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HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

C. RAY NAGIN, MAYOR

1300 PERDIDO STREET

SUITE 8E07

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA 70112

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

"WE BELIEVE IN ONE NEW ORLEANS"

LISTENING SESSION # 3

HELD ON TUESDAY, MARCH THE 27TH, 2007

AT 501 BASIN STREET



REPORTED BY: SYLVIA C. PASTRANO #78015

CERTIFIED COURT REPORTER FOR THE STATE OF LA

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DR. COWAN:

Folks, if we could ask you to take your seats, we would like to get started, please. Ladies and gentlemen, good evening. I am Michael Cowan from Loyola University. And, I am the Chair of the Human Relations Commission for the City of New Orleans. I want to welcome you to the third in our year-long series of what we are calling Listening Sessions with the Human Relations Commission.

Our purpose is to hear from the different ethnic and cultural and social groups that make up our city, learn something about their contributions. And, most importantly, I think any concerns that they have about issues of inclusion and respect in the City of New Orleans.

After listening carefully and pulling together what we hear, we will be making a report back to you and to the City, to the Mayor and the City Council.

So, thank you for coming to listen and have your say this evening. I will turn the program over to our co-chairs for this evening. That is Professor Jane Parker from Tulane University and Rabbi Edward Cohn from Temple Sinai. (applause)

1

MS. PARKER:

2 Thank you very much. A warm good  
3 evening to you and I join in those thanks for you  
4 coming out. I know we are all very busy, and  
5 obviously this is important enough to you that you  
6 have taken time out of your schedule to join us.

7 As Mike said, I am Jane Parker. I  
8 teach at the Tulane School of Social work, and I  
9 also serve as the associate dean there. We  
10 encourage you, if you have not already, please sign  
11 in before you go, as well as place yourself on the  
12 map with a dot of your residence. Thank you.

13 RABBI COHN:

14 I also want to welcome you. I am  
15 Rabbi Edward Cohn. I am the rabbi of Temple Sinai,  
16 and have been working with the Human Relations  
17 Commission now for -- well, a long time. I guess 18  
18 years of its existence.

19 I want to thank Larry Bagneris,  
20 our gifted, dedicated, brilliant executive director.  
21 (applause) He is the cornerstone of our group and,  
22 when you think in terms of what works in city  
23 government here, think Larry Bagneris. He works and  
24 helps New Orleans work. And we love him.

25 There are some refreshments that

4

1 Jane has been thoughtful enough to make sure that we  
2 have right here. Help yourself. This is an  
3 informal evening and it is one that is designed to

4 create light.

5 A lot of people have worked very  
6 hard to try to make this concept come to life for  
7 us. And we are going we are going to invest a whole  
8 lot of time in the next year inviting people to come  
9 and to share their story so that we come away  
10 knowing about our fellow New Orleanians and knowing  
11 about what makes them happy and what makes them feel  
12 right at home, as well, perhaps their frustrations,  
13 their concerns and their dreams for the Crescent  
14 City.

15 Now, the purpose of this evening  
16 is in order to open our ears as a listening session  
17 to hear your thoughts and your feelings, as members  
18 of some of the various groups that make up our  
19 diverse, wonderful and fascinating city.

20 Members of the Human Relations  
21 Commission are present and, if you are a member of  
22 the Human Relations Committee, would you raise your  
23 hand. (Members raise hands.) Now you can see those  
24 who are dedicated members. They are here to listen.  
25 They will not respond to your questions or concerns

5

1 for this evening.

2 A court reporter, as you can see  
3 is here to provide a detailed record of what it is  
4 that you have to say, what is in your heart, on your

5 mind. After the session, Human Relations Committee  
6 members will review the transcript and will labor to  
7 identify each of the major themes that are revealed  
8 in the course of this session and of all the other  
9 sessions that we will have between now and this  
10 coming January, I believe.

11 MS. PARKER:

12 Expanding on what Rabbi Cohn has  
13 said, we will be holding our listening sessions with  
14 different groups across the year. Our last year, I  
15 believe which has got described as our Gumbo Group;  
16 and that will be everyone who wants to come  
17 together.

18 Also, we are very excited that  
19 people are able to self identify with their own  
20 particular ethnic group.

21 And, what we will do, as Rabbi Cohn said  
22 is we will identify these things but then, as a  
23 commission, we will come together and thoughtfully  
24 look at those themes and make recommendations  
25 perhaps for policy, perhaps for certain problematic

6

1 issues to promote more inclusion in the life of our  
2 city.

3 So, that is really our bottom line and  
4 ultimate purpose in this particular exercise. We  
5 are honored to have representatives of the Italian,  
6 French and Irish communities here this evening, and

7 we are most fortunate that key representatives,  
8 people who really know those particular communities  
9 have come to share with us a brief history, as well  
10 as contributions that their particular ethnic group  
11 or population has made to the city.

12 And, at this time, I will ask Ed, if he  
13 would introduce our first speaker.

14 RABBI COHN:

15 Thank you so much. It is our  
16 honor to welcome the Consul General of France to the  
17 Crescent City. Pierre Lebovics was born in France  
18 in 1951. He holds a Master's Degree and an advanced  
19 degree in Russian Literature and Society. He has  
20 held several positions with the Ministry of  
21 Education from 1973 to 1986. He was then assigned  
22 to the Ministry of Defense, and he worked at the  
23 College of Linguistic Studies at Strasbourg until  
24 1991.

25 Upon passing the national

7

1 prestigious competitive exam, Mr. Lebovics was  
2 recruited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
3 resulting in his assignment to the Department of  
4 Strategic Affairs in Paris where he served from 1991  
5 through 1993.

6 He was then named head of the  
7 Press Department in the French Embassy in Prague of

8 the Czech Republic from 1993 to 1998. From 1998 to  
9 2002, he held the position of Political Counselor at  
10 the French Embassy in Tel Aviv, Israel.

11 He then returned to Paris as the  
12 Director of Cooperation for Higher Education with  
13 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, prior to assuming  
14 his current duties as Consul General of France in  
15 New Orleans on August 1st, 2005.

16 My goodness, you had a momentous  
17 welcome, didn't you, to our city. Mr. Lebovics is  
18 married. He is the father of two sons.

19 And I can't tell you how honored I  
20 am and that we all are to have him with all that he  
21 is and all of his responsibilities to be here with  
22 us on this beautiful evening in New Orleans.  
23 Welcome. Thank you so much, sir. (applause)

24 MR. LEBOVICS:

25 Unfortunately, I will not be able

8

1 to attend the whole session, so I offer my  
2 apologies. Very glad to be with you today. I don't  
3 want to tell you that I don't want to bother you  
4 with a very, very long -- is there any question or  
5 answer or just presentation?

6 MS. PARKER:

7 Presentation.

8 MR. LEBOVICS:

9 In a nutshell.

10

MS. PARKER:

11

Ten minutes tops.

12

MR. LEBOVICS:

13

As you know, we have been very

14

much involved in the life of the city. We sort of

15

founded it, so we have been involved in the city.

16

And, it's difficult to retrace in a few words the

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history of France here. You may go to the THNOC,

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The Historic New Orleans Collection, and then we

19

have a wonderful exhibition now going on up until

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the end of May. It's precisely on that. It's

21

entitled "400 Years of French Presence in Louisiana:

22

Treasures of the National Library of France."

23

I suggest that you go and you see

24

the very rare items never shown -- very prestigious,

25

fragile. You will see maps of the Gulf of Mexico

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1

colored by hand dating back from the 17th Century

2

that is really interesting.

3

So, this was at the very beginning

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a French place. And, you know what happened. We

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sold it to you. Sort of got reimbursed later by

6

what you found in the ground over there. But it's

7

okay. Now, you are part of a vast ensemble. But

8

you have your own specific city. This specific city

9

stems precisely from what happened when the city was

10

founded in the beginning of the 18th Century.

11                   One should not forget that, even  
12           after the Purchase, the city was strongly influenced  
13           by French culture, French concepts. Even in your  
14           Civil Code, as you know. Up until now in certain  
15           sort, certain fashion.

