of thugs, looters  
21 and robbers. He showed the same  
22 newsreel over and over and over again  
23 as if it was happening all over the  
24 City, but it was the very same newsreel  
25 of people trying to survive, but he

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1 perceived them to be looters. They  
2 were breaking in stores not to loot but  
3 to get water and food to survive this  
4 terrible storm. Now, that was a thing  
5 of perception.

6 Now, I would like to go on to  
7 say, as I traveled further and into  
8 other cities, I noticed that New  
9 Orleans had a lot of good and positive  
10 things that we never report on. You  
11 talk about the NORD system, but I went  
12 to other cities. There wasn't NORD  
13 systems all over the cities like we had  
14 in New Orleans. You couldn't go in a  
15 neighborhood in New Orleans and not  
16 find a NORD playground. Was it the  
17 best NORD system in the country? Maybe  
18 not, but it saved a lot of children.

19 The school system, we criticize  
20 our school system tremendously, but let  
21 me tell you, I was part of corporate  
22 America in the '80s during the oil  
23 industry. I worked for a major oil  
24 company, and, when that oil company --  
25 when the oil industry went down, I took

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1 off and went to Houston like this lady  
2 said. I was in that era and, when I  
3 sat down and worked with my  
4 counterparts that went to public school  
5 like I went to -- I went to Clark also.  
6 If you don't recognize me, it's because  
7 I played a lot of hookey, but I was  
8 there, and I didn't consider myself one  
9 of the smartest people, but the people  
10 I worked next to, I was very  
11 competitive with.

12 And one other thing: Houston was  
13 really redeveloping just like New

14 Orleans was, but what they did was they  
15 said they had the best school system;  
16 therefore, they did, and it became that  
17 because they perceived themselves to be  
18 and became one of the better school  
19 systems in the country simply because  
20 they said. And, also, you know, I  
21 spent time traveling. I have been to  
22 Japan, China and various other places,  
23 and the people there say, hey, why  
24 don't you wear your hat backwards? Why  
25 aren't your pants hanging down? I

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1 don't perceive myself to be that way.  
2 If you want to say I look middle class,  
3 it's because I perceive myself to be  
4 middle class, not what is in my pocket.  
5 It is the perception of being that, so  
6 I think, if we can perceive ourselves  
7 to be positive, if we can focus on the  
8 positive things about New Orleans, then  
9 the rest of the world will see and jump  
10 on our bandwagon.

11 Thank you.

12 MR. CARLL:

13 Next?

14 DR. SHOLES:

15 I want to say how much I'm  
16 enjoying listening to these comments.  
17 I came feeling very cynical -- Maurice  
18 Sholes -- about what this might be  
19 about and how painful to sit through,  
20 but what bugs me, what really, really  
21 is annoying me is that I don't see any  
22 of you on my television, I don't see  
23 any of you in my newspaper, and I don't  
24 see any of you in any of the  
25 perceptions and things broadcast about

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1 our city, and it makes me feel alone,  
2 it makes me feel invisible, makes me  
3 feel like all of my deeds and what I  
4 work on simply don't exist. All I see  
5 is that boy with dreadlocks like me  
6 they're talking about when they say  
7 we're not welcome in St. Tammany and  
8 cheewees and dreadlocks mean a visit  
9 from the sheriff. I don't see or hear  
10 anything about me and my five friends  
11 with dreadlocks who are doing wonderful  
12 things for the community.

13 So, if I could ask for anything,  
14 if I could focus on anything, I would  
15 like to hear and see the stories of  
16 those of you working with our children,  
17 of those of you who have submitted to  
18 going to schools that are run down,  
19 those of you achieving in spite of  
20 feeling broken, besieged and forgotten  
21 about every day instead of seeing the  
22 boys walking the walk of shame saying  
23 they hate the brother because they got  
24 money and he had five hundred dollars

25

less in his pocket. I want the

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1 perception to match the reality that we  
2 can be. When you do that, children  
3 believe they can be something other  
4 than a statistic, the police believe I  
5 can own a home in the Marigny rather  
6 than that I'm sitting on the stoop  
7 casing the place to steal. I don't  
8 have to explain I live here, provide  
9 identification because I might be a  
10 thief. I don't have to always correct  
11 people at the hospital and say, no, I'm  
12 not here to deliver something, I'm your  
13 doctor.

