

1 HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

2
3 "WE BELIEVE IN NEW ORLEANS"

4
5 VOLUME V

6
7 THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY

8 LISTENING SESSION

9
10 TUESDAY, MAY 29, 2007

11
12 6:00 P.M.

13
14
15
16 MARTIN GUTIERREZ AND FR. WALTER BAER,

17 CO-CHAIRS

18
19 INTERPRETER:

20 LILIA LINDSLEY

21
22 REPORTED BY:

23 DIANE W. MATHEWS, CCR

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HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

LARRY BAGNERIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DAWN SEGURA, HRC ATTORNEY

SYNTHIA DEMONS

AQEEL ABDUL-SALAAM

THERESE BADON

FR. WALTER BAER

MICHIE BISSELL

RUSSELL CARLL

RABBI EDWARD P. COHN

MICHAEL COWAN

GEORGE R. GALLIEN

KEN GRAND-PRE'

MARTIN GUTIERREZ

FR. VIEN NGUYEN

FRANCIS KING

MARGARET MONTGOMERY-RICHARD

DOTTIE REESE

DR. HANA SAFAH

JANE PARKER

CRAIG M. STEWART

PATRICIA BIVINS

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1 (LISTENING SESSION)

2 MR. BAGNERIS:

3 Good evening, everyone and thank you so
4 much for taking time out of your busy schedules to be
5 with the Human Relations Commission this evening. This
6 is our fifth in a series of conversations with the
7 community; this is particularly geared toward the
8 Hispanic community.

9 I would ask everyone to please go over
10 to the back and place a dot on the map which will
11 represent where in New Orleans you reside, or if you do
12 not live in the city but you have a business that
13 represent in Orleans Parish; that is good, please
14 indicate that on the map. We want to know where the
15 people are coming from in the community. We do prefer
16 that you indicate on the map where you live, but if you
17 have a business in the city, that is just as good. If
18 you live in Metairie or other areas and you're here, you
19 are more than welcome. Again, before we officially
20 begin, I would just ask that everyone put all of your
21 dots on the map so that we can show the representation
22 of the Hispanic community in the City of New Orleans.

23 Thank you.

24 (A short break was taken in the session.)

25 Good evening and welcome again. My

1 name is Larry Bagernis and I'm the Executive Director of
2 the Human Relations Community.

3 (In Spanish.) My Spanish is very
4 little, so I am going to stick with my English that I
5 know.

6 (Audience Laughter.)

7 Anyway, we are delighted to have you
8 here; we can't wait to hear what you have to say. You
9 have all of the time in the world to say it. I am going
10 to close out and let you hear from my constituents. I
11 know they are ecstatic about you being here as well. In
12 the meantime I want to introduce you to the Chair of the
13 City's Human Relations Commission, Dr. Michael Cowan.
14 He will introduce the members present and those that who
15 have taken on the responsibility of bringing together
16 the group this evening.

17 Dr. Cowan.

18 DR. COWAN:

19 Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen, and
20 welcome.

21 Could I ask the members of the Human
22 Relations Commission who are here, if you would stand?
23 I will then introduce the chair, or co-chairs, but if
24 the members present would please stand and introduce
25 yourselves.

1 MS. BISSELL:

2 Michie Bissell.

3 MR. ABDUL-SALAAM:

4 Aqeel Abdul-Salaam.

5 MR. STEWART:

6 Craig Stewart.

7 DR. COWAN:

8 And our chairs for this evening are
9 Fr. Walter Baer and Martin Gutierrez. I am actually
10 going to turn the program over to them at this point and
11 they will talk to you about our process here and the
12 spirit of this. The spirit and the hope of this is
13 really simple, the Human Relations Commission is
14 spending this year reaching out deliberately to the
15 different ethnic and other groups that together make up
16 the diversity of New Orleans. Our agenda is to promote
17 respect and inclusion in the life of the city, that is
18 what we are after and that is what we came to do this
19 evening. We are here to listen to whatever you would
20 like to say this evening.

21 Thank you.

22 Martin?

23 MR. GUTIERREZ:

24 Thank you, Mike.

25 I am going to say this first in English

1 and then in Spanish so that everyone understands.

2 I want to remind everyone that if you
3 need translation, whether it's in English or in Spanish,
4 we have available in the back of the room, headsets. So
5 that if the speaker is talking in Spanish and you don't
6 speak Spanish, the translator will be speaking that
7 language simultaneously. Also the same in English, for
8 those of you who cannot speak English, the translation
9 headsets are available in the back of the room as well,
10 please take a moment and go to get a headset.

11 I will let Fr. Walter Baer in a few
12 minutes explain to you the format for tonight's
13 listening session. But one thing that we want to do,
14 first of all, is to listen to a person who I think is a
15 key in the Hispanic community here in New Orleans.
16 Salvador Longoria has been working and serving for our
17 Hispanic community and our entire community for over who
18 knows how many decades now. I don't know how old he is,
19 but I know that he has been around helping in the
20 Hispanic community and Catholic Charities for at least
21 two decades.

22 So Salvador is going to share with us
23 for a few minutes a little bit about the contribution of
24 the Hispanics to the City of New Orleans.

25 Salvador?

1 MR. LONGORIA:

2 Thank you.

3 Martin asked me to just to prepare a
4 little paper on Hispanic presence/Hispanic contribution
5 to the City of New Orleans and I showed this to him last
6 week and he said that it would probably be enough. So I
7 researched it and wrote it so I have to read from the
8 paper but I will be happy to ad lib and get away from
9 the paper as well. I have learned a lot during my
10 research that I think may be of interest, even though I
11 have resided in New Orleans for 25 years and have been
12 involved in the area for 40 something years.

13 Anyway, the Spanish influence in New
14 Orleans dates back to the 1700's when King Louis XV
15 ceded the entire territory of Louisiana to his Bourbon
16 cousin, King Charles III of Spain, in 1762. From 1769
17 to 1803 Spain controlled the City of New Orleans.
18 Despite the brief time, the brief rule that the Spanish
19 had in New Orleans however, the Spanish influence on the
20 city is pronounced and in my opinion it's paramount.

21 As some of you may know, in 1788 and
22 1794 fires ravaged the colonial city of New Orleans
23 destroying hundreds of buildings in each fire. Because
24 of that, in fact even the St. Louis church at the time,
25 now a cathedral was destroyed by fire and was later

1 erected and later became a cathedral thanks to the
2 generous donations from Spanish citizens such as Don
3 Andres Almonester y Roxas.

4 As the Spanish rebuilt the French
5 Quarter in the colonial city of New Orleans they used
6 the wrought iron balconies and the central courtyards
7 that are still found in Spain and which are obviously
8 prominent today in New Orleans, especially in the French
9 Quarter, which was really the Spanish Quarter, as far as
10 I can tell you. Even today the most famous architecture
11 in New Orleans, the St. Louis Cathedral and the Cabildo,
12 show the Spanish influence and reflect the Spanish
13 government in New Orleans. It was also during that
14 short Hispanic rule that two other unique cultures
15 evolved, first following the ejection from Canada by the
16 British to resave France, the Acadians arrived on our
17 shores during the Hispanic rule in 1785. So the culture
18 today known as the Cajuns came to New Orleans and came
19 to Louisiana while we were a Spanish colony and during
20 the time the Spanish ruled New Orleans.

21 Spanish influence also brought into New
22 Orleans the word Creole which comes from our word
23 Cre'ole', which at the time designated a pure blooded
24 Spanish child that was born in the new world, or in New
25 Orleans. Obviously over the years the word's meaning

1 has expanded, first they used it to indicate anyone who
2 came to the new world and whose ancestors came from
3 Europe and then to refer to a somewhat larger
4 population. Today Creole refers to a population and to
5 a lot of other things like food, style and many things
6 which are distinctly New Orleans are now called Creole.

7 In 1803, as I had mentioned earlier,
8 through a series of questionable maneuvers Napoleon
9 purchased the Louisiana territory back from Spain. Even
10 the Archdiocese of New Orleans, which was originally
11 called the Diocese of Louisiana and Florida, created in
12 1793. The original church jurisdiction for the
13 Archdiocese of New Orleans was in Havana, Cuba and
14 Santiago. The Diocese pressed from Key West, Florida
15 and west into Canada. The first bishop of New Orleans
16 arrived in 1795 and his name was Luis Penalvery
17 Cardernas, a native of Havana, Cuba. Louisianian's were
18 led by Governor Hernando Delgado joining the Anglo
19 American colonists in their war of independence from
20 England. The British were obviously defeated and
21 journeyed to Manshac, Baton Rouge, Mobile and finally
22 Pensacola with the aid of Spanish citizens.

23 By 1800 New Orleans was one of North
24 America's most cosmopolitan cities. The census in 1800
25 showed that the native born population was being

1 increased at the time by natives of Spain and parts of
2 Spanish Cuba, Mexico, Santo Domingo, Spanish Morocco,
3 Puerto Rico and other areas. The Spanish and Hispanic
4 population, in New Orleans continued to increase and
5 became a significant presence in the mid 1900's. One of
6 the central areas that the influx of people came from,
7 Cuba, like my family, when Cubans were fleeing Castro;
8 however the largest Latino population can be traced
9 directly back to Honduras, giving New Orleans a larger
10 Honduran population than many cities in Honduras.

11 As a port city, New Orleans imported
12 bananas from Central America to be distributed across
13 the United States. Two New Orleans firms in particular,
14 Standard Fruit Company and United Fruit Company,
15 developed close ties with Honduras. Honduran immigrants
16 began arriving to the Crescent City in increasing
17 numbers and still today form the largest group of
18 Latinos in the City of New Orleans.

19 As many of you will remember, in the
20 50's and 60's New Orleans was considered the Gateway to
21 the America's, not Miami, not Houston, not Dallas. What
22 happened to us, I don't know, but we were the link
23 between the United States, the Caribbean and Latin
24 America. New Orleans International Airport, as they
25 come in, said "Gateway to the America's." So obviously

1 our Latino population continued to increase from
2 throughout Latin America.

3 Latinos sent their children to the
4 Academy of the Sacred Heart in New Orleans. When
5 Latinos needed medical care, they wouldn't go to Miami
6 or Dallas or Atlanta, they would go to Oschner or they
7 would go to Hotel Dieu. Everything from the food, such
8 as jambalaya and gumbo, the music to the architecture,
9 has a succinct link to Hispanics. In addition, Latin
10 rhythms meshed effortlessly with New Orleans musical
11 heritage, from famous bible tunes as in the Mardi Gras
12 mambo to present day usage such as groups, the Los
13 Caliente.