16                   And, also, all along the 19th  
17           Century, I have just watched that from sources, you  
18           will see thousands, tens of thousands, dozens of  
19           thousands, as you say, of French people settling,  
20           coming to New Orleans and opening a business. All  
21           over the 19th century. The first operas were given  
22           here in the New Orleans Opera, which I heard it  
23           burned four times or -- unfortunately, somewhere in  
24           the French Quarter I was told near a hotel.  
25           Unfortunately, there is no more of this beautiful

10

1           opera.

2                   So, the French have played a very  
3           important role, as have of course other very  
4           important communities. It's not by chance that my  
5           Italian and Irish colleagues are here, because I  
6           guess these are also very strong communities and  
7           very present here in New Orleans.

8                   This, by the way, makes this place  
9           unique, because it's a multicultural city. You  
10          would say multi-ethnic. We French do not like to  
11          distinguish by ethnic groups, because it's question  
12          we belong in single state, single nation. You are

13 French, first off. Here, it's different, stories  
14 different. The city is multi-ethnic and  
15 multicultural and has maintained a strong  
16 specificity up until now. And all the challenges  
17 you are facing now is to maintain and preserve this  
18 multicultural and multi-ethnic character. And that  
19 is the very wonderful initiative that you took to  
20 have this first session among us.

21                   So, now, why have we been so much  
22 involved in the recovery? The first phase -- I will  
23 not mention the first phase of aid to the victims.  
24 This was huge. We were among the first countries  
25 involved who have been here from the first in the

11

1 city. I had a rescue team here -- not here, in  
2 Lafayette on Wednesday, Wednesday night. Three days  
3 after the hurricane, we had an emergency team here.  
4 One week after hurricane, we set foot here to see  
5 the devastation and the chase.

6                   But, after the first days of where  
7 the French government and the French companies were  
8 very, very active immediately. We had the second  
9 phase of cultural, education aid and cooperation.

10                   But, even the first phase, it was  
11 very interesting to see the reaction in France,  
12 because you cannot control 50 million people  
13 saying -- oh, what happened there? I was wondering

14 if this was -- I don't know, I don't want to mention  
15 any other states in the U.S. They are all beautiful  
16 and respectful, but give me a name of a remote place  
17 in Oklahoma. I am not sure the French people would  
18 just have immediately stand up and say, oh, what is  
19 happening? People really reacted. It was  
20 interesting to witness that. They said, what  
21 happened to our lost province? People just said  
22 that.

23 So, you see the importance of the  
24 memory, you know. People have -- they do not  
25 even -- even, if they are bad students at school,

12

1 they somehow know where Metairie and Algiers -- I  
2 don't want to be politically incorrect, I don't know  
3 where it comes from. But, they know Louisiana has  
4 been French, and it passes from one generation to  
5 another. And people have ties with Louisiana. They  
6 remember, maybe a member of the family was there in  
7 the 19th Century.

8 So, they reacted. What happened  
9 to our lost province and to this beautiful city? Do  
10 not forget that, before K, around 18,000 people from  
11 France, tourists, who come here to the city probably  
12 among the most important countries of foreign  
13 tourists.

14 And, immediately after we  
15 decided to embark on a very ambitious program of

16 cultural and educational cooperation, because we  
17 thought this was fit for the city. I mentioned the  
18 multicultural aspect, characteristic of the city.

19 Education. We had as you know  
20 since the 17th -- the 1970s here in Louisiana, a  
21 very unique program of promotion of the French  
22 language. We have a state agency called Council for  
23 French Development in Louisiana. We had programs of  
24 teachers sent from France. They come here for three  
25 years and they teach French in New Orleans, in Baton

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1 Rouge, in Lafayette, in Bayou Lafourche, in Cut Off.  
2 We have French teachers in Cut Off. I think this is  
3 meaningful.

4 So, we are there, and we were and  
5 the people of the Cajun people were trying to  
6 relaunch, foster their French speaking or their  
7 French roots. It was very important for them. So,  
8 we focused on culture and education and everybody  
9 running around.

10 We had cabinet ministers come,  
11 members of the French government. I think that we  
12 have three members of the French government coming  
13 and six or seven visits by the French ambassador to  
14 Washington. So we really mean, we intend to follow  
15 up in what we announced.

16 And we immediately tried to be

17 helpful. First, your musicians. We offered  
18 artists -- residencies to your musicians. You know  
19 Leah Chase, Tom McDermott, David Torkanowsky,  
20 Pfister Sisters. We sent them to France. They were  
21 beautiful venues. They were offered gigs, master  
22 classes, just came back to life after the big shock  
23 they had.

24 And we had also, we set up a fund  
25 for education, a one million dollar fund which

14

1 helped us in our effort to relaunch and reopen some  
2 of the schools in New Orleans. What we call  
3 immersion schools where the young students just  
4 speak French after one year. They are just -- they  
5 learning the French or nearly everything.

6 So, this was, very, very  
7 instrumental to the reopening of Audubon Charter  
8 School or Bilingual School or International School  
9 of Louisiana. And we are continuing on that and  
10 other projects.

11 We are reaching out to various  
12 communities for. For me, it was very important to  
13 send the signal to the African-American community.  
14 So, we said, we are not focused just on this  
15 neighborhood and that neighborhood. You see what I  
16 mean. We go north of North Rampart. This was very  
17 important for me to go there in the Treme  
18 neighborhood, and we established the partnership

19 with McDonogh 35. And very promising. We are  
20 helping them. They had a lot of damage.  
21 Unfortunately, not a lot of help, so we gave them  
22 money, quite significant amount of money, \$20,000.  
23 And now we have a second phase to  
24 help them refurbish their music studio. We had a  
25 program in Treme with the African American Museum.

15

1 We want and we are on a very nice  
2 project of refurbishing a Creole cottage to show, to  
3 send a message to the city, do not waste your  
4 heritage. It's worth. People will not come to this  
5 city if you are just an average American city.  
6 Okay. But they will come to New Orleans because  
7 there is a splendid avenue. There is Treme  
8 neighborhood is beautiful. And we just wanted to  
9 send a message.

10 And we are training people there  
11 to open community cafe, to needs, to have people and  
12 to contribute to the renewal, revival of the  
13 neighborhood.

14 And we are doing a lot also with  
15 the nice tribe, the Houma, you know the Houma. You  
16 may find here some Indian people from the Houma  
17 United Nation and they still speak French. This is  
18 something that you just stand in awe. These people  
19 have kept, maintained their French, because they



22 going there. And this is attracting and this is  
23 sending to the world an image of New Orleans. That  
24 is so people can see there is no water in New  
25 Orleans. It's very important.

17

1 And we intend to continue. It's  
2 not just a one year. The relations now are  
3 extremely friendly and strong and warm. And we are  
4 going more and more. We have new partners. There  
5 is maybe a project with a solvent food museum.  
6 People come and we discuss with them.

7 So, we are very much in the fabric  
8 of the city. For me it's a great pleasure. I will  
9 give you a few documentation on what we are doing.  
10 And this is it. (applause)

11 MS. PARKER:

12 Thank you. Thank you so much.

13 What a way to set the tone. I  
14 feel like I have been to cultural class. Isn't this  
15 grand? It is my distinct pleasure to present our  
16 next speaker representing the Irish community. He  
17 is both famous and infamous. And it was very  
18 difficult to boil his introduction down to three  
19 main points.

20 But, Mr. John Fitzmorris is the  
21 President of the Archbishop Hannan Division of the  
22 Ancient Order of Hibernians. He also serves as the

23 state historian for that society. So, he is  
24 certainly well qualified to talk about the history  
25 and contributions of the Irish. He also is a

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1 colleague of mine at Tulane University where he  
2 teaches religious studies. Please join me in  
3 welcoming Mr. John Fitzmorris.

