UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

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BRIEFING BY THE
RHODE ISLAND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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WEDNESDAY
MAY 3, 2006

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The meeting was held in the Atrium of the Community College of Rhode Island, Liston Campus, One Hilton Place, Providence, Rhode Island, Norman Orodenker, Chairman, presiding.

PRESENT:

NORMAN OREDENKER. Chairman
Rhode Island Advisory Committee

RHODE ISLAND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Joseph Fernandez, Providence
Steven Frias, Providence (Not Present)
Dr. Jodi Glass, Providence
Lola Lange, Providence
David Sholes, Warwick
Darrell Waldron, Providence
Jann Bell Douglas, Cranston
Dr. Bennie Fleming, Providence
Allan Fung, Cranston (Not Present)
Reverend John Holt, Newport
Olga Noguera, Providence
James Vincent, Providence



Staff Present:

Barbara De La Viez
Eastern Regional Office

# I N D E X

P R O C E E D I N G S

(9:04 a.m.)

CHAIRMAN ORODENKER: Thank you very much. I would like to open the meeting this morning. My name is Norm Orodenker, I am Chairman of the Rhode Island State Advisory Committee for the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, and on behalf of the commission, I would like to welcome you all here this morning.

I would like to ask the members of the commission, who are seated at the head table, to please introduce themselves, starting on my right.

David?

MR. SHOLES: My name is David Sholes, I have been a member of this commission since 1985 and I'm an attorney in Warwick, Rhode Island.

REV. HOLT: Reverend John Holt, I'm with the Rhode Island State Council of Churches.

MR. FERNANDEZ: Good morning. My name is Joe Fernandez, I've been with the committee since 2000, prior to my becoming the city solicitor for the City of Providence, Rhode Island.

DR. FLEMMING: Good morning, I'm Bennie Flemming, a retired educator from the Providence School Department. Welcome.

MS. GLASS: Hi. I'm Jodi Glass, I've been

with the commission for several years now and I'm a doctor and a community activist.

MS. NOGUERA: Good morning. My name is Olga Noguera, I've been with the commission for many years, I guess, and I work for the Department of Human Services.

MR. VINCENT: Good morning. My name is Jim Vincent, I'm a newer member of the commission and, today I'm the President of the Rhode Island Affirmative Action Professionals.

CHAIRMAN ORODENKER: Also with us this morning, running around and trying to get us all set and on course, is Barbara De La Viez, a civil rights analyst from the commission's Eastern Regional Office in Washington. She is our guiding light and provides us with the ability to move forward.

I just want to say that, this morning, we are going to be doing a briefing, which is really part of our investigation procedure into the disparate treatment of minority youth in both the educational system and in the justice system. This will be one meeting, there may be others, there will be private conversations, there will be investigation. We hope that, as a final result of all of this, we will be able to produce a report that indicates whether or not

there is such disparate treatment and, if there is, what can be done about it.

Rhode Island's population has changed dramatically in the 21st Century, the minority population of Rhode Island has increased by about 14 percent, a tremendous amount of that percentage has taken place in Providence. Hispanic children now comprise 57 percent of the total school age population and African American students, 22 percent. In Rhode Island, one out of every four students are minorities, one of the highest in the nation, and these children are more likely to be poor, they are more likely to drop out of school. If you saw the *Providence Journal* this morning, you saw the article on the economic condition of our minority youth in the City of Providence, so you have an idea of what I'm talking about.

Rhode Island is one of only ten states that experienced double digit increases, with the percentage of children of color going to overwhelming minority schools. What this in fact means is that we are having reverse segregation occur. That's not only happening in Rhode Island, it's happening in other places, but we are just here to talk about Rhode Island and how we can make sure that doesn't happen

because, of course, those segregated schools, whether they are by law or by happenstance are also, we all know, the poorest performing schools.