14 Historically Latin America, the
15 Caribbean and New Orleans were located on the same trade
16 grounds so the scholars have been able to trace some
17 groups and musical influence dating back to the early
18 1800's. As a matter of fact some scholars even think
19 that the roots of jazz come from the Caribbean and in
20 Cuba in that connection.

21 The 2000 census gives us our most
22 recent figures relative to Hispanics, but unfortunately
23 according to the National Hispanic Advisory Committee
24 in Washington, the undercount of Hispanics, particularly
25 in cities like New Orleans that are not considered

1 predominately Hispanic as a minority population, was
2 unbelievable. And there was a severe undercount as to
3 the minorities, Hispanic and Asian. However according
4 to the 2000 census there were over 15,000 Hispanics in
5 Orleans Parish. I don't know how they got those figure,
6 because I live in Mid City and I know that there are
7 15,000 Hispanics living in the city today Post Katrina.
8 So in 2000 there were 15,000 Hispanics self-identified
9 within Orleans Parish. In the metropolitan area 59,000
10 Hispanics self-identified in the census; in the 2000
11 census. That figure represents 3.2 percent of Orleans
12 population at the time and 4.5 percent of the
13 metropolitan area. However, all of us that have
14 discussed the census figure have agreed that even Pre
15 Katrina the figure in the metropolitan area was not an
16 accurate accounting and should have been closer to
17 100,000 Hispanics in the three or four parish area.

18 Even before the storm New Orleans had
19 over 30 social, fraternal or cultural organizations of a
20 Hispanic influence. This includes social clubs of
21 residents from Mexico, Belize, Columbia, Cuba,
22 Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Argentina, the Dominican
23 Republic, Puerto Rico, Spain, El Salvador and Ecuador
24 and of course they each had their own secular societies.
25 In fact, professional and political organizations that

1 are all across the city continue to grow. Hispanic
2 religious services are held throughout the city in
3 practically every denomination and are all over the
4 city.

5 Post Katrina New Orleans Hispanic
6 presence seems to be even more pronounced. As we all
7 know, Latino workers from all over America have flocked
8 to the city and from all over Central America seeking
9 work in the rebuilding efforts. The Latino population
10 has surged and while some workers are just in New
11 Orleans temporarily, others have settled for good and
12 many more have already become settled and have brought
13 their families and are staying. Some estimates say that
14 the ethnic numbers will more than double in the next
15 five to ten years. This new population will surely
16 increase the need for broadcast Spanish radio and
17 television stations and Spanish publications. Several
18 of which are already present in New Orleans. I just
19 found out from Margarita Bergen that we may be getting
20 our first television station in a couple of weeks which
21 will be broadcasting from New Orleans. Tulane
22 University of New Orleans has one of the country's most
23 highly regarded Latin American Studies and more such
24 programs will surely arise.

25 In a state where only 2.4 percent of

1 the population was self-identified as Hispanic origin
2 according to the 2000 census, a census which again
3 really undercounted the Asians and the Hispanics. A
4 large increase of Hispanic residents will be seen on the
5 next census. It is estimated that there are between
6 hundreds of thousands of Hispanics working in the
7 Orleans region since the hurricane. As the newcomers
8 settle in the New Orleans area, the demographics, the
9 labor force will shift tremendously. Some estimates are
10 that as many as 20,000 to 50,000 Latinos were drawn to
11 the New Orleans region in the aftermath of the storm.
12 No one knows the real numbers and the numbers have
13 fluctuated and changed quite often. In any case, the
14 influx is noticeable and post storm New Orleans with
15 even less residents, we will have an even more
16 distinctive Hispanic influence. If the 2000 census
17 found that New Orleans was 3.2 percent Hispanic, again
18 we were undercounted; surely the real numbers will be
19 much higher in the future.

20 Thus, in conclusion, the Hispanic
21 Community is merely restoring a time honored Spanish
22 influence to New Orleans. During the Spanish rule from
23 1762 to 1803 Louisiana grew from fewer than 7,500 people
24 to about 50,000 people. The Spanish influence, as I
25 have already mentioned, created not only the

1 architecture in the French Quarter but influenced the
2 Creole cuisine, the use of beans, paprika and other
3 local staples that are now part of the New Orleans diet
4 which came from the Spanish. The early 20th century New
5 Orleans port made most its money dealing with Central
6 America through trade and importing coffee and bananas.
7 In sum, we feel that not only is New Orleans a Latino
8 city, a Hispanic city, but much of its wealth, both
9 economics in architectural and cultural came from the
10 Hispanics and the Spanish community. And I think that
11 the future of the City of New Orleans; the recovery
12 efforts were from the work of the Hispanics, and I would
13 thank the Latinos for their work.

14 Thank you.

15 MR. GUTIERREZ:

16 Thank you, Salvador.

17 I am going to turn it over now to Fr.
18 Walter Baer who is going to give you the guidelines on
19 how the listening session will be conducted.

20 FR. BAER:

21 Thank you, Martin.

22 Again, I would like to welcome you to
23 the listening session on behalf of the Human Relations
24 Commission. This is the fifth session that we have had
25 with different groups in our city. And so this month's

1 focus is on the Hispanic contribution. We just heard a
2 wonderful exposition of the contribution of Spanish and
3 Hispanics to our city. Now we want to hear from you.
4 We want to take this opportunity to have people share,
5 perhaps the experiences that you may have had in our
6 city, and particularly areas in which you might feel
7 disrespected and/or not included in the life of the city
8 as a result of being identified as Hispanic. This may
9 be a story that you may want to tell or something that
10 you may have experienced with someone else, or just your
11 general feeling about the city itself. That is the
12 first part of it.

13 The second part is suggestions,
14 concrete suggestions on how you think this might be
15 remedied. The Human Relations Commission is looking for
16 ways in which our city needs to become more inclusive
17 and more at one with itself and the many cultures that
18 live here. And so at this point I would like to turn it
19 over to the group for any questions or comments.

20 Thank you.

21 MR. GUTIERREZ:

22 I should add that we have a court
23 reporter that is recording every word that you say. The
24 Human Relations Commission will digest, will study the
25 reports from each listening session and we will then

1 come up with a list of recommendations for the city and
2 the Mayor regarding race relations. So keep that in
3 mind and speak your heart, don't hold anything back,
4 this is your time to be heard. This is not going to be
5 a debate. This is not going to be a discussion between
6 one group or another, one individual to another, this is
7 a listening session.

8 (In Spanish.) The court reporter is
9 taking down every word that is being said. You may
10 speak in Spanish, the interpreter will translate. A
11 transcript will then be prepared which the Human
12 Relations Commission will review, study the reports from
13 each listening session. We will then come up with a
14 list of recommendations for the city and the Mayor. So
15 keeping that in mind, speak from your heart, don't hold
16 anything back, this is your time to be heard. This is
17 not going to be a debate. This is not going to be a
18 discussion between one group or another, one individual
19 to another, this is a listening session.

20 We will be here until 9:00, so feel
21 free to state your mind.

22 Please state your name and if you are
23 representing an organization, or if you are representing
24 yourself, just tell us that.

25 MS. BERGEN:

1 Please, I'm just representing myself.
2 Margarita Bergen. One of the gripes that I have is
3 actually against the City of New Orleans. I feel -- I
4 feel very strongly that we haven't had the support. I
5 know that Larry Bagneris is doing a wonderful job, but I
6 feel that we need to center on the city government to
7 realize that our city is not the same. We have grown
8 and it's mostly Hispanic and as such, should care more
9 for the Hispanic people. I personally get very upset
10 because I really feel that it hasn't been taken into
11 consideration, you know, out there anyway. The
12 children, they need to be in school.

13 You know, it doesn't matter, I'm always
14 there, whether it is with black people, with white
15 people, with Hispanic people, whoever. I am always
16 there. And now I see problems with these groups. I
17 really see problems coming and going when they are
18 working and these Hispanic people don't know anything
19 about it. I really feel that they are very vulnerable,
20 these people, and more than ever they need help. That
21 is only my gripe; that we need to help. I know that my
22 friend, he helps. I know that Mr. Larry works very
23 closely the Nagin administration, you know, and really,
24 we need help, very much.

25 I'm from New York and I was there for

1 16 years and now I've lived here for 30 years. In that
2 time that I lived here, it used to be that we had with
3 the government, I can't pronounce the word, but it used
4 to be a person who was in the mayor's administration.
5 It used to be that if you would come in with any issue,
6 that he would handle it. We don't have anything like
7 that. We don't know where to turn. I just think that
8 we need to work with greater communication. I was just
9 reading today's paper and I just saw that they are
10 probably going to be hiring an outside firm from another
11 city who is coming in to try and reach Hispanics. Why?
12 Why can't this money, I mean, how much was it? I think
13 it was almost a million dollars, right? It's in today's
14 paper that they are going to give the money to a public
15 relations firm to go out and reach the black Americans
16 and the Hispanics. I think that this is something that
17 it should be here; we have a lot of talented people that
18 live here, females, minorities, Hispanics, you name it;
19 that can do that job. We have it here, people that
20 could do that job. That is a job that could be done
21 here by someone in the city and I don't think that we
22 should send that money some place else.

23 MR. GUITTEREZ:

24 (In Spanish.) If you need a headset for
25 the simultaneous translations, we have them available.

1 There will be translation both in English or in Spanish,
2 whichever the speaker is speaking, the translator will
3 speak simultaneous languages at the same time. Please
4 see the translator at the back of the room.

5 MS. AMADOR:

6 Good evening, my name is Maria Elena
7 Amador. I have worked and lived in New Orleans for 31
8 years and I consider myself -- does this thing
9 (indicating) work?

10 MR. GUTIERREZ:

11 Yes, ma'am, it's working.

12 MS. AMADOR:

13 Anyway, my family, my daughter and my
14 husband, we have lived here for 31 happy years and I --
15 my daughter will kill me for saying that. Anyway, my
16 biggest concern at this point, right now, even today,
17 there is such a great housing discrimination for
18 Hispanics. They can be legal or illegal and they are
19 still facing discrimination. I was not involved in any
20 of these problems before Katrina, like everybody else
21 we just go around and do our work and that is it. Until
22 Katrina, it took Katrina to open up my eyes and to see
23 what is going on in the Hispanic community, I confess.
24 I think it's time to do something about this
25 discrimination. I don't know what the city is doing to

1 control the discrimination with the housing; in my mind
2 that is a big problem.