4 MR. FITZMORRIS:

5 I would first like to thank the  
6 French community and the Italian community for  
7 bringing their culinary abilities to New Orleans.  
8 Because, if they relied on Irish culinary abilities,  
9 no one would come here.

10 The Irish are a people. We are  
11 not a race. We are a people. And a people made up  
12 of a bunch of other peoples. The history of Ireland  
13 goes back 10,000 years. We are found in the box,  
14 long canoes and boats that date back to nine to  
15 10,000 years ago.

16 So, various people have  
17 contributed to the makeup of the Irish genetics,  
18 including the original inhabitants: The Celts, the  
19 Normands, the English, the Scots, the Welsh. I  
20 myself and Ronnie Berg -- I don't see him here yet.  
21 He is supposed to be here with me.

22 We are both Normands. I  
23 participated in a genetic experiment, a test. I  
24 bought a book called "The Seven Daughters of Eve,"

1 peoples who supposedly descended from seven women  
2 who are all descended from myochondrial Eve. Don't  
3 let me get into all that, just believe that it is  
4 true. I am not here to describe DNA. And my DNA  
5 was like -- my female DNA was Middle Eastern.

6 This convinced me that the  
7 doctrine that we are all descendants of Adam and  
8 Eve, that we are all one race is absolutely  
9 genetically true. We are all the same people. We  
10 are just like gumbo, I guess. There are some people  
11 that are okra, some people are crabs, Andouille,  
12 whatever you throw into the mix. And the Irish are  
13 a people who have a history of the luck of the  
14 Irish. You have heard that. Nonsense. The Irish  
15 are very unlucky people until we got here.

16 And our luck was to come here and  
17 maintain on the wings of what the world calls the  
18 Great Famine -- what the Irish call "ongatawa,"  
19 (phonetic), The Great Hunger; because there was food  
20 in Ireland. There was plenty food in Ireland. But  
21 the economic theories of the ruling class of Britain  
22 forbade it to be given to the Irish people, so we  
23 starved.

24 And we came to America as we like  
25 to say on the wings of the Great Hunger. And this

1 place right here, this city was the second largest  
2 Port of Irish embarkation in the United States,  
3 behind either New York or Philadelphia who had  
4 switched places. New York would sometimes be third,  
5 Philadelphia would sometimes be third, sometimes  
6 they would be first. They would start over here on  
7 Port Street. They would get off the boats and some  
8 stayed there in an Irish community around Holy  
9 Trinity Church, which is now an abandoned, a  
10 desolate Catholic church. They either stayed there  
11 and they would walk there way to Canal Street to the  
12 Customs House, report in. Then, we would all move  
13 along the riverfront in a place that has become  
14 known as the Irish Channel.

15 Why was it called the Irish  
16 Channel? It was called the Irish Channel, because  
17 when it rained, it flooded and it looked like a  
18 channel running through the streets.

19 What have we given to New Orleans?  
20 First we gave this. We gave muscle. We built a  
21 canal out here that was 60 yards wide, six feet deep  
22 and six miles long. We and the Germans and our  
23 associates built the railroad that ran alongside  
24 that later became a streetcar line, which I think  
25 some people in this room, even I kind of remember

1       that, when they were uprooting the tracks back in  
2       the 50s. When all of a sudden, we filled the city  
3       with gasoline engines, rather than keeping the  
4       wonderful streetcars.

5                        They built the railroads and  
6       brought the supplies out and dug the ditch and then  
7       moved on. That was before the Great Famine. We  
8       brought muscle and we brought -- we are not very  
9       good with scientific things. We just don't have a  
10      tradition of science. We have a tradition of  
11      mysticism and a tradition of literature. We have  
12      brought to this city some great writers,  
13      playwrights, anything that has to do with the visual  
14      arts or the reading arts. We brought that to the  
15      city.

16                      The problem with us Irish is  
17      twofold. I think it's something we can share with  
18      everybody here. Our problem is forgetfulness and  
19      false memories. I am a rather odd person to be  
20      talking here about Irish experience because my  
21      family, and I am not bragging, just refused to  
22      forget. We refused to forget. When a lot of the  
23      Irish came here, that is all they wanted to do was  
24      forget. They remind me of World War II veterans,  
25      who would refuse to talk about their experience.

1 They did not carry on the story.

2 My great great grandmother and  
3 great great grandfather refused to do that. They  
4 kept the memory alive. They were not guilty of  
5 amnesia. Thank God. We wouldn't have anything to  
6 talk about. That is how life congratulated them.

7 Another thing a lot of people  
8 don't know about the Irish is that, when they came  
9 here, despite what the history books will tell you,  
10 a lot of them did not speak English. They spoke the  
11 Irish language. My great great grandparents were  
12 bilingual. Now they realize they can't speak the  
13 Irish language, they have to speak English to get  
14 along in this world; so they gave it up. And, the  
15 only thing that we remembered or they taught to us  
16 or came out to us were a few dirty words. Those are  
17 all that survived.

18 Anyway, our contribution was  
19 muscle, was literature. And we would like people  
20 now instead of being amnesiacs to remember; to  
21 embrace darkness in our society; to realize there  
22 are some nasty things in Irish history. I have to  
23 tell that to my people when I give them these  
24 lectures.

25 They like the lectures of all the

1 gallant fighting men of yore. They like all of the

2 stuff that crowns Irishmen. They like the Great  
3 O'Connell, they like Amon Devill (phonetics). They  
4 don't want to hear about the draft riot of 1863 in  
5 New York. They don't want to hear those kind of  
6 things.

7 That is what I think we all have  
8 to do with each one of our experiences. If this is  
9 something we can give to this community is to  
10 embrace our own darkness, and let it go. I learned  
11 that from -- where did Mike go? Mike Connell?  
12 Snuck out on me. Mike Connell taught me that. That  
13 man is really something. Great guy to have. That  
14 is what I would like to say about the Irish.

15 That we are now beginning to  
16 remember -- and we want you all to remember along  
17 with us. That is one thing I learned from my  
18 grandfather. He didn't like anybody unless they  
19 were from -- he didn't like anybody. Let's put it  
20 that way. But he always taught us to respect other  
21 people's stories. Other people had stories to tell  
22 that were just as good as ours.

23 Gasper has a story to tell. Mr.  
24 Maselli. He has a wonderful story to tell. That is  
25 what the Irish I think want to bring to the City of

24

1 New Orleans today, as we have in our Renaissance.  
2 Irish Renaissance is going on now. We want you all

3 to remember and tell our stories to one another.

4 Thank you very much. (applause)

5 MS. PARKER:

6 Thank you, Mr. Fitzmorris. Thank  
7 you. I know we all appreciate that. And we have  
8 all learned something from your remarks already.

9 Our next speaker is so famous and  
10 infamous, he actually requires two people to  
11 introduce him. I am going to introduce the formal  
12 facts of our next speaker who has been in business  
13 in the New Orleans community for 60 years. And he  
14 has been an Italian American activist for 30 of  
15 those years.

16 And in his spare time, Mr. Joe  
17 Maselli managed to build the Italian Piazza. So, I  
18 think he is very well qualified to speak to us about  
19 the Italian community. But, Rabbi Cohn also knows  
20 some more personal information and accolades about  
21 Mr. Maselli.

22 RABBI COHN:

23 I just wanted to add, that he is a  
24 coauthor. He has a book that is here available to  
25 you to purchase, which is a fascinating book.

25

1 But, less than a year ago, just a  
2 few months ago, he was honored by the  
3 Anti-Defamation League at a fantastic dinner and he  
4 had this ballroom full of people everybody just

5 laughing and roaring and having the best time with  
6 his jokes. If you could just bring some of your  
7 jokes here tonight, but I know you are not here to  
8 tell us the jokes. This is a great, warm-hearted  
9 fabulous man, truly one of the great citizens of  
10 this community who builds and looks toward the  
11 future, and is one of the great boosters of a future  
12 for New Orleans. So, Joe, thank you so much. You  
13 honor us. (applause)

14 MR. MASELLI:

15 In case you didn't like what he  
16 said, I brought a few flash cards.

17 Did you get the hot tea, Nick?  
18 The last one was the Frenchman and the Irish. Where  
19 is that Irish guy?

20 MR. FITZMORRIS:

21 Right here.

22 MR. MASELLI:

23 Oh, man, you are good. I learned  
24 something about the Irish. I had to learn because  
25 my relations now are half Irish and half Italian.