We will have two panels advising us today, the first panel, which will discuss education, will include Superintendent Robert Hicks; Mary Harrison South Kingstown Superintendent Robert Hicks; Mary Harrison, President of Rhode Island Children's Crusade; Providence School Superintendent Donnie Evans, who is new to the job and we welcome him; Jennifer Wood, Chief Legal Counsel for the Rhode Island Department of Education and Jose Gonzalez, Director of the Parent Engagement Office of the Providence School Department.

The second panel, which will convene after this panel is finished, on the justice system, includes Karen Feldman, the Director of Youth in Action; Cranston Chief of Police, Colonel Stephen McGrath; Major Tucker from the Providence Police Department; and Chace Baptista, a graduate of Mt. Pleasant High School, who attends the Community College of Rhode Island, as well as serving on VISTA with the Providence Police Department.

Now this is a public meeting, the public has been invited, the press has been invited. There

are a couple of ground rules. The meeting will be recorded, we have a stenographer present. And what we are going to do is the panelists will speak, then there will be some time for questions from the advisory committee members. The same rules apply to both panels, and at the very end of the program, there will be time for members of the public to speak, if they wish to do so. You can also submit written opinions, if you would like, to the committee, either this morning or at a later date. And if you wish to make statements, please sign up at the table at the entranceway and we will make sure your names are called in the order in which your names appear.

We want to make sure that everybody who wants to speak has a chance to speak and be represented. Now, given the nature of the subject this morning, some people, in various minority groups, may feel that they are being unfairly treated, or the comments are unjust or inappropriate, or they may just simply want to add something.

I want to let you know that everybody should feel free to say whatever is on their mind, it's an open, public discussion and we welcome your comments. Any organization or person that feels that they are in any way being misrepresented should feel

free to speak up and talk to Barbara about that.

We would like to thank all those members of both panels who have agreed to come and be with us this morning and give us the benefit of their expertise and experience in this field.

Now I'm going to turn the meeting over to Dr. Bennie Flemming, who is the Chair of the Education Committee for the U.S. Civil Rights Commission.

DR. FLEMMING: Thank you, Norman.

I'm just going to give a little information about each of our participants and then I will start the discussion, beginning with Dr. Hicks. Dr. Hicks is Superintendent of Schools in South Kingstown, he has served as the superintendent for 14 years and the last four in his current district, and he is past President of Rhode Island School Superintendents Association. Now if I read everything about everybody, we would be here all night.

My next person is Dr. Donnie Evans, who is new to us in Providence, and he is, previously, he served as Chief District Academic Officer for the Hillsboro County Public School System in Tampa, Florida. And during his 12 years in Tampa, he has been Assistant Superintendent of Instruction, Supportive Services, Director of District Reform and

there are many other areas that he has, so he certainly has a lot of expertise in education.

My next is Dr. Jose Gonzales who now serves as Director of Parent and Public Engagement and formerly as Director of Language and Culture before the Director of Equity and Access for the Providence School Department, and he has had a lot of experience in the Providence School Department with his numerous jobs.

Mary Silvia Harrison is a lawyer, which sometimes she doesn't even acknowledge. She earned her bachelor's from Villanova and I've known her even way before then, and the Juris Doctor from Antioch. She is the current President and Executive Director of the Children's Crusade, which of course, is a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is to increase educational and career success for youth in Rhode Island low income communities. She has also, among the other jobs that she has held, many of them. I'm only going to mention one because I know it's dear to her heart and mine, and that was she served for six years as the Executive Director of Times Square, a nonprofit organization that provides math and science enrichment programs for African American, Hispanic and Native American children in grades K-12. And I'm sure

that she must have been very, very happy when she saw the saw the new building ribbon cutting last week.

Jennifer Wood is the Chief Legal Counsel for the State of Rhode Island's Education Department, and I think she said that's all that needs to be said.

So I will begin with Dr. Hicks and I might say he so graciously did not decide not to come, even though he does have something he needs to do, so I'm going to go and have Dr. Hicks speak first. Dr. Hicks?

DR. HICKS: Thank you. I'm appreciate and honored to be invited to give testimony before the panel today. And again, I am very grateful to the panel for being flexible, in view of the situation, I do have a family funeral to go to after my testimony this morning.