3 The other problem that I have
4 encountered is the inability of mothers who have no
5 idea, like Margarita was saying, what is available for
6 their children, school is a problem as well. The
7 schools request a social security card, a type of
8 paperwork that most parents don't have for their
9 children and have no idea how to get the documentation.
10 These children in our community are staying home without
11 opportunities to get an education. That is probably how
12 I got involved with the process and along the way I
13 found out about a lot of other things. So I think that
14 we have to tell the school system that they have to
15 admit the children, sometimes bend the rules without the
16 paperwork as well. It hurts to see all of these
17 children from age six to 16 being at home because they
18 cannot go to school.

19 Thank you very much.

20 MR. GUTIERREZ:

21 Thank you.

22 Let me say too that even if you are not
23 Hispanic, we are not discouraging you to speak, okay?
24 We know that there are some people here who work very
25 closely with the Hispanic community and are not

1 Hispanics themselves.

2 MR. LONGORIA:

3 Yes, now as a citizen.

4 MR. GUTIERREZ:

5 Salvador is Hispanic.

6 MR. LONGORIA:

7 Kind of, yes I am. In terms of gripes
8 about the city, the reason why the census undercounted
9 Hispanics was because the City of New Orleans did
10 absolutely nothing to outreach the Hispanics. There
11 were no Hispanic bilingual workers. There were no, you
12 know, Hispanic did not exist in the City of New Orleans.
13 When people call 911 in the City of New Orleans, who
14 answers, there is no Hispanic services available. When
15 police officers go see Hispanic people who do not speak
16 English and they were having problems in the City of New
17 Orleans, their version of the accident, their version of
18 the assault or whatever happened is not taken into
19 consideration and never gets into the police report
20 because the police officer doesn't speak Spanish. So
21 people are having civil problems and criminal problems
22 merely because they cannot communicate.

23 Fifteen years ago the City of New
24 Orleans had an office in City Hall, as I may have
25 mentioned where a guy sat there, his name was Ortega

1 Garcia. If you were a Spanish citizen you could go to
2 City Hall and get information from that office. You
3 could get hurricane information in Spanish, get social
4 services information in Spanish. You could go to him to
5 find out where you can register your kids for school.
6 That office was essential. Today you go to City Hall
7 and you just have to walk up and down the halls of City
8 Hall and say "Ola." "Ola," hoping that somebody is
9 bilingual and can speak Spanish just so that they can
10 help you. That is not the job of the private community,
11 or the social service community. The Hispanic Council,
12 Associate Catholic Charities and Spanish operatives are
13 doing what the City of New Orleans should be doing for
14 its citizens.

15 The school system, the ELS program in
16 Orleans Parish has always been in a shambles. I am
17 sorry if I offended anyone or hurt anybody's feelings,
18 but you cannot compare the ESL program in Orleans to the
19 ESL in Jefferson Parish, because the Jefferson Parish
20 program is a hundred times better than the program in
21 Orleans Parish. Margarita and I have both received
22 telephone calls from people Post Katrina who have gone
23 to register their children in Orleans Parish schools and
24 have been turned away because they said that they needed
25 proof of citizenship. That happens every day in Orleans

1 Parish. It's no wonder that about 50 percent of the
2 various groups of Latinos have moved to Jefferson
3 Parish. Of course they have, Jefferson Parish has JETCO
4 that deals with Latinos, has an ESL program which is
5 incredible and they seem to be more responsive to their
6 ethnicity citizenry instead of ignoring them like New
7 Orleans in not meeting their needs. That is what is
8 happening here in Orleans, the police is the main issue,
9 the big issue.

10 When Mayor Nagin, representative of the
11 power, says something bad about the Latino community --
12 when he says things about the hurricane he has, for the
13 deaf, he has someone to translate, which is wonderful
14 for the hearing impaired community, but what about the
15 people who don't speak English? So when you are telling
16 people to evacuate in the next five hours, could maybe
17 Lucy, or Martin, or myself, anybody, say it in Spanish
18 to the people so they know what is going on. There is a
19 real, real lack of sensitivity to the Latino Community.

20 MR. GUTIERREZ:

21 Rosana?

22 MS. CRUZ:

23 I'm going to piggyback on that. I will
24 introduce myself, my name is Rosana Cruz and I'm the
25 Co-Director of the Safe Streets Strong Communities,

1 which is a community organizing group that focuses on
2 creating a safer meaning to reforming the criminal
3 justice system. I recently fell into this position
4 after working for a year with the Latino community,
5 particularly with the working community, which I'm glad
6 to see that someone brought them today.

7 My comments from the New Orleans
8 Workers Center and Racial Justice, and one of the
9 experiences that we're seeing and we have been talking
10 about this issue for over a year and it continues to be
11 an issue is that the police approach to the Latino
12 community since the hurricane has been one where that
13 community is completely criminalized. And it's
14 extremely unfortunate but it takes a page from the book
15 of how the African American community has been treated
16 in this city for many years and across the boundary, we
17 known that it is this way around the country and now
18 we're seeing it in our community. It's something that
19 we have to acknowledge, after a year and a half, to talk
20 about this population as an influx, it just doesn't make
21 any sense.

22 This community is here, the Latino
23 community has been here for many years, now it's much
24 larger. And to talk about this influx as if any minute
25 now 100,000 workers are going to leave New Orleans is

1 ridiculous. We know that this population is here. They
2 are here to stay and the city needs to catch up. One of
3 the ways that the city needs to catch up, and one of the
4 things that we're seeing is that public safety is going
5 to continue to be an issue. The streets are not going
6 to safe if the community doesn't trust the police. And
7 there is no way for there to be trust when the community
8 is seen in an adversarial position with the police. So
9 if we take a lesson from other cities where there are
10 larger Latino populations, there is an understanding
11 about immigration laws. Immigration is not a criminal
12 matter. It is not a crime when people talk about
13 illegality and people being illegal, people are not
14 illegal. If they are in this community undocumented,
15 they have not committed a crime. It's a civil
16 violation. One of the things that the police in this
17 city do not seem to understand is that when you
18 decriminalize someone, then that approach to that entire
19 community -- and the workers can speak to it better than
20 I can -- that their experience is, that any interaction
21 that they have with the law enforcement is going to be a
22 negative one. They feel that it's going to leave them
23 worse off than they were before, even when they may have
24 been the victim of crime. Even when, and the reality is
25 that with law enforcement, it's going to be a negative

1 experience. This is the case when we talk to the
2 workers; they are the victims of crime. Overwhelmingly
3 we are seeing that because the population is vulnerable,
4 because the workers don't have access to the resources
5 that exist in other cities or that exist for other
6 members of the population. They are more vulnerable.

7 The Latino community is vulnerable and
8 therefore more easily targeted by crime. And yet the
9 Latino community has less access and resources to
10 protection and to making a safe space for themselves
11 because they are criminalized. So this is a very large
12 issue, it's one that the police department and the mayor
13 have the capacity to resolve just by taking a look at
14 the best practices of other cities around our country
15 where police departments have acknowledged that
16 immigration law is not our jurisdiction and in fact it
17 hinders our capacity to keep the public safe. Therefore
18 we should let ICE deal with, you know, Immigration
19 Custom's Enforcement deal with immigration issues and
20 the position should then be for the New Orleans Police
21 Department to take care of them, to serve the people as
22 law enforcement not as an auxiliary team to an already
23 insanely over funded law enforcement organization. ICE
24 had, after a hurricane where there was no money and
25 there were no federal aids coming to the region, there

1 were 725 new ICE agents coming to New Orleans and to the
2 Gulf South. Why? They were coming here to keep our
3 population vulnerable.

4 So it's really important that, as a
5 community, it's really beautiful to talk about our
6 history here, it was really great. I think that
7 Salvador did an excellent job, but I think also that
8 it's really important to talk about the ugly realities
9 of what it means to keep our population vulnerable in
10 this city. And that is exactly what city government and
11 the police are doing when they continue this approach;
12 that unfortunately is also the approach that we've seen
13 in the African American community for many years. It's
14 very sad and our organization, Safe Streets, represents
15 both groups and we really should begin to see a
16 resolution to that.

17 Thank you.

18 (NEXT SPEAKER ALL IN SPANISH)

19 MR. MOLENO:

20 Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen, and
21 the Commission. My name is Edward Moleno and I'm here
22 as a consultant with the Latin American Journeyman's
23 Organization which was formed in December. It was
24 formed as a center for workers for the New Orleans area
25 working toward ensure that they are receiving justice.

1 This is a relationship that has been created so that the
2 New Orleans workers and in areas around here can come so
3 that they can talk about their problems, talk about who
4 to see for work. They can talk about improving their
5 quality of life and other needs in the community that we
6 may be able to provide assistance or referral for.

7 The organization was formed in alliance
8 with the organizations in the African American
9 community. We are here to aid these workers and let
10 them know about health care issues. We are concerned
11 about the Latin American health care issues and we are
12 asking the officials, as a representative for the
13 journeymen, to ask the federal and state workers to
14 please let us get help in order to create a safe space
15 for the workers of our community.

16 We want to ensure that the Latin
17 American workers here in this city that we are
18 representing, as in other cities, to get help for us so
19 that we can get control over our bosses who are not
20 paying us and using us for work and not giving us the
21 kind of protection for ourselves. This is a problem,
22 taking our papers, not paying us. We are here to work,
23 but if we have help to get control over our bosses, in
24 this way we can go to work. More than anything the
25 workers have come here to work and to care for their

1 family. These workers are not criminals, we don't come
2 here to do anything wrong to the City of New Orleans.
3 We are here to work, to rebuild this city. These
4 workers do the work that no one else wants to do. We
5 are here tonight to ask that you, as authorities in the
6 City of New Orleans, if you can please support us, that
7 you have many good workers that want to work.

8 Thank you very much for your time.

9 MR. PINEDA:

10 Good evening. My name is Norman
11 Pineda; I am with the American Red Cross.

12 I am just going to switch gears here,
13 I'm all about solutions. One of the things about the
14 New Orleans Police Department, I just want to say that I
15 teach Spanish at night at UNO. Just a little plug
16 there. I just want to note that there have been several
17 NOPD and Jefferson Parish police officers that have come
18 in to take my class because they see it as something
19 that can possibly help them out in the street. One of
20 their favorite parts, other than me teaching them all of
21 the Spanish curse words, is just to teach them about
22 culture, Latin American culture. That helps them in
23 understanding how to deal with Latinos that are in New
24 Orleans.