26

1 MR. FITZMORRIS:

2 My brother was treasurer of the  
3 Italian American Marching Club.

4 MR. MASELLI:

5 Who is that?

6

MR. FITZMORRIS:

7

Dennis Fitzmorris.

8

MR. MASELLI:

9

Oh, yes, Dennis.

10

MR. MASELLI:

11

They gave him the money.

12

MR. MASELLI:

13

They trusted him. You have to do

14

that when you have all Italians Irish name. I

15

didn't know this building existed and I took

16

Southern Train to New York many times during the war

17

years. Mike Valentino was here. Remind to write a

18

story about him in our digest.

19

Look, we have handouts back there.

20

Everything is free and the book will be half price.

21

Normally 20. We will sell it to you for 10. If you

22

can't afford the 10, talk to Felicia, I will give

23

it.

24

Can I sit down? You know Italian

25

people go back a long time. When Tonti came here in

27

1

late 18th century. I think 1790, Tonti was the

2

first white man to set foot in New Orleans.

3

Now, some of the facts may be a

4

little bit twisted. I am not so sure I am going to

5

guarantee everything I say is true; but it will be

6

pretty close, because I have been hanging around

7

with a lot of Irish for the last 20, 30 years, so

8 you know, they are full of fun. But, I like what  
9 you said tonight. And I like that Frenchman, too.  
10 Gasper, what are you doing here?

11 MR. SCHIRO:

12 I came to hear you.

13 MR. MASELLI:

14 I didn't know I was going to be  
15 here till the lady called me. But, anyway, in the  
16 early days, people just associated Italians in a  
17 very minor way. But, their involvement in New  
18 Orleans goes back to the early 1800s. With the War  
19 of 1812, we had people fighting with Jean Lafitte.  
20 And all the way through we have had Italian  
21 activities here. We have had great business people  
22 here versus some probably today they were founded  
23 right here on Decatur Street by the Uno Taorimina  
24 family.

25 Then, we had the banana business.

28

1 I don't know. I am not so sure between the Solaris  
2 and the D'Antonis, whether we would have bananas in  
3 this country. But, they are the first ones that  
4 really got into the banana business big time right  
5 through the port.

6 Now, the heart of the Italians was  
7 the Sicilians. Really, we should just for the rest  
8 of 10 minutes, 15 minutes forget about Italian;

9 because 90 percent of people who we refer to as  
10 Italian are Sicilian. They came directly from  
11 Sicily by boat. Palermo to New Orleans. A lot of  
12 people, when you ask them where they are from, they  
13 say Palermo, but they are not from Palermo. They  
14 left the Port of Palermo. They are from Contessa  
15 Entellina, a little town maybe a thousand people,  
16 1500 people --

17 MR. SCHIRO:

18 3,000.

19 MR. MASELLI:

20 3,000. They got 20,000 and  
21 Contessa is here and 3,000 up there...little towns.

22 But, the biggest town of course  
23 was a city called Palermo, which is a port. You,  
24 ask, as you go along, what did they do? They  
25 started these organizations. If you were not from

29

1 Contessa, would you believe they are still going on?  
2 Gasper has a group called Contessa Entellina Society  
3 that has been going on since I think 1879. Is that  
4 pretty close?

5 MR. SCHIRO:

6 Yes, 1886. Okay.

7 MR. MASELLI:

8 The one thing of course, I  
9 disagreed, he don't let women in there. He is so  
10 macho. He only allows people that are born and

11 raised from that country in that little town. So,  
12 3,000 people produce about 20,000 people. Some  
13 mayors, some businessmen, official businessmen. I  
14 like to think they started the business world here.  
15 The French Market was full of people from Contessa.

16 And, of course, the other little  
17 towns gave their share of pretty good people here.

18 One of the things we produce here  
19 is a lot of some good food. They brought their food  
20 here and they brought a lot of their quality.

21 There is nothing better than Italian festival. I  
22 put on 20 in the City at the Piazza D' Italia.  
23 Everybody likes to go to an Italian feast.

24 Now, going down the line, we also  
25 have serious business people like Joe Canizaro, who

30

1 has put up most of the buildings on Poydras Street.  
2 We have all kinds of mix -- doctors, lawyers.

3 And a lot of the young people will  
4 preserve our heritage as best as we can. We have a  
5 Museum on South Peters. Which, if you want to find  
6 out anything about Italian or Sicilian Americans,  
7 just come to the museum. It's free, and you can get  
8 a world of information.

9 We also like to say -- maybe I  
10 ought to look at my notes. After listening to Mr.  
11 Frenchmen here, he come up with some good stuff. I

12 want to make sure that I am not -- excuse me a  
13 minute.

14 How about athletics? We had some  
15 of the greatest fighters, boxers right here. If the  
16 ambassador was sitting still here I could tell him  
17 where the French opera house was -- straight ahead.  
18 About a mile. You can see the top of the building  
19 right now. It's the Royal Orleans at St. Louis  
20 and...

21 You know, that in 1867, we had a  
22 fellow named Danny Farrell, who was the first Chief  
23 of the Supreme Court. I have been bragging about  
24 Pascal Calogero, who is the present chief. He is  
25 one of the best. We had mayors -- Mayor Maestri,

31

1 Mayor Schiro. Where was Mayor Schiro from?

2 MR. SCHIRO:

3 He was from right outside --

4 MR. MASELLI:

5 Piazza D' Albanese?

6 MR. SCHIRO:

7 Piazza D' Albanese, yes.

8 MR. MASELLI:

9 You see. The reason he is a  
10 little different than me, his people come from  
11 Albania years ago. Just like you are mixed up. They  
12 are mixed up, too. They went to Sicily and Southern  
13 Italy and they called themselves Albresh (phonetic).

14 The Turks were there about 700 years ago.

15 MR. SCHIRO:

16 But we beat them by 90 years. And  
17 then we lost.

18 MR. MASELLI:

19 You know what I would like to  
20 close with. The Hennessy case. Who killed the  
21 chief? And tonight I would like you to know who  
22 really killed the chief, because I have been  
23 studying it for 30 years. Any 1891. I have to set  
24 the scene. The Italians were called Degos. Now, I  
25 don't know where that come from, but it's not a nice

32

1 word. I don't like to be called a Deigo. In fact,  
2 it's almost fighting words. So, Larry, don't call  
3 me Deigo. You are my size.

4 So, what happened, at that time,  
5 the Italians -- the Sicilians, they were a little  
6 different. They spoke a different language. They  
7 came here speaking Sicilian. They cooked different.  
8 They took over the French Quarter. It was known as  
9 "Little Palermo." There were so many Sicilians in  
10 the French Quarter, and it was known as "Little  
11 Palermo."

12 Now, with that as a setting, one  
13 night the chief of police named David Hennessy, he  
14 was going home with a fellow officer known as

15 Captain Connors. I forgot his first name. All of a  
16 sudden, shouts rang out and somebody shot him on  
17 Girod Street. Not too far from where the Superdome  
18 is now. Nobody knows who shot him. But this  
19 Captain Connors -- was he related to you?

20 MR. FITZMORRIS:

21 No. (laughter)

22 MR. MASELLI:

23 He says to some reporter, the  
24 Degos did it. How did he know this? He said that  
25 Hennessy told him. Now, here he is lying on the

33

1 floor (whereupon, Mr. Maselli lies on the floor), he  
2 is lying on the floor, lying on the sidewalk, and he  
3 whispers to this guy, "the Dego shot me."