Issues related to minority youth have come to the fore in South Kingstown, we have faced an Office of Civil Rights complaint on over-representation of minorities within special education, and more recently, second, the dissagregating of student achievement data, most notably in response to No Child Left Behind, means that districts, such ours, can no longer be satisfied with our aggregate student achievement.

South Kingstown is, in many ways, a typical American town, it has a small downtown, suburban plots of houses, public housing, a university, farms and open spaces. I would like to speak briefly about three things; what the data tells us about minority youth in South Kingstown schools, what steps we have taken to impact our data and what challenges remain before us.

In 1999, when our disproportionality complaint was filed, a minority student was more than twice as likely as a white student to be identified for special education, 2.22 times to be exact. That disproportionality was reduced to 1.5 times as likely in our most recent data and has reached somewhat of a plateau at that point, causing us to go deeper into our data and desegregate that further to develop further targeted actions.

We also found that minority special education students were less likely to be in resource programs and more likely to be in out of district placements, indicating a tendency to be placed in more restrictive programs with less time in general education. Reducing disproportionate identification is inadequate if disproportionate placement remains. Between '03-'04 and '05-'06 the percentage of minority

special education students in resource programs, students who spent most of the time in regular education, increased from 52 percent to 68 percent, versus an overall number in the district of 71 percent.

And the percentage in out of district placements, students removed from our local schools, decreased from, for minority students, decreased from ten percent to six percent, versus a three percent overall rate of out of district placement for special education students. Progress in that area, but not there yet.

The most visible common indicator of minority student achievement now comes from state accountability systems created in response to NCLB. To date, minority students in South Kingstown have met AYP targets. However, with more tested grades creating large subgroups and increasing targets, this will not necessarily remain the case because minority achievement lags in our district.

While minorities make up 12 percent of our student population, they comprise 17 percent of students who failed to meet standards on one or more of this year's Grade 3-8 state assessments, a ratio of disproportionality nearly identical to that of our

special education identification. Further analysis of those results show that lagging minority achievement is linked to minority over-representation in poverty. In South Kingstown, poverty is a better predictor of lagging achievement than race. Poverty, in fact, is a better predictor of lagging achievement in South Kingstown than is special education status. A special education is more likely to meet standards than a poor student in our district.

Beginning with the 1999 OCR complaint, South Kingstown took action to remedy minority under-achievement and over-identification in special education. That initial work was guided by a minority task force that met to analyze the situation and create an action plan, that work fit into a division of the district strategic plan and specific steps took place, including the creation and organization of intervention programs for academically struggling students, these began with reading and are now expanding to include mathematics.

The creation and expansion of the Family and Community Engagement Program, providing case management services to disaffected families and communication feedback to the school district, the implementation of consistent, rigorous curricula

throughout the schools and classrooms and the district, the phasing out of core selections that are not rigorously college preparatory, for example, enrolling high school students have two English course options, college preparatory and honors. Students who struggle to meet rigorous college preparatory standards receive additional support aligned with their course work and a similar program begins in mathematics in September.

A redesign of our secondary special education services so that special education receive instruction from highly qualified content teachers and an accountability structure that regularly analyzes and reports to the public on minority identification and placement data and progress, such as I mentioned earlier, as well as a larger data structure, and that's based on the philosophy that you can't change what you don't measure and report to people. While we do have progress to report, there remain challenges before us. To illustrate the challenges we've identified, I would point to questions we ask ourselves.

Under Rhode Island's high proficiency graduation system, what supports will be necessary to get all students to the required level of rigor and to

assure no groups of students are left behind? What analyses will identify an actions remedy are institutional road blocks to the improved performance of underachieving groups of students? We can only change ourselves and reflective tools will assist us in identifying and changing specific behaviors that serve as obstacles.

And just to digress for a second, that is why we built the second component into the Family and Community Engagement Program which provides communication feedback to us on what are the things we are doing that cause families to be disengaged from us. And how can the work of Family and Community Engagement broaden to institutionalize the school's ability to form alliances with all the communities and families in support of underachieving students?