25 I believe that part of the solution for

1 this problem is getting that push from City Hall, from
2 the chiefs of police of the respective parishes,
3 Jefferson Parish, Orleans, to take a type of sensitivity
4 training. That training is needed in order to get the
5 word out that there are some things that you do to
6 Latinos that you shouldn't because it is just going to
7 create animosity toward you.

8 Also, I would just like to say that I
9 am happy to see so many members of the Latino community
10 here and the other communities, but we also have to take
11 a look at ourselves. The history of New Orleans and as
12 Salvador said, there has always been Latinos in New
13 Orleans, that is true, but our community has been a
14 quiet community. We have just been kind of laid back
15 and doing our own thing for a while and that is just the
16 way that we were. I mean; how many of us have friends
17 that don't speak Spanish? Why, because they don't want
18 to, because they are not, because they are in America
19 and we speak American. How many of them didn't want
20 anyone to think that they are not American? And now we
21 see that the tide is turned with all of the influx, all
22 of the Latinos here in the United States, this in your
23 face Latino is what is really bothering the city.
24 Although what has happened with every Latino group that
25 has come over, it's happened with the Italians, it's

1 happened with the Irish, it's happened with the Blacks,
2 it's happened with the Germans, everybody here in New
3 Orleans has their set area that they go to, for example,
4 the Irish Channel, Irish Bayou.

5 I think that education is really where
6 we need to go to help us work this out, and that is
7 basically it, thank you.

8 MS. LOVERA:

9 Good evening. My name is Shaula Lovera
10 and I work with Catholic Charities.

11 My work is mainly in health. I'm going
12 to speak about what I believe is a problem in the health
13 care system. I think that what is needed is cultural
14 strengthening in the health care system. The present
15 health care system is a system that is failing Latinos
16 miserably. You can go to the hospital, go to the
17 emergency room and there is nobody that can speak the
18 language. There are only a handful of the clinics that
19 will provide services and physicians assistance. If you
20 don't speak the language, how can you tell the doctor
21 what is wrong with you? If you can't communicate, how
22 do they know the symptoms? How many mistakes have been
23 made that we don't know about because of the lack of
24 communication? On top of a lack of the language there
25 are all types the other barriers on the health care that

1 denies the access of a Latino: it's cost, it's
2 location, it's papers that they require. Even if you
3 bring a paper or a picture ID that is not the one that
4 they want, they will not accept it for assistance. Such
5 as proof of residency, if you don't have that, they can
6 not get services. I think that the city doesn't just
7 need to look at the language as a problem; they also
8 need to provide the tools for the healthcare workers to
9 be able to do their work correctly.

10 Another thing that is needed, the city
11 should also look at these employers who are not
12 providing a safe place for the workers, protection for
13 the workers. The city needs to ensure they have not
14 only health care needs today but also the future. We
15 can't, we don't know what was here on those murky waters
16 from the storm, but we do know who picked up all of the
17 debris and we do know who did all of the hard labor. We
18 do know that they were exposed to so many things and
19 what diseases may come. We may not see it now, but what
20 about the consequences that will appear at a later date
21 and who is going to take care of them? Should we
22 sacrifice their lives? No, I don't think so.

23 Thank you.

24 MR. GUITTEREZ:

25 Thank you.

1 MS. SIKAFFY:

2 My name is Karla Sikaffy and I am with
3 Catholic Charities and I will piggyback on the last two
4 speakers.

5 I run an ESL program with a team of
6 individuals and one of things that we have noticed is
7 that these day laborers, these workers that are here,
8 are attending classes. They are working eight, 10, 12,
9 15 hours a day and they are coming to the classes for
10 two hours twice a week, so four hours a week in the
11 evening. They are attending six hours a week if it's in
12 the morning and they are working evenings, to learn the
13 language. So they are making an effort to learn the
14 language, they are making an effort to acclimate
15 themselves to our culture. However I see a lack of
16 effort on the part of our city officials, of making that
17 effort. Not just to learn to speak the Spanish
18 language, but overall become aware of the different
19 cultures and not just labeling everyone as Mexicans. We
20 have many, many more Spanish people from other
21 countries.

22 Also I want to add to the speaker about
23 the negative comments being made about the workers, that
24 we don't have enough skilled workers, that we don't have
25 a skilled workforce. I hear constantly that we don't

1 have skilled workers or a skilled workforce. Well let's
2 look at our workforce now, it's completely different.
3 Our demographics have changed, well if our demographics
4 have changed, wouldn't it be obvious to change the work
5 requirements. We have a workforce now that is willing
6 to come here. They are educated; they have degrees from
7 their own countries. They are looking to just learn the
8 language in order to transcribe those degrees and we are
9 not working with them.

10 It's these grassroots organizations,
11 the non profit organizations, these faith based
12 organizations that are coming here to help and teach
13 them the language. I can say that there is no money
14 coming in for literacy, which is important. Without
15 them learning the language, how will they access the
16 healthcare system? How will they go out there and try
17 to seek a job? How will they know what their rights are
18 and how to defend themselves against causes or acts?
19 All of these things need to be included, need to be
20 considered. We are living in a different time. Our
21 demographics have changed and it's for our city. Until
22 our city acknowledges that, if this matter isn't
23 addressed we are going to be in the same predicament
24 that we were in before the hurricane, it's just going to
25 be a different demographic now.

1 (NEXT SPEAKER IN SPANISH)

2 MR. FUENTES:

3 Good evening, my name is Jorge Fuentes.

4 I am part of the journeymen. We are
5 here to talk about the protection to the laborers. We
6 are having a lot of problems, including the arrest of
7 them. We need protection at work so we can work in
8 peace. This protection for our part calls upon our
9 employers. We have health problems that do not leave
10 us. We are not allowed to live like people, like human
11 beings. Whether Latino or Hispanics, we have our rights
12 to health. For example, I had an accident and have been
13 unable to work and have been unable to work for three
14 months. The boss that I had didn't send me to the
15 hospital, didn't say how are you? Didn't do anything to
16 help, nothing. I would come to do labor and I would get
17 \$15 or \$10. So I come tomorrow and there are other
18 problems because there are no protection for us. We
19 need an organization that would help us and show us what
20 are our rights, even if we are undocumented people.

21 Thank you.

22 (NEXT SPEAKER IN SPANISH.)

23 MR. MOLENO:

24 I am Edward Moleno and I am here to
25 speak on behalf of the journeymen workforce. I am the

1 coordinator for the Council of Journeymen. Our
2 organization was created as part of the Center for
3 Worker's for Social Justice in New Orleans. Our goal is
4 for our workers so that they can come together. So that
5 they can share their ideas, make decisions and initiate
6 actions. We are a new organization. We have some
7 problems that we face which are very large, much larger
8 than we had expected. I'm going to touch on four
9 points. The four main points, the first is the no
10 connection to any kind of official protection. Many of
11 our workers are doing the work they were hired to do but
12 there is an incredible number of unpaid salaries. The
13 State Department of Labor for Federal Judiciary have not
14 come to help, have not come to talk to the foreigners
15 about what is happening here. We are not being paid. I
16 come from New York to New Orleans to work with the
17 journeymen and the number of cases are 20 times more
18 than New York. New Orleans, we are talking about a city
19 of a half a million people, maybe. New York, we are
20 talking about eighty, 8,000,000. You do the math in
21 your head.

22 You have heard the comments of the
23 workers, the concern being expressed by all of the
24 speakers here tonight. I know that many of you are
25 homeowners and you are responsible for that as well.

1 You must take responsibility and fault for the workers
2 who are rebuilding the city and your homes, the workers
3 who are not getting paid, the workers who are getting
4 hurt and are unable to work. There are workers who are
5 experiencing problems because of some political system
6 that will prevent them from working in a system that
7 does not give them protection. Obviously the officers
8 have no control over the authorities. When a worker is
9 hurt that the bosses are using to do the work, the next
10 day they go find another worker and ignore the one who
11 has been hurt.

12 Another problem is the police, fellow
13 police officers that are out there, if they see us
14 standing at a corner, not doing nothing, they pull us
15 over and say, "Look at me, (demonstrating) stand over
16 there." If something happens and we experience crime,
17 we have an accident or someone commits a crime against
18 us or we see some crime committed we can't go to the
19 police officials because we understand that the police
20 equals Immigration and Immigration equals deportation.
21 As you can see, or understand, to us this is the
22 American dream. We want to work together, that is a
23 very important issue. It's very difficult for us and
24 the police. We are not against the police. We want to
25 work with them together but it's very important to have

1 more conversations about this.

2 To conclude, I want to congratulate the
3 organization that put this together. There should be
4 many more meetings like this one. Now for my point of
5 view, I'm going to give you some suggestions or
6 solutions. I think that we should be doing like they
7 are doing in other cities. There is a commission that
8 deals with the Latin American issues, Hispanic issues,
9 that population has a commission to deal with the cases,
10 we have 20 times the cases here. We need to find a
11 solution like other cities have to address those
12 concerns and cases. I hope that the city takes this
13 solution and takes members of the community to form a
14 commission. I would imagine that there should be
15 elected official members of the communities and other
16 members of the community, but above all include those
17 who are affected and the Latino workers who are here.
18 They will come if it comes to a commission that becomes
19 reality.

20 I just want to add to what he
21 (indicating) said about the African Americans, we were
22 talking about the problems that are not dealt with
23 superficially; we want to work with those workers to
24 rebuild the city. The workers have to be an active part
25 of this committee if it is approved. I am basing my

1 comments on the committee that was in New York, it was
2 very helpful.

3 Thank you very much.

4 MS. SAN MARTIN:

5 Hi, my name is Karla San Martin. I'm
6 President and CEO of N.O. Sotros Magazine.

7 If you guys all work with the
8 community, lash out and help with that alternatively
9 because we don't deal with it every day. We find it our
10 responsibility to inform the community, our job is to
11 distribute our magazine; that is what we do. And to get
12 the information that is pertinent to the community out
13 into that community. We are never contacted by any of
14 your organizations with press releases or information
15 about any of these programs. I have been trying for the
16 past month for the N.O.Sotros magazine to get the people
17 that coordinate these programs and that develop them to
18 give me a list of contact information. We want to list
19 where people will go to get healthcare, if they have
20 problems with being abused and no one has provided that
21 information or responded to my requests. So how to we
22 get that information to the community?