14 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:

15 We have another speaker here.

16 MR. FERDINAND:

17 I'm Ken Ferdinand, and my wife  
18 Melba and I are life-long residents of  
19 New Orleans. Actually, we lived in the  
20 Lower Ninth Ward until, what, about six  
21 years ago. We grew up there; we know  
22 it, know all the nooks and crannies.

23 I think the conversation  
24 regarding middle class is misdirected.  
25 The class that we are is irrelevant.

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1 The amount of resources we have,  
2 material is irrelevant. What is  
3 important is that we're still here and  
4 we're still trying to make something  
5 happen.

6 Now, I have two brothers who are  
7 extraordinary and part of what I think  
8 we need to keep in mind is maybe a  
9 couple of numbers that you can walk  
10 away with. Poverty rate, New Orleans  
11 pre Katrina was 28 percent. There is  
12 not another city where almost a third  
13 of the people are in poverty. We don't  
14 talk about that number, and we don't  
15 talk about that statistic because that  
16 is something that we don't feel we can  
17 do anything about, nor do we have a  
18 sense that we need to know what the  
19 demographics of our community,  
20 regardless of race, are. The economic  
21 level in New Orleans pre Katrina was  
22 such that almost a third of our people  
23 were below poverty. There is no other  
24 city in the world that can sustain that  
25 kind of poverty. We are dreaming if we

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1 think we can. 12 to 13 to maybe  
2 15 percent poverty, yes. But  
3 28 percent, we can't sustain it. You  
4 don't have enough citizens providing  
5 tax -- a tax base; you don't have  
6 industries that are going to come to  
7 your city if one third, almost one  
8 third of the population is described by  
9 the Census Bureau as in poverty, and

10 our leaders generally don't talk about  
11 it.

12 Now, I also sit on the Regional  
13 Planning Commission representing  
14 Orleans Parish, and I can tell you that  
15 there is no other parish in our region,  
16 including St. Bernard, St. Tammany,  
17 St. Charles, Washington Parish, East  
18 Baton Rouge, there is no other parish  
19 which is as generous in regards to  
20 poverty as is Orleans Parish, so that,  
21 even when you cross into Mississippi or  
22 go west to Texas, neither one of those  
23 states have cities, from Houston all  
24 the way to Pascagoula and Bay St.  
25 Louis, which is as hospitable to poor

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1 people. I'm saying that in a way that  
2 expresses our humanity here in New  
3 Orleans, and, Kern, when you talk about  
4 the history, you really didn't think  
5 about it, I don't think, but we have  
6 always had poor people, from  
7 Reconstruction on, come to New Orleans.  
8 You don't have a job, you don't have  
9 something to do, go to New Orleans, and  
10 it's kind of a -- it is a generous  
11 attitude toward poor people in the back  
12 eras.

13 My dad grew up in Napoleonville.  
14 He got tied of the sugar cane, he and  
15 his brother, and came to New Orleans  
16 and they made something of themselves,  
17 but New Orleans has been somewhat  
18 designed to serve this region as a  
19 place where the poor people can go. We  
20 have more housing per capita for the  
21 poor in New Orleans than any of our  
22 sister cities along the Gulf Coast from  
23 Houston probably all the way to  
24 Florida. There is not another city  
25 that provides as much public housing as

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1 we do, so it is an acknowledgement and  
2 a curse, this thing of poverty. It has  
3 given us a lot of opportunity, but it  
4 is also who we are in the region, so  
5 the 28 percent, you got to remember  
6 that. The amount of public housing  
7 that is provided as compared to our  
8 other counterparts in the region, we  
9 provide the most.