4 But, the only thing is, Connors  
5 was the only guy that heard him. Now, on the basis  
6 of that, would you believe that they indicted 19  
7 Italians for the murder of Hennessy. Nineteen  
8 Italians for the murder of Hennessy. Eleven of  
9 them -- nine were brought to trial. A six-week  
10 trial in Judge Baker's court. What division was  
11 that -- B -- Division "B" in the criminal court  
12 building. And they were charged with the murder of  
13 Hennessy. After six weeks, six were found not  
14 guilty and three -- hung jury.

15 The next day two SOB's -- one was  
16 named Parkerson and the other fellow was editor of

17 the paper. They got a rally going on the foot of  
18 Canal Street and they brought hundreds of people to  
19 prison where the municipal court is today was the  
20 women's prison. And they crashed in where these men  
21 were put back in jail, and they shot them and hung  
22 them. And that was the Hennessy case.

23 Now, I said I would tell you who  
24 killed him. Well, nobody knows. To this day they  
25 don't know who killed him. But, we got blamed for

34

1 it. And it's the biggest miscarriage of justice in  
2 the history of New Orleans. Eleven Italians were  
3 hung. It was the largest lynching. Larry, you  
4 heard me? The largest lynching maybe in the United  
5 States. And it was unfair. And we had to suffer  
6 for that.

7 I didn't get here till 1944, so I  
8 wasn't suffering. I was really good. But my  
9 father-in-law wasn't treated good. A lot of  
10 Sicilians that were here right after that were  
11 treated ?(whistling). Who killed the chief? Well,  
12 we didn't. Our Sicilians didn't. The Italians  
13 didn't. Captain Connors never went to court,  
14 testified that he heard the chief tell him that the  
15 Degos did it. So, and he disappeared for a while  
16 for three or four weeks after the trial before he  
17 come back to New Orleans. So, nobody could really

18 testify that they saw anybody kill anybody.

19 Now, I am sure somebody did, but  
20 it wasn't the Italians. Because at that time,  
21 Hennessy, his father was killed 10 years before; and  
22 Hennessy was doing business with a lot of crooks.  
23 It is not unlike today, they have a lot of elected  
24 official crooks themselves, and blame it on other  
25 people.

35

1 But, I will tell you one thing I  
2 would like to close with. The Sicilians came here  
3 with two major assets: The hard work ethic and  
4 family values. And to this day, I think that  
5 prevails throughout the culture.

6 And, I want you to know, I  
7 appreciate this little tiny kid named Mike Valentino  
8 who fixed this place up. Thank you. (applause)

9 MS. PARKER:

10 Thank you so much, Mr. Maselli.  
11 Ed, for this next part, why don't we work the room?  
12 You can do this side and I will do this side. This  
13 is now our meat and potatoes part of the session.  
14 We want to hear from all of you hear. The  
15 instructions are on your agenda.

16 We would like to hear, while we  
17 know that there are many positive ways that the  
18 various groups represented here are included and are  
19 involved in the city. We particularly want to hear:

20 Are there ways you do not feel included? Are there  
21 ways that you feel disrespected, as a particular  
22 group? And what solutions for that or what  
23 recommendations might you offer on those particular  
24 issues? We do ask that you limit your remarks to  
25 five minutes.

36

1 And, Craig, would you help us with  
2 that. This is another, my newest member of the  
3 commission. We are the two new persons of the  
4 commission, we are the babies on the commission. I  
5 am sorry. He is a timekeeper extraordinaire. This  
6 is very informal. Again, we will not debate your  
7 point. We will not disagree with you. We want to  
8 hear from you. Our whole point is to listen  
9 tonight. So, anyone. Who would like to start? And  
10 we will offer a microphone. Who would like to be  
11 second?

12 MR. VARRECCHIO:

13 I will go second.

14 MS. PARKER:

15 Tell us who you are.

16 MR. VARRECCHIO:

17 My name is Nick Varrecchio. I am  
18 a lifelong New Orleanian. Interesting tonight that  
19 it is the night of the Italian, the French of the  
20 Irish. I have two of the three covered. My mom is

21 an O'Riley and I am a Varrecchio. I married a  
22 French girl and my daughter is a part French. It's  
23 too bad I could not have brought them tonight, cause  
24 I would have had all three covered.

25 Now, the first thing I want to say

37

1 I got a great deal. I had the pleasure of traveling  
2 here tonight with Mr. Joe Maselli. He brought all a  
3 variety of handouts. All of them are free except  
4 for the book is half price. It is a very good book  
5 on the history of Italians in New Orleans. Mr.  
6 Maselli is the coauthor of the book. Please take  
7 some of those handouts, so it will be less to bring  
8 back to the car.

9 I guess Larry -- I talked to Larry  
10 Bagneris. Thank you, you did a really good job with  
11 this and everybody else on the commission. It's a  
12 great idea. The commission has been active the last  
13 10, 12 years.

14 I think a lot of the things that  
15 concern the city, as far as people feeling slighted  
16 and people maybe not feeling included, from my  
17 perspective have less to do with me feeling less  
18 included as an Italian or an Irishman. It might  
19 have to do a little bit with my concerns as a  
20 taxpayer. It might have a little bit to do with my  
21 concerns. It's just a person who has grown up here  
22 and seen what I think might be an imbalance. And

23 I will give you an example.

24 I think a lot of times when we  
25 talk about New Orleans, history kind of begins with

38

1 the city as it won't work. We don't hear a whole  
2 lot of what went on here in the early 40s, 50s, 60s,  
3 other than the bad stuff. We hear all about  
4 segregation and we hear about who killed the chief.  
5 We hear about the lynchings and we hear about  
6 reconstruction sometimes, when it fits into an  
7 argument.

8 But, it's almost as, if history  
9 began with the Civil Rights Movement. Other than  
10 the bad stuff that went on and that spurred the  
11 Civil Rights Movement, we really don't hear anything  
12 about the achievements and the accomplishments and  
13 some of the things that did work here in the city  
14 and work here.

15 Another example might be this.  
16 Mr. Maselli said a piece of your talk involved Chief  
17 Hennessy's murder and the lynchings of the Italian  
18 Americans. There is a 60 or 90 minute documentary  
19 which was made about that, a feature which runs in  
20 Jefferson Parish two or three days.

21 Before I got married, my wife  
22 lived in Jefferson Parish before she moved here. It  
23 seemed like every time I was in Jefferson Parish on

24 the public access channel, the sun never set on the  
25 who killed the chief documentary. I don't ever

39

1 remember that ever being seen in Orleans Parish. I  
2 don't think it's run here. And this is where it  
3 happened.

4                   So, you would think that maybe  
5 somewhere in the vaults of Cox Cable or whoever  
6 makes those decisions, we get to see the reruns of  
7 the American Can Company renovation and how much  
8 money Troy Carter and his friends made off of that.  
9 We get to see that rerun five years after the fact.  
10 But where is the documentary about that or anything  
11 else?

12                   I think that, again, it has less  
13 to do than being Italian. Of course, me being a  
14 mut, I might be a little less sensitive to that than  
15 maybe somebody who has more of a deeper history and  
16 deeper involvement. I try to involve myself with  
17 some of the Irish groups and some of the Italian  
18 groups, and maybe I am a little less committed or  
19 less offended than some of the others not to be  
20 included.

21                   But, I think that we do need to  
22 have a governing over diversity. I once saw a  
23 documentary -- let me take a step back. The people  
24 who choose to live in New Orleans, we choose to live  
25 in a place, and we make a leap of faith to live

1 here, because we choose to make the leap of faith  
2 that diversity is going to work and we want to live  
3 in a diverse atmosphere.

4                   And we move here and our tax money  
5 goes less further than it would somewhere else. And  
6 we live in a louder, dirtier place with bumpier  
7 streets where it takes longer for the fire truck to  
8 come and the police to come, that it would if we  
9 lived 50 miles. But, we choose to live here and we  
10 make a statement with our lives that we want  
11 diversity to work. We want to be here, we want to  
12 have things work out.