23 There are only three newspapers in the
24 Hispanic community. Our magazine is heavily distributed
25 in the community and there are two radio stations.

1 There are not that many people to contact, you make five
2 telephone calls and you can reach the community. So why
3 it's not done, why we don't get emails? Why we don't
4 get that information to give to the community, I'm not
5 sure.

6 So as far as the media, the Hispanic
7 media, there are two of us here today. We find it our
8 responsibility to get the information out there, but we
9 rely on you guys that working with the community and
10 developing the program to get the information to us so
11 that we can provide it to them, to the Hispanic
12 community.

13 I want to mention at the same time that
14 we have our contact information available; in fact if
15 any of you guys want a business card, I will give it to
16 you. If you have information that you want to get out
17 to the Hispanic media, contact us, contact the radio
18 stations, the newspapers, it will get out into the
19 community. If you get it to the Spanish media, we will
20 get it out, it is our job to get it there.

21 Thank you.

22 MR. GUTIERREZ:

23 (In Spanish.) I see we have a group
24 that just came in; there are seats in the front. If you
25 need translation by a translator, we have earpieces in

1 the rear.

2 Thank you.

3 (NEXT SPEAKER IN SPANISH.)

4 MR. MARTINEZ:

5 Good evening. My name is San Diego
6 Martinez and I'm part of the Alliance of Guest Workers
7 for Dignity.

8 I came to work in this area and I came
9 here on a visa. I came to work with this visa to work
10 at the one of the New Orleans hotels, it -- I just
11 cannot share with Mr. Bush that this is a great
12 advantage for the Mexican society with this kind of
13 program. For us, I am speaking on the side of the
14 worker because we have suffered the most and it's many
15 of us. A lot of people, for example, myself, I was told
16 that I was to work and when it was getting the paper,
17 the transaction for the employer, I tried to work for
18 the price that I was told I would work. Than when we
19 did not get the price, the same as an American worker,
20 when we objected, I was the first one fired. So we
21 didn't know if we had rights or not because when I spoke
22 up and we tried to organize, I was fired. There are
23 many cases where this happened.

24 I don't mind work, I want to work; many
25 of us want to work. There are some bosses that take the

1 passports from the people so that they cannot escape.
2 There are people, many people, we only have one boss and
3 if we don't respond to the boss he will lower our work
4 hours, he can lower our wages. Nonetheless, we have no
5 right to object. We cannot go with a local authority or
6 a federal authority because they have it all, they have
7 their hands on all the power.

8 I -- we live in terrible conditions.
9 Many of us live with trailers with 25 people and one
10 bathroom. And those are not conditions that any one of
11 you could live in, but we have to do it because of
12 necessity. We have to do it to be here, each and every
13 one of us. I for one came here and paid \$5,000 because
14 I wanted to have a better way of life and that has not
15 been the case. I never thought that we would not be
16 given what we were told. There is not the jobs we were
17 told. They give us the worse jobs that are here in New
18 Orleans. I have been at many jobs where we have very
19 small spaces to work; we have no protection for our
20 face, ourselves, no masks. We burn ourselves. They say
21 we take their jobs. We take jobs that no African
22 Americans or no else will do because they know they will
23 burn. They pay us a very small salaries to do these
24 jobs.

25 They take our papers. We are not able

1 to have our ID's and our documentation, it is not right.
2 We have a right to have an ID or driver's license but
3 the bosses where we were working were taking them. They
4 take our papers, ID, documentation and say they will
5 give them with our pay. We do the work and many times
6 we are not paid and do not get our papers back.

7 I spoke with the Department of Motor
8 Vehicles and still they do not help us. Now like the
9 journeymen, we are asking the City of New Orleans, could
10 a solution be established for Hispanic workers. I think
11 like he (indicating) said that is the best way to
12 handle, channel the problem from the Hispanic community.
13 Not just one person, but a group that works in the
14 community and speaks the language.

15 Also the public housing to improve
16 living conditions, to help us get housing that a human
17 can live in. I don't know if that is the right language
18 for this, but if we can organize it or if this exists
19 that deals with the Hispanic issues. We must have
20 representation and not just the workers, but the
21 journeyman and all of the other workers in the
22 community. We will work, we are not afraid to work and
23 we will work with all people in the community.

24 We are part of this community because
25 we have come to work and we do all of the work. I just

1 have to speak a little more because I definitely want to
2 be the best worker. I ask this of the Mayor and the
3 city.

4 Thank you very much.

5 MR. GUTIERREZ:

6 Thank you, Senor.

7 Who would like to speak next? (In
8 Spanish.) You can come up and speak English, Spanish,
9 Chinese or in English.

10 We have a translator that will enable
11 you to speak your language.

12 MR. BALDUCCI:

13 Good evening. My name is Marco
14 Balducci.

15 I am new both to immigration and to New
16 Orleans. I just started with immigration as an attorney
17 with Catholic Charities. And where I feel that I would
18 like to contribute to this discussion, I don't have very
19 much to say with respect to New Orleans and also with
20 respect to the Latino experience, but I am the son of
21 immigrants and I am an American.

22 I think that one of the reasons that
23 there is often so much opposition to providing services
24 to the Latino community is that there is a fear of
25 change. I think that that is unfortunate and I think

1 that it's also as many fears are, it's rooted in
2 misunderstanding. I think that often we are subject to
3 the idea, all of us, that the world was a certain way
4 until we were born and then things started to change.
5 And then we become scared of what this change is because
6 things are different. However I think there has always
7 been this period, this sphere of influx. As Sal noted
8 at the beginning of this discussion, the Latino
9 community has had its own historical sphere and there
10 has been a mixing of cultures that has characterized
11 this city. This mixture, this constant change that has
12 made New Orleans, has given it the distinctive qualities
13 that make it the city that it is.

14 New Orleans is a unique city; that
15 uniqueness is what made it so appealing for me to come
16 here. This leads me to reflect on my own experience,
17 my parents were immigrants and they came to a place that
18 had a fairly parochial outlook with respect to
19 outsiders. They worked hard; they worked really hard,
20 without the possibility of advancement. Ultimately,
21 because of their frustration they left and they moved to
22 a place that was more welcoming to them. And now my
23 father is about to receive an award from a premier
24 institution in his field for the forensic contributions
25 that he has made in Oncology. My mother is the director

1 of a nursing home, which is always the highest rated
2 operation at her hospital. These are the contributions
3 that immigrants make. For my parents it wasn't a
4 decision that was taken lightly, to leave aliens and to
5 come across the United States.

6 I think especially with the individuals
7 that are here, I had the privilege of going to a Mexican
8 border conference recently. It is not a decision that
9 was taken lightly, to come to the United States. You
10 leave your home to walk for days in the desert, to be
11 the prey of bandits, of border enforcement, of mountain
12 lions, of rattlesnakes, of all these things, of the
13 heat. I understand that it's not a decision to be taken
14 lights to come here. I think that the drive that led
15 these individuals to come here is something that we, as
16 Americans, would be well advised to tap into and that we
17 as Americans, should seek to encourage and to welcome.
18 We need to allow the drive and to allow this experience
19 of sacrifice generally for families and for family
20 values, which we always talk about.

21 I think we would be well advised to
22 have institutions that facilitated the contributions
23 equal to these people that have sacrificed so much to be
24 here and to be in this land that hold out the promise of
25 opportunity. I think that we as Americans, it would be

1 great to have a duty to allow them to take advantage of
2 this opportunity. I think that at the end just about
3 everyone in this room has been able to take advantage of
4 that opportunity.

5 Thank you.

6 MS. FUSSELL:

7 Hi. My name is Beth Fussell and I'm a
8 professor of sociology at Tulane University and I've
9 studied Mexican Migration in the United States.

10 I have set up some statistics for the
11 United States and I have put them into a New Orleans
12 context. The first statistic is that five percent of
13 the U.S. labor force is estimated to be undocumented
14 workers. Okay, so we are talking migrants. And most of
15 them do come from Mexico and Central America. The other
16 thing is that those workers are mostly concentrated in
17 construction work and in hospitality work. So we know
18 that New Orleans economy concentrates on both of those
19 industries, those are, you know, the major part of our
20 economy. Furthermore, we know that with all of the work
21 that has been going on in New Orleans since Hurricane
22 Katrina, it couldn't have possibly been done without the
23 presence of the undocumented labor force that arrived
24 here. So everything that is true about the United
25 States in general is even more true about New Orleans

1 and our dependency upon this specific labor force.

2 I wanted to make sure that the New
3 Orleans Human Relations Commission understands those
4 facts because it is the case that without that labor
5 force the U.S. economy could shut down and could go into
6 a recession. And it's even more of a dependent status
7 that without that labor force New Orleans would never
8 have been rebuilt to the degree that it has been and in
9 fact it's even more true for the future. So these
10 statistics are highly relevant to the debate or to the
11 conversation that we are having, but they haven't really
12 circulated in the city itself. When I read the
13 newspaper, or when I watch television and I see the
14 news, there is not a whole lot of attention being paid
15 to this population. We are all very happy to have our
16 houses rebuilt and to get back to work ourselves, but we
17 rather ignore the human faces of the workers who are
18 giving their work and their all in order to allow us to
19 get on with our lives.

20 So this is, well, my contribution to
21 this discussion is simply that the magnitude of what
22 we're talking about tonight isn't fully recognized and
23 it is rather understated unless you understand those
24 statistics. We don't know very much about rules in New
25 Orleans, but certainly a city that is facing

1 depopulation can't afford to alienate or turn away or
2 ignore any of the people that are living here Post
3 Katrina.

4 Thank you very much.

5 MR. GUTIERREZ:

6 (In Spanish.) We are happy to have
7 such an audience for the Hispanic community. Those that
8 want to express their opinion freely, without fear of
9 retribution, you can do it here. It is not a matter of
10 a debate; this is a discussion, a chance to express your
11 concerns. The Human Relations Commission is here to
12 listen. No one is here to answer questions or make
13 comments or respond to the comments that are being made,
14 it is to listen to what you have to say. Afterwards we
15 will review what is said and then make our
16 recommendations to the City Council and to the Mayor of
17 New Orleans.