10 The last thing is education that  
11 I would like to speak to quickly, and  
12 remember this: Over 60 percent of the  
13 young black men who enter the public  
14 school system in Orleans Parish drop  
15 out before grade twelve and graduation,  
16 another statistic that I don't think  
17 makes a lot of hay, so you can't have  
18 doctors and lawyers and you definitely  
19 can't have them be male and black if  
20 they're dropping out of school before

21 age twelve -- sorry, grade twelve.  
22 So 28 percent poverty doesn't  
23 work. Dropping out, males dropping out  
24 of school doesn't work, and whatever we  
25 need to do to change those two things

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1 around, we need to do that, and, then,  
2 having the most public housing of all  
3 the other regions -- other cities in  
4 the region gives us the opportunity to  
5 serve the most poor people in our city,  
6 and you can't grow an economy like  
7 that.

8 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:

9 Thank you.

10 MR. CARLL:

11 Thank you.

12 Next?

13 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:

14 I'm sure many of you have  
15 something to say. Here is a hand over  
16 here. Because we are going to start  
17 wrapping up if -- I know we said 6 to  
18 9, but if there is not new comments  
19 coming out -- Larry, you want to say  
20 something?

21 MR. BAGNERIS:

22 I have heard a lot this  
23 evening -- I don't need a microphone.  
24 I really want you to think about the  
25 reason why we brought you here. I

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1 heard the economy. I know that  
2 discriminates, but I want us to begin  
3 to realize we live in a melting pot and  
4 we've got a group here that  
5 continues -- I believe we've got  
6 80 percent of our people in the middle  
7 and 10 percent on one side pulling one  
8 way and 10 percent on the other side  
9 pulling us one way and using the race  
10 card, I don't believe that is true, but  
11 what I'm hearing from everybody who  
12 spoke about the economy, the  
13 hospitality industry, that talked about  
14 our kids, that talked about crime,  
15 about how we personally are treated, I  
16 am delighted to get that information  
17 because, once we get those statistics,  
18 we can report to the proper people that  
19 be, but, in these last twenty minutes  
20 that we've got in here, I want to hear  
21 your heartfelt reasons in this  
22 community, we got your depth of -- I  
23 understand the discrimination in the  
24 economy, discrimination in people going  
25 to jail. We know all that. We've got

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1 all that in the paper. We know, we're  
2 in the process of trying to dilute  
3 that, but what we as a Commission are  
4 looking for is how we can compete  
5 against those Houstons and Atlantas and

6 Miamis and San Antonios when the  
7 Mexicans and the white people and the  
8 black people come to the table without  
9 screaming at each other about race and  
10 decide it's not about black, brown,  
11 yellow or red; it is about green. It  
12 is about money.

13 I want to hear something from you  
14 guys about how you feel about your  
15 white counterparts. Do you feel like  
16 we're not the ones dealing with each  
17 other? Do you feel we need to look  
18 inside of ourselves? Do we need to  
19 stop pointing our fingers on the other  
20 side of Rampart Street? I want to  
21 inflame you in the next twenty minutes  
22 to tell me what this Commission needs  
23 to be charged with to deal with the  
24 segment in this community that always  
25 goes to City Council meetings and

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1 complains about racism.

2 MR. BANNERMAN:

3 I'm Eugene Bannerman, an  
4 architect from New York, living here  
5 about sixteen months. I came as a FEMA  
6 specialist. I was with the New York  
7 City Housing Authority in New York and  
8 also worked for Parson, Brinkerhoff in  
9 New York before I came here.

10 My reasons for staying after my  
11 stint with FEMA were twofold: I  
12 thought I could make a difference in  
13 the City. I thought, as an African  
14 American, that I was charged, if I had  
15 an opportunity that education had  
16 bestowed upon me, to come to this part  
17 of the world and try to make a  
18 difference, so myself and my partner  
19 set up offices in Metairie and Orleans  
20 Parish. I am grateful that the Dr.  
21 Diaz invited me here. I met her at the  
22 Unified New Orleans Plan. I also work  
23 for the Central City Park Initiative,  
24 the executive board, and I'm currently  
25 restoring houses in Gentilly and Treme,

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1 parts of St. Anthony and the Lower  
2 Ninth Ward, so I'm quite familiar with  
3 the issues that we have here in New  
4 Orleans.