13                   I just think, to the extent that  
14 things don't work out sometimes that we have  
15 arguments, it has less to do with being Italian, and  
16 it has more to do with class and it has more to do  
17 with frustration. It goes back to -- I saw a person  
18 once say on television, one of those political talk  
19 shows. And a guy said: Governing across diversity  
20 is really the challenge for modern times and for the  
21 future. But, the cities and countries and states  
22 are going to be much more diverse. And different  
23 people who are part of the groups that make up that  
24 diversity have different sensitivities; but we have  
25 to have a common set of rules in certain instances

1 that we work with.

2 For example, council meetings, the  
3 school boards meetings. Certain people cannot be  
4 shouted down because they are not of the right race  
5 or of the right group or maybe their children that  
6 go to public schools. They are as entitled to that  
7 microphone and to be represented before that  
8 particular governmental entity. That is a very  
9 recent thing that we have had problems with in New  
10 Orleans. It started with the school board meetings  
11 being out of control. Now, it's the council  
12 meetings sometimes get out of control. Governing  
13 over diversity is the challenge.

14 Whether you have children or not,  
15 whether you are the person who might be more  
16 invested or not, you are a citizen of New Orleans,  
17 you are a taxpayer, you ought to be able to speak to  
18 that public body without being shouted down and  
19 cursed down and intimidated. We have to have a set  
20 of rules that govern across diversity that allow  
21 just in that instant is a perfectly fine example of  
22 where the challenges are.

23 I had an instant a couple years  
24 ago where I went to a school board meeting to speak.  
25 I got screamed at, cursed at, yelled at. The crowd



1 try to create a situation where everybody is heard  
2 and everybody has a civilized opportunity to  
3 participate in certain things, it will be an even  
4 better place, will be a much better place.

5 I mean, that is really all I have  
6 to say right now. Thank you. (applause)

7 MS. PARKER:

8 Who wants to be the next second.  
9 You don't have to come up if you are uncomfortable.  
10 You can stay where you are, if you would like to.  
11 If you would like to come up, that is fine.

12 MS. WEINSTEIN:

13 My name is Felicia Weinstein. I  
14 am also another citizen of the city that loves this  
15 city and I choose to be here. It's funny you bring  
16 up education, because I think the trauma with the  
17 School Board, education is our key and our way out.  
18 It's our ticket out.

19 So, I think the School Board is  
20 something that needs to be addressed a little bit  
21 more. At the same time, I think everybody is so  
22 frustrated, so maybe race and other problems that we  
23 bring up are just kind of this things to yell about  
24 instead of really addressing the problems, because  
25 we are is so frustrated.

44

1 It's nice to see so many people  
2 here. I love the city as well. But, I don't have

3 answers, but it is nice, and I think only discussing  
4 are ways to get answers. I have thought a lot about  
5 the School Board personally. I thought about  
6 parenting classes with our recent crime. Binge, if  
7 you call it. Just different ideas that need to be  
8 tossed around. They need to be tossed around,  
9 otherwise, we will lose what we have. We need to  
10 keep what we have and grow on it. That is it.

11 MS. PARKER:

12 Anyone else? Ways in which you  
13 may not feel included, ways you feel disrespected in  
14 the city and suggestions for solutions. And this is  
15 your forum. This is your forum. We are taking your  
16 comments extremely serious. They are being recorded  
17 and will be folded into recommendations. Yes.

18 MR. CAMMARATA:

19 My name is Ryan Cammarata. I am a  
20 resident of the city of New Orleans. As she said,  
21 and everybody before them, I do love it very much.  
22 Of course, I don't have kids and am a very new  
23 homeowner to the city. I have rented all my life.  
24 Last year I have become a homeowner. It wasn't  
25 easy. I did buy a flooded home. That is the

45

1 biggest ordeal of my life. I won't talk education.  
2 I am talking more on a nationwide scale, a worldly  
3 skill.

4                                   Because the last -- since  
5           Hurricane Katrina, I probably traveled four, five  
6           different places within the country and probably two  
7           places around the world. The biggest misconception  
8           when everybody would talk to -- mostly I had people  
9           in the United States is the big thing with I can't  
10          be you are back. I can't believe you are going  
11          there. How stupid is that, that you went back to  
12          that city.

13                                   I think if we promote that the  
14          city is back. Everybody we have talked to  
15          personally, most of the tourism areas, they don't  
16          understand are okay. I mean, parts of New Orleans  
17          East, Lakeview, the ninth ward are not good. But  
18          for the tourism, which is a very key part of the  
19          city, I think it's a big deal that we let people  
20          know nationwide, if you come to the downtown area  
21          the French Quarter, it is still the same way it was  
22          before.

23                                   It is very discouraging to hear  
24          the local businesses on Bourbon or Royal Street are  
25          not coming back as strongly as they are. And I --

46

1           just before I finish, I just to say one story. I  
2           was actually with my Uncle Russ in Spokane,  
3           Washington. We were at a Hampton Inn or whatever,  
4           and I was making a waffle minding my own business.  
5           And a lady just came up to me, a lady, she was from



7 everybody still has that misconception.  
8 Unfortunately, the media is the media. They have to  
9 sell, so they are going to show the bad parts, so it  
10 is up to let people know it's back. Start letting  
11 people know, not only the tourist parts being back.  
12 But, as you know of, that restaurant that is opened  
13 in your own neighborhood. I was so happy when  
14 Mandina's opened. I just cried. Yes, yes. It's  
15 restaurants like that -- Liuzza's By The Racetrack.  
16 God, they really have to get ready for Jazz Fest.  
17 Different things like that. We have to continue to  
18 promote, especially with the areas of crime.

19                   Unfortunately, but then you never  
20 want to put anything fortunate into a crime. I told  
21 a lady today the bank teller. She was really scared  
22 and ready to leave. What you have to pay attention  
23 to and in the media, they are starting to get a  
24 little bit better, because they know their jobs are  
25 just as much on the line from what they report.

48

1                   But, unfortunately, it has been  
2 targeted. You have to look at that. It has been  
3 targeted. When most people look at the news and the  
4 media and realize that we are the nation's highest  
5 in reported crime. They don't have time to report  
6 all the crime in L.A. They don't have time to  
7 report all that crime in L.A. We are going to be  
8 reporting because we are under the microscope. It's

9 up to us to continue to report what it is.

10 Yes, it's unfortunate that this  
11 kid got killed, but I know it was a targeted crime.  
12 I did hear that the last couple of crimes, and it  
13 kind of stops to scare the tourists. It kind of  
14 stops to scaring citizens. I don't want to be at  
15 Orleans and Broad and yet you will pull up and shoot  
16 somebody.

17 But, you are going to pull up and  
18 shoot that person, whereas just on a recent one,  
19 they had three other people in the car. They  
20 only -- they were after who they were after. We  
21 have to pay attention to the media and know how to  
22 decipher, because they are trying to sell. It is up  
23 to us to be ambassadors everywhere we go. Keep a  
24 smile on your face and going on (inaudible with  
25 sirens passing). We promote that. Our children

49

1 hear that and they continue to want to promote it  
2 themselves. That is all I have to say. (applause)

3 MS. PARKER:

4 This is such a cheering,  
5 encouraging group. Other groups haven't really  
6 applauded.

7 MS. PARKER:

8 My name is Amy Enchelmeyer. I am  
9 the director of constituent services and

10 neighborhood relations for Councilman Fielkow's  
11 office. The councilman is actually in Washington,  
12 D.C. this week on a diplomatic mission to bring  
13 different world international ambassadors back to  
14 the World Trade Center.

15 I just wanted to comment on the  
16 Fleur de Lis Program. If you all don't know what it  
17 is yet, basically Scott Cowan, president of Tulane,  
18 along with Councilman Fielkow have gone to very  
19 prominent figures in the community. I think there  
20 is 20 to 30 of them. I don't know what final count  
21 was. And they are going to be dispersed across the  
22 nation to bring good PR and good press to tell  
23 people that we are not having six inches of water in  
24 their living rooms and things are good here and to  
25 encourage different businesses and to bring people

50

1 to come back to the city or maybe move down here to  
2 begin with.