18 So please, come forward and be heard,
19 this is the time to speak. Is there anybody who would
20 like to talk?

21 MS. ORTEGA:

22 Ola.

23 AUDIENCE:

24 Ola.

25 MS. ORTEGA:

1 Hello. My name is Gema Ortega.

2 If you don't mind, I would like to
3 speak tonight about the families, the family
4 perspective. I work on literature on perspectives. I
5 feel that from a sociological perspective it's very
6 important for things to be organized and put in
7 literature in the sense or in order for the outside
8 community to know what the Latinos are doing and to put
9 a face on all of this. In order for our community to
10 understand the sort of things that are happening for
11 both the outside and within our community, everything
12 can be organized, it can be documented and it can be out
13 there. Not literature just only for us, you know, but
14 also for others that might have to see documentation and
15 only by doing that, to reach over and across to give
16 human face and humanity to those who have lost it, their
17 homes or left their family by coming to this country to
18 work.

19 We also have to reach outside and let
20 our voices be heard in this city, so that it can be
21 known, what is happening, otherwise it won't happen. I
22 agree with what was said before, that the media would be
23 a good way to actually give back, to provide information
24 both to us and to the outside. The media would be
25 responsible, I guess, I don't want to be, I don't want

1 to put that responsibility only on the media, but I
2 think that they would be a good out, a good way to get
3 out those stories. I was just reading on literacy the
4 other day about how people come here to get jobs and to
5 send money to their families, but nobody is talking
6 about how their families live and how New Orleans has
7 been to the Latinos.

8 I am just saying how important it is
9 for the jobs that are being done in New Orleans, how the
10 jobs are being done. I am saying that there has to be
11 organization in the community, but also to reach other
12 members in a way that are not considered part of the
13 community, or part of our ethnic group. That is all.

14 Thank you.

15 MR. PEREZ:

16 Hi, my name is Jacob Perez and I work
17 for an organization called United Neighbors
18 Organization, we're from Chicago.

19 We have been doing organizing and
20 community work in the Latino community there for over 20
21 years. About eight years ago we opened up our first
22 charter school and we will be opening up the charter
23 school, Esperanza, here in New Orleans this August. We
24 will be here for the Latino community and I would like
25 to say that a large part of the school is parental

1 involvement. We will definitely be offering services
2 such as ESL, immigration; you name it, we will have it.
3 Again, we are new to the city so we know very well that
4 there is a lot that we need to learn.

5 I would just like to say that coming
6 here to this forum was great, I learned a lot and that
7 it gives me an idea of what the needs of the community
8 are.

9 Thank you very much.

10 (NEXT SPEAKER IN SPANISH.)

11 MS. MURPHY:

12 Good evening. My name is Brenda
13 Murphy. I would like to welcome the people who are here
14 in this room because I know that everyone here is all
15 working for a new New Orleans.

16 New Orleans is proud that you have
17 arrived here to work here and to be here and I think
18 that the workers have done an invaluable job. In
19 talking about this, we are having a simultaneous
20 translation; I praise this because the emphasis on
21 language is the main block for the Latin worker. Many
22 times the Latinos experience not getting involved for
23 fear of not understanding because it's not in our
24 language, it's not our first language.

25 The Hispanics that have come here have

1 a hard time going to school and there is a time to go
2 out and learn and so I am glad there will be a charter
3 school coming here.

4 Let's remember the risks that the
5 Hispanics take in coming here with their family and
6 leaving their own country. We have to work hard to
7 remember that is what was required for this country to
8 have growth. I think that the community has to work
9 together in the process.

10 I want to thank you, those on the
11 commission, for the opportunity for people to come to
12 speak. For those of us who are not bilingual in the
13 Hispanic community, to be given an opportunity to know
14 everything that is happening. If you are bilingual, I
15 encourage you to help with translation so that people
16 will not be afraid. Tonight they were not afraid and
17 bright enough to listen for something that was good for
18 them and to hear all of this.

19 It was very good to have the
20 simultaneous translation so they could understand step
21 by step what is going on in the Hispanic Community. The
22 workers came here to work, some have families with
23 children. They can listen to this. We are very -- I
24 believe, and some emphasis was put on this, but last
25 year in New Orleans there were more than 5,000 children

1 and there will be more. We have the right and we also
2 have the obligations to make sure that the working
3 people's needs are being met, to make sure their
4 families, their children's needs are being met.

5 We are here to make a difference, we
6 not only have working people, we have professional
7 people, all walks of life; we can make a difference. We
8 are interest making changes, in order to make changes,
9 to make a difference, to improve the quality of life.
10 We each need to continue to work and to demonstrate that
11 the Hispanics are capable of doing. The Hispanics can
12 do big things; that is who we are. Latinos, with out
13 culture, with our minds, with our hearts, we are capable
14 of doing really big things. Each and everyone of us,
15 all of us. I think perhaps that some of the people do
16 not understand what is going on because I think this is
17 the first time we were able to meet and know that we
18 can, to do large, great things and be part of the large
19 changes in New Orleans.

20 MR. GUTIERREZ:

21 We have about 15 more minutes if
22 someone else would like to come up.

23 (NEXT SPEAKER IN SPANISH)

24 MR. VALLEJO:

25 Good evening, my name is Angel Roberto

1 Vallejo. I am first going to talk as a representative
2 of the Episcopal Grace Church community.

3 There are many opportunities, options
4 that we can do in our community. We like a religious
5 Hispanic community. We are very pained by the pain of
6 our brothers and sisters, what they are experiencing.
7 We know that very little or nothing can be done if there
8 is no communication for those people that are going
9 through this. And with this that I have in my ear
10 (demonstrating) for those that don't understand Spanish
11 and don't understand English, that barrier is being
12 eliminated today. And this, as we are all present here
13 today, we can be united in everything that we can do.
14 Everything that we think about doing, we will be able to
15 do this, but we must remember that it is with the grace
16 of God.

17 There is something very important that
18 we must know, that we depend on the strength of God;
19 that is where our strength comes from. We must remember
20 that we all part of one God, no matter what denomination
21 we are. It is important to be a part of the community
22 and feeling that you are part of the community. Many
23 people are visiting the church and I hate to say this,
24 but many of them are doing it in as their last option
25 because they don't know what to do. It as if believing

1 in God is their last option, I don't want to appear as
2 if I am giving a sermon, but I want to talk about that I
3 have noticed this in the community.

4 As far as health is concerned, this is
5 very worrisome. I want to speak specifically about this
6 to the workers. I was told, I still don't know what the
7 chemical composition is this material is which is being
8 worked continuously with by the Hispanic workers. They
9 have contact constantly with the chemicals and in a few
10 years in the future that could cause problems in their
11 body. There are many of them that are being used and we
12 are abusing them because the bosses are not buying
13 protections, goggles, or what is needed for protection.
14 Some, they don't want to use it because sadly, in our
15 country to protect ourselves is not accepted because the
16 mask is bothered, but here, some people are more
17 educated, they know. They know we are working with
18 material in a different way but the same damage could be
19 done as far as there or in our country. There is much
20 work that is being done in this community with materials
21 that could cause a chronic illness for many of us who
22 have been working and contacting the sheetrock material
23 that has asbestos. There are many different things that
24 can be in those materials that we are handling and the
25 future health care will be needed.

1 And I want to tell this to as many
2 people who are here, don't have schooling, not even
3 first, not even primary school. In order to work and
4 learn anything in an area, in the field, it has been
5 very difficult. Therefore in a work plan it occurred to
6 me to think and try to, if it's possible, create here a
7 school that has been created in different countries. In
8 my country there is school, school for adults? Adult
9 education, I have heard that here there are programs
10 here for adults. I don't know who, I don't know where,
11 but that is very important to me. In my country for
12 example, when it is possible to learn, so that everyone
13 can begin, we can be coming to the level system here to
14 communicate. Adult education is important, it is
15 different in our country, but if it is available and
16 some can go, it is important to go. We need to find out
17 if there is such a program and if there is, we need to
18 get the education that we can. We need to create an
19 awareness in each one of us, to communicate to the
20 bosses that everybody is important. That is all I have
21 to say.

22 Thank you.

23 MR. KNECHT:

24 Hi, I'm Bill Knecht; I'm a member and
25 representative of the organization, Erace, also known as

1 Eracism.

2 I want to start off by saying that I
3 really appreciate being here because I have learned a
4 lot. When I hear the words discrimination, prejudice,
5 stereotyping, discrimination in housing, profiling by
6 the police and so forth, I have heard those words for 13
7 years here in New Orleans. And to me that is racism.
8 Our organization believes in, not fighting racism, there
9 is a way to do it, a better way to do it, erase. We
10 believe by getting people together from different
11 backgrounds and talking with each other rather than
12 about each other or against each other. We believe in
13 person to person communication to show that we are
14 committed to treating fellow human beings of all colors,
15 with love and respect.

16 In New Orleans historically, as most of
17 you know, it has been a black and white discussion. New
18 Orleans is changing, and I have heard some of the
19 changes here tonight. To me, what I would like to do is
20 invite you to an Eracism meeting so that we can start
21 communicating with each other. So we can learn about
22 the cultures of each other. By communicating, we can
23 exchange some of the stories of what we are experiencing
24 and so that we can get along better. I am excited about
25 this. Our organization is changing as well. In fact,

1 we have two interns with us tonight, Julio and
2 Fernandez, of UNO, who are going to working specifically
3 on this with us over the summer. So I invite you to
4 talk to them and get some information about how we can
5 start talking with each other.

6 Thank you.

7 MR. GUTIERREZ:

8 (In Spanish.) Now we are going to
9 extend the time. So that those of you who want to talk,
10 go ahead.

11 MS. KUGLER:

12 I will be very fast. My name is Elly
13 Kugler and I work with the Latino Health Outreach at New
14 Orleans Riverside Operations.

15 I just want to comment on some of the
16 things that other folks haven't touched on. I want to
17 say that I think everyone that has spoke on the issues
18 did a fantastic job on some of the issues such as
19 education, health care, daily work and communication
20 issues. I just want to mention one issue in health care
21 that I see as an issue and it's a huge issue and that is
22 dentistry. There is almost no free or low cost dentists
23 that are available. There is none in New Orleans, there
24 is one that I know of around the area and they are
25 closing soon. So this is an issue that affects the

1 Latinos and it affects all members of the working class
2 community. It's a huge issue and it's something that
3 people can't eat, they will have a problem, right? So
4 somebody needs to create a dentistry program that will
5 be able to serve the working class.