5 What basically has troubled me  
6 since I got here, basically, largely  
7 has nothing to do with the crowd here.  
8 I always think that the course of this  
9 great city is charged with the local  
10 government that sits up in City Hall  
11 and basically holds the cards and the  
12 destiny of this great city. It is  
13 quite surprising that, since Katrina,  
14 with the amount of disaster we had in  
15 Orleans Parish and the fact that most  
16 of the obligated dollars from the

17 Federal government sit here in Orleans  
18 Parish, since Orleans Parish sustained  
19 three-quarters of the damage, that,  
20 nearly two years after Katrina,  
21 everybody and their grandmother does  
22 not have a hammer and there is no  
23 public works project in the City of New  
24 Orleans to begin to develop a lot of  
25 abandoned property that we could be

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1 using to get people back into Orleans  
2 Parish.

3 I don't see the mayor talking to  
4 institutions here about basically  
5 getting programs that are -- that will  
6 begin to inundate and inoculate younger  
7 people here to be able to participate  
8 the way a lot of the Fortune 500  
9 companies who are going to try to come  
10 here now to look for opportunities. I  
11 don't see anything on behalf of local  
12 government trying to invite businesses  
13 here, giving incentives. I have not  
14 seen any kind of programs set up by the  
15 Xaviers, by Southern University, by  
16 LSU, by Loyola, by most of the major  
17 institutions here, saying that, since  
18 we have this thing on the ground now,  
19 how do we get into our institutions  
20 programs that begin to mirror the  
21 disaster we have on the ground here so  
22 that we have kids who are coming from  
23 the school system who can participate  
24 in this program and begin to turn out  
25 people who have an opportunity to begin

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1 to partake of the dollars that are on  
2 the ground here.

3 What I have seen, which is very,  
4 very vexing to me is that every other  
5 car I see, and I drive through the  
6 different neighborhoods, either come  
7 from Texas or other parts of the world,  
8 and I'm surprised that, when I go to  
9 Council meetings, nobody is addressing  
10 that we need programs that bring people  
11 in the City. It is not about the  
12 cameras and it's not about the police  
13 going in the neighborhoods; it is about  
14 giving people an opportunity to  
15 participate in the disaster and  
16 basically making, you know, reparations  
17 to that and making reparations to the  
18 financial corridor.

19 Thank you.

20 MR. CARLL:

21 Anybody else?

22 MR. BROUSSARD:

23 Again, my name is Jarod  
24 Broussard.

25 I just wanted to make some

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1 comments about race and culture. One

2 of the comments that was made earlier  
3 was that we need to put race behind us,  
4 and I think that, as a city, we aren't  
5 able to do that because we will stumble  
6 over ourselves in the process, and one  
7 of the -- I believe it is Dr. Sholes  
8 said that, you know, he wants to see  
9 more people like us on TV, and I have  
10 been working with a nonprofit since  
11 1999. I have been on the board, the  
12 board president, the board chair. I  
13 have never turned down an opportunity  
14 to go on radio or TV and talk about  
15 that, and, I mean, one of the things  
16 that, you know, we owe ourselves and we  
17 owe our city is to listen to and  
18 respect other cultures. You know,  
19 we're -- we're here in this process of  
20 listening tonight, but, individually,  
21 and I believe in my heart that the way  
22 to overcome discrimination, the way to  
23 overcome race conflict is to pay  
24 attention to other cultures, respect  
25 other cultures, keep an open ear and

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1 mind and learn from other cultures,  
2 because every culture on the plant has  
3 something to offer us.