To summarize, South Kingstown is like many suburban communities in Rhode Island and across the nation with the added experience of having faced a civil rights complaint over identification. This caused us to be attentive to the treatment of minority students in our schools, that attention resulted in improvement in minority identification and placement in special education, although disparity remains to a degree very similar to that of academic achievement.

To address issues of minority under-achievement in education, school districts need support.

Student achievement is too commonly associated between distrust between home and school, our interventions have dealt with this on a case by case basis but to take those successes to scale, we must move our actions from case by case to systemic supporting institutional changes that build effective relationships with disaffected families.

Issues of under-achievement are often part of a constellation of circumstances that include basic needs, like food and housing, drugs and family break-ups. Schools must do their part and can do better, but can not bring all students to the required proficiency alone, and necessary are the internal supports to prevent students from falling behind and to remediate when they do.

Given this recognized challenge in South Kingstown where the scale is relatively small, structures to create and sustain supports and systems where underachieving students are much more prevalent must resonate as a local, state and national call to action.

Thank you.

DR. FLEMMING: I would like to deviate

just a moment here. Since Dr. Hicks has to leave, any questions from the panel that you would like to ask at this point?

MR. VINCENT: I have a question, I'm not sure if you can answer it. You said that 12 percent of your students are minority, of those 12 percent, what's the percentage of students that are Narragansett, Narragansett Tribe?

DR. HICKS: I do not have that data. Well I can break it out, I do have the data with me on the Native American population that--

MR. VINCENT: Well Native American is fine.

DR. HICKS: Right. We have 144 Native American students out of a total of 3,914. I could do that math quickly.

MR. VINCENT: No, that's okay, that's all right.

And my follow up is that do you see an disparities between Native Americans and other minorities in terms of your numbers? Have you done that?

DR. HICKS: Yes, we have. In a general sense, the Native American and the black population look similar in our achievement numbers, we have not

found a large gap between them.

MR. VINCENT: Thank you.

MS. GLASS: Thank you, thank you for coming when it was a difficult day for you.

Just I'm trying to formulate this question. In your testimony, you stated about the creation and organization of intervention programs for academically challenged students, struggling students, are you aware of anything that's going on as far as early identification is concerned, so that this is dealt with earlier in the child's school career?

DR. HICKS: Our preschool, before entering in school, begins with age three, and that begins with our preschool screening program. Our preschool screening and interventions are essentially targeted at our special needs population. We have recently passed, in our school budget for next year, to upgrade to a full day kindergarten program, which we saw as an essential part of our early intervention efforts, beginning with age five with students.

MS. GLASS: You do mention about reading, issues of reading, and so I'm wondering if there is anything outside of early intervention, regular early intervention protocol that's used to identify early reading problems with this targeted population.

DR. HICKS: We do begin in kindergarten, in the fall, with identifying students for personal literacy plans and I didn't bring the disaggregations of our personal literacy plan data with us, but our analysis shows that it does follow very closely with our special education and achievement data, and that we have grade by grade, that begins in fall of the kindergarten year.

MS. GLASS: Thank you.

REV. HOLT: Thank you for being here, Dr. Hicks.

A question away from, I guess, education and a question more about atmosphere in South Kingstown. Do you ever have occasion to have you or your staff sit with minority students and ask them what their experience is living and learning in your schools? And if you don't, do you have any sense, from your perspective, as to how the youth in those schools feel, the minority youth in those schools feel about their experience in South Kingstown?

DR. HICKS: Yes, I do. I Have spoken with both students in our school system as well as graduates from our school system years after, reflecting back in their experience. And those students do reflect tension.

REV. HOLT: Tension.

DR. HICKS: Yes, tension, yes. And again, it is not a universal response, it is not the same response from all students, but there are minority students that do feel tension in the schools, they feel tension between themselves and white students as well as tension within the minority community. That's one of the reasons we look to, reflecting on what it is, institutionally, about us that might be contributing to that tension and how we can change our system and our schools to help alleviate that.