6 Another thing is, one of the amazing
7 things that Latino immigrants have brought here Post
8 Katrina, is small carts in the street, especially women
9 run small businesses such as food. One of the things
10 that we have seen on the street corners is that there
11 has been a lot of policing on that food. So the police
12 are coming up to the women who are selling the tamales
13 and saying, "Well, where is your permit?" They are not
14 saying where you get the permit and they are not saying
15 how to go about the steps to get the permit. They are
16 just saying, "Where is your permit?" And I have been
17 trying to figure out where to get those permits and it's
18 a maze.

19 New Orleans needs all of the small
20 business that we can get and we need all of the healthy
21 food that we can possibly get. So the police and law
22 enforcement, they probably shouldn't be the ones that
23 are cracking down on these small businesses. I feel
24 that we should be out there supporting folks, these
25 women with these small businesses to become viable and

1 increase their business to a larger scale.

2 Thank you.

3 MR. GUTIERREZ:

4 How is our translator doing?

5 MS. LINDSLEY:

6 I could really use a break.

7 MR. GUTIERREZ:

8 You could use a break?

9 MS. LINDSLEY:

10 Yes. I have a dry throat.

11 MR. GUTIERREZ:

12 (In Spanish.) I hate to stop for too
13 long because it's difficult to resume the session.

14 MS. LINDSLEY:

15 I need at least five minutes.

16 MR. GUTIERREZ:

17 We will adjourn for five minutes.

18 (A break was taken in the session.)

19 MS. LINDSLEY:

20 Thank you.

21 MR. GUTIERREZ:

22 Please, everyone take your seats so we
23 can continue with the listening session. That is the
24 difficulty in taking a break, people get involved in
25 other things, other conversations.

1 (In Spanish.) Please have a seat so
2 that we can let anyone else speak that would like to be
3 heard on the listening session. Sir, did you want to
4 say something?

5 (NEXT SPEAKER IN SPANISH.)

6 MR. MELAZ:

7 Good evening, my name is Orlando Melaz
8 and I am from Nicaragua.

9 I am an organizer with the Congress for
10 the Social Justice. I live in Kenner and we have come
11 to this reunion to talk about the human relations. We
12 have a problem in Kenner. I know that this is a reunion
13 for New Orleans, but I think that we have a problem in
14 Kenner, a very bad problem in Kenner with the police in
15 Kenner. They are doing things against Hispanics because
16 we are here to work. They will come to us for work when
17 we are on the corner and ask what we are doing. On
18 Friday we were at the corner and three police officers,
19 three police cars arrived. One of the people that we
20 know, from the police, we have the police officer that
21 ran over a friend and he is hospitalized. And the
22 police got him just because he was asking for work.

23 We have come here to the Human
24 Relations Commission to ask to come to help for the
25 police; this is an injustice to our rights. Our rights

1 are being violated. Because in reality, people don't
2 feel that we are able to be here, we are asked to leave.
3 We are mistreated; we are called lazy, vagabonds. We
4 are workers and we are looking for work. We work for
5 New Orleans and we would like for our American brothers
6 and sisters and all of the Hispanic community to support
7 us so that we can truly improve the human relations.
8 The way they treat Hispanics, it's very unjust what they
9 are doing against us. If you can just come, we ask to
10 support us. I'm not the only one that is saying this,
11 we all say this and this happens daily.

12 The police take us out the workers from
13 the trucks, from the contractors, and they fine us about
14 \$1,000. This is racism. We cannot continue to have bad
15 things like this happen. We need your support.

16 Thank you for listening to me and may
17 you have a good evening.

18 MR. VALLADAUS:

19 Good evening, my name is Carlos
20 Valladaus. I'm here as an individual. I'm not here
21 representing anything but myself.

22 I want to say that I really admire
23 seeing all of these men and women together fighting for
24 something better, something new. I really admire you
25 for that and I got to tell you as a Latino living in the

1 United States, it's always the same story. It's not
2 easy but that doesn't mean that we cannot make it.

3 I think personally, education; it is
4 the most important of all of these things in this
5 country. Not just for ourselves but for the ones that
6 think that all of this country cannot include anybody
7 else. For those of that mentality, I think that they
8 need to realize that the world is growing fast. We
9 cannot think just one race anymore. We cannot think
10 just one way anymore. The United States is not just one
11 thing; it's more than just one race. It's more than
12 just one way of thinking.

13 I believe that education has to go both
14 ways. I think that for our Latinos, we need to
15 understand what this country is all about, the language,
16 the way of life. But at the same time the country needs
17 to get out of this old way of thinking. It's time, and
18 for us, really education is the way that we need to go
19 and expand ourselves and also be personal voters. If I
20 work every day, I am tired by the end of the day, but I
21 make the effort to help another kid. I go to the school
22 and share some time with one of the kids and I tell him
23 about myself or share the best that I can share with
24 him. I feel that by doing that I can make a difference
25 in someone's life.

1 Like the gentleman (indicating) here,
2 he was telling us about his situation. I guess that all
3 of you have experienced that or helped somebody in that
4 situation. It is sad because we live in what is
5 supposed to be the best country in the world. The
6 reality tells us different, we see it; we live it. So I
7 would say this to you, education, education, education.

8 Thank you.

9 MS. CRUZ:

10 I know that earlier we had talked about
11 we were going to split the session up in gripes and into
12 solutions. I have to leave so, can I address that now?
13 I can't stick around.

14 MR. GUTIERREZ:

15 We have been doing the solutions at the
16 same time. You can speak about that at this time.

17 MS. CRUZ:

18 Yes, I would like to offer that the
19 Safe Streets Strong Community is in partnership with the
20 workers committee, some have expressed their concerns.
21 We are interested in talking about solutions that have
22 worked in other places, to make the community have a
23 voice in the decisions that impact them every day.
24 Ultimately that is really what the number one lack in
25 this situation has been.

1 Education, health care, police issues
2 and labor issues, unless the workers are part of the
3 conversation. Unless the police are going and talking
4 to the workers, in the Latino community, conversation is
5 the best practice. Unless there can be conversation,
6 not harassment, the best practices are not going to come
7 out. So my suggestion is that we really look at and we
8 really make an effort to put together that packet of
9 best practices and talk about what is really going to
10 improve public safety. What is really going to make the
11 Latino community a safe community and ultimately, every
12 community that is having that positive impact. Just
13 looking at models, there are resources around the
14 country like, there are some that have worked.
15 Organizations have done this; organizations have put
16 together packets with a lot of information. It would
17 help to explain things, how the police department could
18 do a memorandum of understanding. How the city
19 government can come out, as in other cities where they
20 have done it, they have said, this is harm free zone.
21 This is a zone; this is a safety zone for the whole
22 community. This is a zone for the community and we
23 recognize these people as part of our community and we
24 need to make a haven that recognizes the contributions
25 that this community makes.

1 That is not something that we are just
2 throwing out of the air. This is something that exists
3 in other parts of the country and it can exist here,
4 what we need is a willingness of the city government and
5 the authorities, not just a blanket invitation. It's
6 all well and good to welcome the Latino community today,
7 but ultimately to get involved with the Latino
8 community. That is the way that it would function for
9 everyone. Maybe we could do some of that, we are
10 willing to do some of that work and we are willing to
11 bring some of that information and show how it has
12 worked in other parts of the country. You are welcome
13 to contact us in terms of working with best practices.
14 We are interested in instituting them and, you know,
15 there are viable consultants all around the country that
16 do this kind of work, criminal justice and immigration.

17 We can definitely do this and we can
18 make a difference in how the Latino population is going
19 to be viable here. As this community, it is targeted as
20 a community that that is falling victim to crime. As
21 there are more health problems, than that has a negative
22 effect over and over and it is really going to harm the
23 entire community. If we are going to turn that around
24 we have to take really serious steps forward. So I'm
25 offering that olive branch in the situation and I hope

1 that it is taken in good faith.

2 MS. LOVERA:

3 I'm sorry. I don't have any solutions
4 but I would like to talk about one of the problems that
5 I don't think we have addressed; a problem that is
6 incredibly important to us is transportation. We forget
7 that many of us do not have transportation and the
8 public transportation is really difficult. We talked
9 about health care, but to get to health care, work, or
10 for whatever services you need; it is very difficult to
11 get to those services. Even when you get to Jefferson
12 and you have to cross the parish from Orleans to
13 Jefferson you have to take several buses, two to five
14 buses and then the fares change and it can cost up to
15 \$5.00. It is very difficult for people who use public
16 transportation and I just wanted to make sure that was
17 included.

18 MR. DIAZ:

19 (In Spanish.) My name is Lucas Diaz
20 and I am a naturalized citizen from Santo Domingo, from
21 San Troy and Puerto Rico. I have been here in New
22 Orleans for eight years.

23 (In English.) I grew up in Jefferson
24 Parish. I went to the public schools and we were in
25 classes with other cultures to learn English. When I

1 became a teenager and I went to high school and came to
2 Orleans I realized that there was a reason for this,
3 which I thought that was a shame. That was in the early
4 '80s and I'm not sure if it's ever improved and someone
5 else spoke about that issue earlier.

6 I want to speak about my story and my
7 personal experiences. Growing up, learning how to live
8 in the city. Before I knew English my foreignness was
9 very evident so I was getting picked on a lot by both
10 white and black, getting jumped, you know, whatever.
11 And then once I learned English and I lost my accent;
12 then I got questions from guys and girls asking me what
13 I was. Especially because I looked like Mr. Bagneris'
14 cousin, so they didn't know whether I was Latino or
15 white or half black, or something. So that gave me a
16 cue, so I continued working on how to become one of the
17 Americans. As both - North Americans across the country
18 like to call themselves Americans but the rest of the
19 south, including Black America call themselves Americans
20 as well. Which is part of the education that needs to
21 happen as well -- we don't, the Americans need to learn
22 about other things -- what their culture is about and
23 other cultures. I, in assimilating, not necessarily the
24 culture, but I definitely stopped speaking Spanish for
25 many, many years. It wasn't until recently, within the

1 last ten years that I decided that it was much more
2 important for me to actually keep my language, go back
3 and actually relearn it, and feel proud of who I am. At
4 the same time while I was doing that I became very proud
5 of the fact that I was bilingual. So I cast aside my
6 Dominican-ness and picked up a lot of my surroundings.
7 Eventually I ended up straddling two worlds, balancing
8 them both, with Latino with my family who is here who
9 speaks mostly all in Spanish. In the '70's we were not
10 allowed to speak a lick of English and we lived in a car
11 for months while my father worked and saved enough for
12 an apartment.