3 I want to say thank you for  
4 mentioning it. If you have any questions about it,  
5 I can answer some of the questions. I am not an  
6 expert, but --

7 MS. DUCRUE:

8 Just being an ambassador, an  
9 expert on your city which we all are. (applause)

10

11 MS. GENNUSO:

12 I am Carla Gennusso with Stacy  
13 Head's office. In my official capacity, I would  
14 like to thank speakers and everybody for coming out  
15 here and Larry, always for being a wonderful  
16 advocate for anyone and everyone who needs it.

17 In my unofficial capacity,  
18 strictly as a citizen and with Sicilian heritage, I  
19 would like to say that I would hope that  
20 education -- certainly as far as Felicia said,  
21 education is the key and for myself what you  
22 gentleman are doing and the French consul of keeping  
23 that story alive and keeping the dialogue open  
24 certainly helps the younger generation. And then I  
25 would want to know how to continue to carry that on

51

1 to my future generations, because it is such a  
2 beautiful story for all of our cultures that have  
3 come together and made this city so beautiful. That  
4 is why I love New Orleans so much and why I have  
5 heard other people say that they love visiting and  
6 living here.

7 So, I guess, with as it relates to  
8 the human relations goal here, I would like to see  
9 some tangible ways that we can continue the dialogue  
10 and continue the education of the history of all of  
11 our struggles. And the victories and the beautiful  
12 things as well as the bad, as Mr. Fitzmorris said.

13

MS. PARKER:

14

Thank you. Okay. Next. Tell us

15

what is on your mind.

16

MR. FITZMORRIS:

17

Where is the Rabbi? I love to

18

hear from him.

19

MS. PARKER:

20

He had to step out.

21

There is a future group for the

22

Jewish community. And you are welcome to come back.

23

We are not so rigid to say, sorry, you are not

24

Jewish, you can't come in. That would be anti-

25

ethical.

52

1

MS. CHARLES:

2

I am not Italian, I am not French,

3

I am not English, but I heard about this program and

4

I wanted to come and hear what was going on. I

5

enjoyed every speaker because I learned something

6

tonight.

7

With that said, you know, we

8

collect so much information. We always are

9

collecting information, but what we do with it?

10

It's stacked in the libraries down in the archives

11

and we never implement I would hope, at the end of

12

this date, not this particular day, but when this

13

human relations program has had these sessions and

14

bring the people together that we can have some kind

15 of coming together to resolve the problems in this  
16 city.

17 This city is sick. As Cowan said  
18 last night at Loyola. This city is sick, black and  
19 white, he said, sick, and we need to -- we need to  
20 find a way to bridge this gap. I am not originally  
21 from New Orleans, so I can speak that way, because  
22 when I moved here, I put New Orleans under a  
23 microscope because of my background in nursing  
24 looking at all those olders microscopes to look at  
25 organisms. And I put it under a microscope and I

53

1 have seen it over these many years change, not for  
2 the good. Some good things come out of this. Our  
3 patient is sick. I just want to -- my name is Cora  
4 Charles.

5 MS. PARKER:

6 Thank you. Thank you so much.  
7 Yes, sir.

8 MR. ALBERTS:

9 My name is Roy Alberts. I am in  
10 the Broadmoor area, an excellent area in the city --  
11 well integrated, great issue leadership. I am  
12 originally from the Ninth Ward. Brought up in the  
13 Ninth Ward on Burgundy Street between Piety and  
14 Desire. I am from a German family. Good Irish,  
15 they set up these ethnic churches -- Irish clergy,

16 Catholic clergy. Of course, our church was Holy  
17 Trinity which my family followed; but I didn't. The  
18 French church was St. Vincent DePaul. The Irish  
19 church was St. Peter DePaul.

20 There is a good book outright now.  
21 It's about the life of Marie LaBeau. It tells about  
22 New Orleans in the 19th Century. This author does a  
23 great job. If you want to see what the city was  
24 like back then, it was a tremendous city. Wide  
25 open. All types of diversity, intermarriage, black

54

1 and white, didn't matter. The relationship was  
2 unbelievable.

3 So, I suggest that you read that  
4 book. It is a good blueprint for what the future of  
5 the city should be and could be.

6 What ruined that was Plessy versus  
7 Ferguson. Of course, you know it took better than  
8 50 years to correct that. So, I highly recommend  
9 that book. Thank you.

10 MS. PARKER:

11 Okay. Next. Anyone. Ways you  
12 feel included, not included.

13 MR. SCHIRO:

14 My name is Gasper Schiro. I have  
15 been around New Orleans 71 years. I will be the  
16 first one to admit that we have problems.

17 But I think main problem that we

18 have is that we look at our problems more than we  
19 look at our assets. I think that we have a problem  
20 of looking at the glass being half empty rather than  
21 half full.

22 With all the problems that we  
23 have, just look at the good things that we have, and  
24 the good things that we have had and we still have.  
25 We have a fabulous city here. Like Thomas Jefferson

55

1 said, years ago, United States can't really make it  
2 without New Orleans, because they need the Port of  
3 New Orleans. We need New Orleans.

4 You know, the art, the culture,  
5 the history that we have here, other places do not  
6 have. I mean, you know, how can you compare New  
7 Orleans with a place like Topeka, Kansas? And  
8 DesMoines, Iowa, or even Covington. A lot of nice  
9 people that live over in Covington. The art, the  
10 culture. We had an opera house here in New Orleans  
11 before there was opera anywhere else in the United  
12 States, we had he first opera here in New Orleans.  
13 And our people don't even know that. We had museums  
14 here that other cities would die to have the type of  
15 museum that we have. We don't appreciate it.

16 And, you know, just the idea that  
17 we can have Mardi Gras after Katrina with 800,000  
18 people and nobody rioting and nobody killing one

19 another, everybody outside out on the street having  
20 a good time, that is an asset. Sure, we have some  
21 miserable criminals out there, a handful. Maybe one  
22 hundred, and they are giving this city a bad name.  
23 I just wish there was a way we could get rid of that  
24 100 criminal element.

25 Because doing the rest of the city

56

1 is doing pretty well. With all the problems we  
2 have -- poverty, all kinds of problems.

3 But, basically, if you look at the  
4 assets of the music, the food, the art, the history  
5 that we have, people do not go to Houston to eat.  
6 They come to New Orleans to eat. I never heard  
7 anybody say, oh, I am going to Dallas, 'cause I want  
8 to eat. Never heard that. I never heard anybody  
9 saying, I want to go to -- I hate to pick on other  
10 places, but Florida, or I want to hear another  
11 opera. We have people that come from all over the  
12 United States for our opera. We have one of the  
13 best opera companies in the United States. We have  
14 a good symphony, a good ballet.

15 These are the things that make the  
16 city an international city. These are the things  
17 that we ought to preach about them.

18 We have Arny Fielkow's group with the  
19 ambassadors. That is a fabulous idea. We need  
20 people to go out and tell the rest of the country

21           how well off we are. Larry and I can tell each  
22           other how well we are. Larry Bagneris ought to be a  
23           good will ambassador for the city.

24                           MS. PARKER:

25                                   He is.

57

1                           MR. SCHIRO:

2                                   We don't appreciate the assets  
3           that we have. We need to start talking about some  
4           of the pluses, and not all the minuses. I know we  
5           need to talk about problems that need to be solved.  
6           We taught to talk about good things.

7                                   In the last two weeks, we have had  
8           the Spring Parade, the St. Patrick's Day parades and  
9           everyone is out there having a good time. You  
10          didn't have to be Irish. I have been riding in the  
11          St. Patrick's Parade for 30 years. Of course, my  
12          wife is three-quarters Irish. Just to ride those  
13          streets and see how everybody is getting along and  
14          having a good time and were not Irish by a long  
15          shot. Probably had as some Italians as they had  
16          Irish out there in the streets. A lot of  
17          African-Americans all having a good time.