4 I've lived abroad for many years.  
5 I'm from New Orleans originally, I came  
6 back to New Orleans in '98 and have  
7 been back ever since except for seven  
8 months in Dallas because of Katrina,  
9 but some of the notes I jotted down, we  
10 must fight the societal and  
11 institutional flaws in the City with  
12 individual action, and it is up to us,  
13 each and every one of us to stand up  
14 and say, yes, I may have been  
15 discriminated against, yes, I got  
16 called the N word, yes, I got this, I  
17 got that, but I'm going to stand up and  
18 do what I need to do and I'm going to  
19 turn around when I get where I want to  
20 go or in the process of getting where I  
21 want to go and hold out my hand and  
22 bring somebody with me, and, if we all  
23 take that attitude, that will  
24 self-perpetuate this city becoming what  
25 it can be.

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1 Thank you.  
2 DR. MONTGOMERY-RICHARD:  
3 One more comment over here.  
4 MS. MITCHELL-GRUBB:  
5 Thank you. I'm Yvonne  
6 Mitchell-Grubb. I would say one of my  
7 disappointments since Katrina is, you  
8 know, there was a lot of discussion  
9 about the opportunities that we would  
10 have in making this city better and  
11 different, and I really haven't seen  
12 that, and I think, in particular for

13 the African American community and for  
14 professionals, I haven't seen  
15 additional opportunities, and, as a  
16 result, we're losing people who could  
17 be an asset to this city, who could  
18 help rebuild this city because they  
19 don't see the opportunity.

20 On the other hand, I haven't seen  
21 us make the opportunities here. I  
22 think that we have been looking to the  
23 government, to the State, to the City  
24 to say that they're going to give us  
25 opportunities rather than coming

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1 together and making them ourselves, and  
2 I think that that is what we have to  
3 do. They're right; they don't see us  
4 on TV; they don't see people talking,  
5 see us talking as a group because  
6 they're so focused on everyone else.  
7 They're focused on the people who I  
8 guess were part of the picture when  
9 they were at the Convention Center, and  
10 they're still focusing on that group of  
11 people now, but we have to make  
12 ourselves heard and we have to make our  
13 opportunities, and we have to come  
14 together, and I just haven't seen that  
15 happening.

16 For all of the issues with lack  
17 of housing and the education problems,  
18 we can't wait for anybody to come up  
19 with the solutions. We have to come up  
20 with the solutions ourselves, and I  
21 think the City is making a mistake in  
22 not using the talent that it already  
23 has here and the talent for people that  
24 have come from other places that are  
25 willing to work with us. They have

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1 missed out on that opportunity, but we  
2 can't complain about it; we have to do  
3 something about it, and we have to come  
4 together and say we're here, we can do  
5 it, we're capable and we're going to  
6 come up with our own solutions and not  
7 wait for them to tell us what to do but  
8 to tell them, hey, this is how we're  
9 going to make a difference.

10 MR. CARLL:

11 Anybody else? Okay.

12 At this time, we would like to  
13 introduce Dr. Michael Cowan, the  
14 chairman of the Human Relations  
15 Commission.

16 Mike?

17 MR. COWAN:

18 Folks, I just want to just bring  
19 this to some closure. First of all,  
20 thank you for your time. Thank you for  
21 your honesty. I want to ask the  
22 members and the director of the Human  
23 Relations Commission to stand up for a

24 minute, all the ones that are here.

25 We -- tonight, we started the

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1 first of thirteen or more of these  
2 meetings that we're going to do monthly  
3 over the coming year, and we started  
4 with this group of people quite  
5 intentionally as an act of respect for  
6 who you are and what you have done and  
7 what you're doing and what you will do  
8 in the City. I want to just tell you a  
9 quick story about something that I have  
10 been involved in that I think has a  
11 lesson for us maybe about what we're  
12 addressing tonight.

13 For the last twelve months, I  
14 have been one of the people working on  
15 getting an inspector general  
16 established in the City of New Orleans,  
17 and I see some heads nod. I don't know  
18 how people feel about that in this room  
19 exactly, but I know one thing: I went  
20 and learned about how, eight years ago,  
21 in a very corrupt place called Miami  
22 Dade, they perceived themselves to have  
23 this problem, and they set up an  
24 inspector general who is having  
25 powerful effects on the way that city

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1 operates, and I could tell you fifty  
2 stories -- I won't tell you one, but I  
3 could tell you fifty stories about how  
4 that person, with a relatively little  
5 bit of money, has interrupted waste and  
6 fraud and corruption in Miami Dade.