13 Tonight I am very happy to see this
14 gentleman (indicating) who in the tradition of my
15 father, just looking for work, just looking for an
16 opportunity. I don't know if my father experienced the
17 kind of discrimination and problems that these
18 immigrants are experiencing today. In their case it's
19 so public because of Katrina and the numbers of them
20 coming, it's hard for them to hide and find a job, as
21 Latinos used to do in New Orleans and the surrounding
22 areas. In New Orleans we have always had immigrants
23 coming in here prior to Katrina who found a way to
24 survive through familial networks or friend networks or
25 people who knew a company who would get them a job even

1 though they were undocumented and even though they
2 didn't speak English. So long as that individual didn't
3 bother anybody, was found by somebody who could utilize
4 the man, that individual didn't have any problems. That
5 is pretty much what I believe my father's experience
6 was.

7 I want to add that my father did it not
8 only for himself but also for about 300 other
9 Dominicans, which he brought over here and put in the
10 foundries throughout Southeast Louisiana. Unfortunately
11 some of these new workers don't have the opportunity to
12 have that kind of an experience. I would think that a
13 situation like this, New Orleans hasn't experienced this
14 migrant influx in such a long time.

15 When you are dealing with officials,
16 its elected officials, it's not elected officials to
17 really be proactively promoting in support of, encourage
18 the patronage of these individuals. They come over
19 looking for work; many prominent Orleanians have told me
20 that they are very glad to have Latino workers working
21 here because their houses have been put up half as fast
22 as it would have been otherwise. These folks at the
23 same time also don't have an understanding that perhaps
24 the newcomers might want to stay. They might want to
25 come here and be here permanently. They might come to

1 be like me, now speaks perfect English, graduated from a
2 local university, be naturalized, works in New Orleans.

3 I hate to see politicians then use
4 these newcomers sort of as ping-pong balls for political
5 gains when it comes to elections because New Orleans was
6 so divided along the black and white lines. It may be
7 that if we don't do something to advocate on our behalf
8 to get the politicians to understand how to evoke a
9 different way of thinking, that we may used against that
10 submission or towards their issue in order to win
11 political points. Because we don't vote and they know
12 that we don't vote because new populations are unable to
13 vote. That would pass them against us, in order to get
14 white votes or to get black votes, whichever works in
15 their favor. I think that what we need to do is to
16 continue to have conversations like this with elected
17 officials, non elected officials, to keep the dialogue
18 open and to make it broader than a black and white
19 issue. We need to get them to understand that Latinos
20 can just become as American as the Americans in North
21 America consider themselves and still maintain their
22 culture. While doing so, Latinos can enrich this city
23 and provide maybe an opportunity for a way out of the
24 battle situation that we have had for so many years.
25 Expand the economics and maybe even open other avenues

1 that we haven't had in years with other Latin American
2 countries simply by reaching out.

3 MR. GUTIERREZ:

4 Does anyone else wish to speak? Two or
5 three more?

6 MR. GIAMBELLA:

7 I just wanted to note real quick that
8 this sheet that has been handed out for feedback, it is
9 not in Spanish.

10 MR. GUTIERREZ:

11 Yes, I was going to mention that.

12 (In Spanish.) I want to apologize that
13 the evaluation is only English and not in Spanish
14 translation. You can write in Spanish, the question is:
15 What was it that was good about this session? What was
16 the successfulness? What could we do differently to
17 better facilitate this type of session? Do you want to
18 state any solutions for this session? Again, I
19 apologize for not having translated the form.

20 MS. ROSE:

21 Good afternoon, or good evening. My
22 name is Brenda Rose and I work with the community
23 program Welcome Home.

24 For those of you that don't know, it is
25 a program that works with the homeless. It's a non

1 profit organization that works with the homeless. There
2 are many barriers that I have encountered and some of
3 you may have seen me early in the morning doing these
4 things. It is really hard when you have to question
5 someone and ask someone, "What is your housing status?"
6 It's just too close to home for some people. When you
7 do it and so you ask, "Where do you go at the end of the
8 day?" It's hard to say you are homeless and I
9 understand that. I just want to say that you are
10 identifying in the book - I'm sorry - it's just as hard
11 to identify homeless in Spanish as it is in English.

12 We just have to work to figure out a
13 way not to say homeless because that is hard to say for
14 somebody you love or something that you don't want to be
15 identified as. I think it's an issue that we really
16 need to hone in on because at Unity we really believe in
17 the housing first model, which is once you have a house,
18 your other problems that are going on may fall into
19 place. So I really just want people to know that there
20 is a place out there like Unity Housing which shows
21 housing at eight percent less than fair market value and
22 our web address is www.unityhousinglink.org. I'm really
23 trying my hardest but I guess maybe my voice is soft but
24 I am really trying to get the word out there.

25 Unity is trying to reach the Latino

1 population, the Hispanic population as much as we can to
2 end homelessness. We will keep on working on that
3 effort.

4 Thank you.

5 MR. GIAMBELLA:

6 My name is Mike Giambella. I just last
7 week went to work with the Office of Public Health here
8 in New Orleans. I am with the HIV Outreach Department.
9 I have two outreach workers here that I supervise and we
10 have been doing everything from accompanying workers to
11 the hospitals, helping them get treatment here and often
12 housing information is provided.

13 I am trying to get information out to
14 the people on the street, to the workers. We have been
15 helping them in every way that we possibly can.
16 Unfortunately there are only three of us and we are
17 doing everything that we can possibly do in working with
18 the Latino community and organization. So anyone that
19 is here that might up needing someone to help with the
20 language barrier, we have two or three people that speak
21 Spanish. At any time during the day, my workers are
22 here to help with that and will be happy to assist you.

23 Unfortunately we haven't been working
24 long enough to have a business card, but if anyone wants
25 our services we are here and will be around after the

1 meeting, just come to see us.

2 Thank you.

3 MR. GUTIERREZ:

4 Anyone else?

5 (No response.)

6 There is a group that is meeting called
7 the Hispanic Forum, they meet every two weeks. It is an
8 organization that is trying to gather information and
9 reach out to the Hispanics. If anyone is interested in
10 participating, see Justine. Justine, if you would raise
11 your hand.

12 Is there anyone else that is interested
13 in saying something?

14 (No response.)

15 That appears to be everyone who wants
16 to speak. I would like to ask at this time if anyone
17 would like to meet the commission members, to please
18 have the Human Relation Commission members that are
19 still here, please stand.

20 Thank you very much.

21 MR. BAGNERIS:

22 Again, my name is Larry Bagneris.

23 Thank you very much for being here. My
24 heart personally goes out to each and every one of you
25 for showing up. You have made this evening tremendous.

1 I want to thank our two co-chairs,
2 Fr. Baer and Martin Gutierrez. Let's give them a hand.

3 (Audience applause.)

4 As we know, everything in this country
5 that is based on a democracy starts out with
6 communications. We have found the tool that we can help
7 this community with because now we can translate your
8 needs into what you just did for us. You educated us.
9 There are three steps, communication, education,
10 legislation. We are going to take all of the dialogue
11 that you have given us from our court reporter that is
12 here and review it. We are going to make sure that the
13 Mayor and the City Council, who has empowered us to be
14 here, get the issues and concerns.

15 We heard you loud and clear about
16 police problems, the communications with the police; the
17 treatment with the police. And I want to talk with the
18 fellow who is from Kenner, to see if we can even help in
19 that area. We heard about the problems in education, we
20 heard the talk about the charter school from the people
21 who are working in the area of education. We also heard
22 about the problems that are going on not only today but
23 in the future, about health care. We heard that the
24 people that helped clean the city up, they may not have
25 shown any signs of sickness yet, but picking up all of

1 that garbage without the proper coverage is not the
2 proper way to do things. We have heard you loud and
3 clear.

4 I became incensed about 20 minutes ago
5 when someone asked, you know, who are these people that
6 they have around here for? I want to inform you that
7 every one of these people with the exception of myself;
8 these are volunteers. I do three jobs at City Hall, one
9 is Americans with Disabilities, one is liaison between
10 the City Council and the Mayor's Office; that will help
11 me bring your message to the City Council. And the
12 other one is working with Dr. Cowan, who is the chair of
13 our Human Relations Commission.

14 I was incensed for just a moment
15 because I thought that maybe someone would walk away
16 from here and believe that this is just a conversation
17 and that is all; that is going to end here. I am
18 incensed because I have seen people from my own family
19 that has been treated, even not knowing because they
20 look Hispanic, my brother-in-law was dragged off of a
21 roof from an INS agent that was just overly zealous. He
22 is an American citizen that was born here, so we know
23 these problems.

24 I want to commit to you tonight that
25 this commission is hearing you along with the other

1 groups in this city, that we will bring you some
2 resolve. We will start with some of the issues that we
3 heard; we won't even wait until January of next year.
4 Issues that we can facilitate, the education, the
5 police, hospitalization. We will see what we can do to
6 with the small things and then we will work toward the
7 big things.

8 On behalf of the Human Relations
9 Commission and on behalf of the Mayor -- I know that
10 some of you have expressed problems with the Mayor --
11 but believe me there are concerns by this administration
12 about you and the way you are being housed, the way you
13 are being treated and ill treated. And most of all, the
14 contractors that are taking advantage of your work and
15 then they are complaining and saying, "Well I don't
16 understand so I don't have to pay you." So I promise
17 you, and I know that the media was here, but the media
18 doesn't cover everything. You will see me tonight on
19 television; they will take a 30 minute interview and cut
20 it down to two seconds. You can't get much said in two
21 seconds.

22 The point I am making to you is that
23 this administration, this City Council, this Human
24 Relations Commission, is going to make something happen
25 to bring this city to where it was 300 years ago, with

1 respect for multiculturalism, respect for the workers
2 that work here. But most of all, respect for the human
3 beings that make a contribution to making New Orleans
4 the great city that it was and the great city that it
5 will be.

6 Thank you for your being here, thank
7 you for your time and good evening.

8 We have refreshments in the back for
9 you. Please do not leave here without putting a dot on
10 the map of where you live or where you work in this
11 community; that is our documentation that you were here.

12 Thanks to my co-chairs, everyone who
13 participated. Thank you very much for coming.

14 (END OF SESSION.)

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CERTIFICATE

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

10 I further certify that I am not of counsel nor
11 related to any of the counsel or any of the parties,
12 nor in the employ of any of them, and that I have no
13 interest in the outcome of this action(s).

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18 _____
Diane W. Mathews
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