18                                   Other cities can't do this, and  
19          don't do this. If you go to a parade in another  
20          city, everybody stands on the sidewalk like a zombie  
21          and looks at the parade go by. When we have a

22 parade, everybody participates. That is the fun of  
23 it. That is one of the assets we have.

24 The St. Joseph parade was the same  
25 thing in the French Quarter. Everybody having a

58

1 good time. And I don't think we have many Italians  
2 out there in the French Quarter during the night of  
3 the St. Joseph's Parade. I know we had a lot of  
4 tourists. A lot of people told me they were from  
5 North Carolina. I know they don't have too many  
6 Italians in North Carolina. There are people from  
7 all over the country, and a lot of our people from  
8 all over the area enjoying what we have. We should  
9 appreciate more of what we have. And always not  
10 always be willing to knock the city.

11 One of the things that really gets  
12 me. I am tired of looking on the front page and  
13 seeing one drug dealer killed another drug dealer.  
14 That is fine. They ought to put it in back in Metro  
15 section or in the death notices. It's bad news.  
16 One drug dealer doing another drug dealer.

17 Here, the night of the St.  
18 Patrick's parade, I looked at the news -- all the  
19 channels on television. They might have been given  
20 St. Patrick parade maybe 30 seconds. Or maybe a  
21 minute. And yet three, four, five minutes talking  
22 about another drug dealer doing this drug dealer or  
23 whatever. That is what is really hurting the city

24 more than anything else. All the negativity coming  
25 from the news media and from the television instead

59

1 of ever sidesing the positive. They just keep  
2 talking about the negative and then people are out  
3 on the streets and talking about the negative and  
4 not the positive.

5 We have a lot of good things here  
6 to talk about. We not only talk about them. We all  
7 participate and enjoy it. The more, you know, I  
8 tell people, if you can't have a good time in New  
9 Orleans, you have to be dead and not even know it.  
10 Because, what other city can you go to in the United  
11 States that where you go to the cemetery on All  
12 Saints Day and have a party, drink champagne and eat  
13 oyster patties which we do here in New Orleans. You  
14 have to be dead if you can't enjoy New Orleans.  
15 Everybody should find something to enjoy in this  
16 city.

17 The worst thing I hear from  
18 people, I don't know what to do, I don't have  
19 anything to do. I say, if you don't have anything  
20 to do that you can find to do in this town, then you  
21 are dead and you don't know it, because this city  
22 has something going on everyday, every night. I  
23 know, because I been in politics for 30 years, I  
24 have been an elected official. I have been just

25 about by every corner of this city. There is so

60

1 much to enjoy, so much to do, so much to participate  
2 in. So many people you meet at all these different  
3 functions. It is just fabulous.

4 Well, this group here ought to be  
5 the beginning of a nucleus, go out and tell  
6 everybody go out and enjoy New Orleans. There is a  
7 lot to enjoy here. A there is a lot to be proud of.  
8 (Applause)

9 MS. PARKER:

10 Thank you so much. I already feel  
11 better about being a resident of the city. Who  
12 else? We welcome all of your contributions.

13 Our Executive Director Mr. Larry  
14 Bagneris, who is our and motivator and our closer  
15 will be next on our program.

16 MR. BAGNERIS:

17 First of all, I want to thank all  
18 of you for coming here this evening. I could assure  
19 that this is not going into a library. These 13  
20 listening sessions are going to be used to move this  
21 city to what it was 300 years ago, when we  
22 celebrated diversity, and we appreciated the  
23 contribution that each of these groups have made to  
24 this city to build it to what it is. Sometimes you  
25 eat gumbo and don't realize what is in it. We are

1 dissecting it so people can see what it is and make  
2 sure that the city council backs us with the mayor  
3 to bring along some legislation to make us  
4 appreciate what we have to offer.

5                   Number two, we cannot count on the  
6 media to tell our story. Let's face it. Where in  
7 America is anybody not from New Orleans going to  
8 understand a black man waking up on a Tuesday  
9 putting on a black face with white around his mouth  
10 and throwing a coconut. Let alone some young girl  
11 walking by the St. Joseph statute in at Italian  
12 parade wishing to get a lucky bean.

13                   We have to tell our own story,  
14 because we are the only ones that understand it.  
15 Or, let alone getting hit by three cabbages in the  
16 head by the Irish parade. We have to tell our  
17 story. We have to do it ourselves.

18                   Last week I was walking on the  
19 second floor. I try to stay away from the second  
20 floor at City Hall. That is the executive offices.  
21 I am on the 8th floor. Somebody handed me a paper  
22 and I said, oh, a bunch of crap. Well, I went home  
23 and read this newsletter and I was so uplifted,  
24 because I was so tired of Channel 6 and it's  
25 ta-ta-ta-ta telling the story and it's all wrong.

1                   So, I will pass out these and  
2                   hopefully when you get home this evening, you will  
3                   read it and be uplifted about somebody of the  
4                   positive things going on in your city that you live  
5                   in and it is very positive.

6                   In closing, I want to thank each  
7                   of you. We have a slight survey to take so we can  
8                   include that in our dialogue with the city council.  
9                   I want to thank the presenters this evening. I want  
10                  to thank Mr. Maselli and Mr. Fitzmorris to come out  
11                  this evening. They were excellent. The Frenchman  
12                  was excellent as well. Each of you that made a  
13                  contribution this evening touched my heart because  
14                  you spoke from the heart.

15                  We will take all of this  
16                  information and make sure it's used to present New  
17                  Orleans as the city it was 300 years ago, when we  
18                  were purchased and then labeled. We are going to  
19                  take those labels away. We are going to start  
20                  calling each other New Orleanians. One New Orleans  
21                  for all of us. Thank you, have a wonderful evening.  
22                  We have refreshments in the back.

23                  (Mr. Bagneris suggested this be  
24                  read into the record from Page 2, Italian American  
25                  Digest, Spring 2007 issue):

1 E D I T O R I A L E

2 The Mafia Stigma

3 "1984 - Early immigrants who came  
4 to America had a tough time, perhaps the Italian  
5 immigrants most of all. Many, if not most,  
6 immigrants came to this country with little funds,  
7 no 'American' language skills, and with little or no  
8 education. So how does one find a job with which to  
9 earn a wage to support one's growing family without  
10 the backing of an education and means with which to  
11 communicate?

12 "Italian immigrants had another  
13 problem that other immigrating nationalities did not  
14 have: the stigma of the Sicilian Mafia. Because of  
15 that, many Italians felt they "got a bad reputation"  
16 and felt stigmatized. All of this made assimilation  
17 much more difficult. There are people today who  
18 still feel the sting of bigotry, created by the  
19 mafia, on Italian immigrant's lives.

20 "In New York, then California, the  
21 movie industry produced movies for all. They made  
22 films about love, about mysteries, about the 'wild  
23 west', science fiction, and fantasy and, of course,  
24 crime. In many of the crime films, the protagonist  
25 or 'bad guy' was of Italian descent. The mafia was

64

1 not always mentioned; however, it was often implied.

2 "Let's face it: there were 'bad  
3 guys', many of Italian descent. They, like any  
4 other 'bad guys', were involved in a lot of illegal  
5 activity. Oh, they had a code-of-honor-it is just  
6 that their code of honor was, evidently, different  
7 from the codes-of-honor of other industries.

8 "I don't know it for a fact, but  
9 it seems as though the 'bad guy' image of Italians  
10 has fallen by the wayside. Many Italians and  
11 Italian Americans said, "pulled themselves up by the  
12 bootstraps" to become doctors, lawyers, and business  
13 professionals. It didn't come easily or quickly-it  
14 took hard work and years of fighting against  
15 discrimination. Thank goodness that our children  
16 and grandchildren do not have to experience it.

17 "Signature of Joe Maselli"  
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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, SYLVIA C. PASTRANO, a Certified  
Court Reporter for the State of Louisiana, do  
hereby certify that the foregoing transcript is  
true and correct, as reported by me and reduced to  
typewriting under my personal supervision.

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SYLVIA C. PASTRANO