7 There is nothing in the world to  
8 stop us here from doing that. There  
9 are not less intelligent people here;  
10 there are not people who care less  
11 here, so how come, for six months when  
12 I talked to people about that, I can  
13 only get, on the one hand, people who  
14 are totally cynical or, on the other  
15 hand, people who are highly skeptical?  
16 I just can't get the bar to move  
17 outside that range. I think it says  
18 something about our perception or our  
19 lack of hope for changing something  
20 that fundamental.

21 If anything, what we're dealing  
22 with here tonight is more fundamental,  
23 and so the Human Relations Commission  
24 isn't trying to -- I'm not going to  
25 make a speech, try to change your mind,

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1 but we'll make this promise: We have  
2 asked for honesty, and I believe we got  
3 that tonight. We're going to ask for  
4 it every single night. Honesty is no  
5 good if somebody isn't listening,  
6 paying attention and feeding back what  
7 they hear, and that is our  
8 responsibility, and we're not going to

9 just listen and feed back what we hear  
10 to the City. We're going to take what  
11 we hear in the form of a set of  
12 specific recommendations to the mayor,  
13 to the City Council, to the business  
14 leaders and to any other decision maker  
15 in the City who needs to hear something  
16 about what needs to happen so people  
17 feel respected and included in the life  
18 of the City. That is our promise to  
19 you. It says in the Good Book, by  
20 their fruits ye shall know them. Hold  
21 us to the fruit test. Hold us to that  
22 fruit test and see what we deliver.

23 Thank you very much, and you will  
24 hear from us about what you said  
25 tonight. Thank you.

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1 Sorry, Larry Bagneris.

2 MR. BAGNERIS:

3 Before you leave, I wanted to  
4 introduce a councilman who is here with  
5 us, Councilman Fielkow.

6 Would you stand so we can  
7 acknowledge your presence?

8 I again thank you for coming out  
9 this evening and sharing with us as you  
10 have shared in all honesty. I want to  
11 say, I heard a couple of people say  
12 they're from Clark. I'm went to St.  
13 Aug. They used to walk the halls and  
14 say, hey, Champ, you ought to go to  
15 Clark. That's a compliment, all right,  
16 but welcome to the people from Clark.  
17 St. Aug right there.

18 This is a real difficult city to  
19 crack. We're all doing the same thing.  
20 We're all doing it at your mamma's  
21 house, going to mamma's for king cake,  
22 we're all going to Mardi Gras, we all  
23 start with the grandma and the  
24 children. It is not like a major city  
25 in America where you go to college,

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1 then go to work, you meet a diversity  
2 of people, Asians you've never met,  
3 Hispanics you never met and we get the  
4 melting pot feelings. We're all  
5 melting in our own neighborhoods and  
6 music, listening to the same stuff,  
7 doing the same things, whether it's  
8 Jazz Fest, whether it's French Quarter  
9 Festival or the whole Mardi Gras season  
10 where we stand together on the parade  
11 line.

12 I'm personally tired of using the  
13 concept of the race card. You have  
14 helped us this evening as a beginning  
15 to try to work this community into the  
16 melting pot it needs to be.

17 We thank you, we appreciate your  
18 time. Have a pleasant evening and tell  
19 your friends about this. We'll meet

20 again next month for the Anglo  
21 community in this location at 6  
22 o'clock, and, again, you're all  
23 welcome, but we prefer to have the  
24 white counterparts of yours come in and  
25 join us and tell us what they think.

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1 Good evening.  
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1 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE  
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3 I, RUTH ANN FREY, Certified Shorthand  
4 Reporter, do hereby certify that the proceedings  
5 were reported by me in shorthand and transcribed  
6 under my personal direction and supervision, and  
7 is a true and correct transcript, to the best of  
8 my ability and understanding;

9 That I am not of counsel, not related  
10 to counsel or the parties hereto, and not in any  
11 way interested in the outcome of this matter.  
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