Our school principals hold meetings with students and meetings with families to try and understand what people are feeling about the schools, what issues are coming to the fore so that can better understand it. So having that communication is very important to us and it is something that we do regularly, and that happens on both a group basis and I also have people come in and speak to me one to one about their personal experiences.

REV. HOLT: Just a quick follow up.

I think you said in your report that 12 percent of your students were minority in South Kingstown, what percentage of staff and teachers are minority?

DR. HICKS: We have, it is smaller than that, it is two to three percent, and we --. Another area we could use help is recruiting minority staff, we have struggled with that. We have done outreach efforts and have not been as successful in that area as we need to be and would like to be.

REV. HOLT: Thank you.

MR. SHOLES: I just have one question. You indicated that the OCR filed a complaint in 1999, that was seven years ago, could you address what the current status is of that complaint?

DR. HICKS: I believe that complaint has been resolved and is no longer a current, outstanding complaint.

DR. FLEMMING: All right, thank you. I can only have one short question, please, because I have to go on.

MR. VINCENT: Very short.

You said you do outreach. First of all, what kind of outreach are you talking about? And how do you measure success in terms of your outreach program?

DR. HICKS: Well it is both formal and informal. The informal part of it is inviting people in to have individual conversations about what is your

experience, what is happening. Very often, our Family and Community Engagement Program will help us organize groups of people who are feeling disaffected from the schools and bring them in. Our principals also, within their schools, have invited families in for group conversations about what they believe are issues that are faced, and I think evaluating the effectiveness of that, I think that's a very good question. I would say we really don't have a structured way of organizing the effectiveness of that outreach program.

MR. VINCENT: I think I misled you, I'm talking about outreach in terms of faculty and staff. You've got two to three percent faculty and staff and your population is 12 percent, that's a big gap. What are you doing to get minority teachers and staff into that school system?

DR. HICKS: We have tried many things, including our district has used recruiting agencies, we have broadened our advertising outreach. Those are the main reasons, things, is use recruiting agencies and to expand the scope of our advertising.

DR. FLEMMING: All right, I will have to end the questions at this point.

Thank you very much, Dr. Hicks.

DR. HICKS: Thank you for your flexibility.

DR. FLEMMING: Mrs. Harrison is next, please.

MS. HARRISON: Thank you, Dr. Flemming. Good morning, everyone.

I'll begin my remarks by just making some claims and then I'll follow up with some data that I think substantiates the claims. I'll start off by asserting that I believe that the education reforms that have been going on in this country in earnest, in the last 20 years, are woefully inadequate, especially relative to the gaps in achievement. By gaps, I mean the gaps along racial lines and along economic lines. I believe that these reforms have been inadequate because they address systems and corrections that are indicated at the systems level, but in addressing those systems' needs, we have failed to close the achievement gaps and we have also failed, as a result, to create good schools.

My second claim is that I believe that *Brown v. the Board of Education* led us to the wrong focus on education in this country, it caused us to concentrate on integration and bussing while it averted a focus on equal and quality education. My

third claim is that good schools are possible and they can yield high achievement, even for high minority and high poverty populations. However, our country obviously lacks a sense of will, lacks the will and a sense of urgency to replicate successful, proven models of this fact.

My fourth claim is that creating good schools and closing the achievement gap requires adequate resources, qualified teachers, high standards and expectations, rigorous programs and public will, bold approaches and a sense of urgency, as well, is what is required for closing the gap.

And finally, my last assertion that is in the face of so much knowledge, as what exists in this country, as to how we can raise achievement, close the achievement gap, create good schools. The failure to have done so is, to me, de facto proof of our lack of a willful act in this country to cause that fact to be so. We are sentencing our minority and poor children to a poor quality of life, a life of failure, to a second class existence, to a --. We are giving them a virtual death sentence. What we are not doing is addressing their right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Some of the data that underline the claims

that I make include things that are evident in trends relative to higher education opportunity in this country which, as all of you may know, as a result of the civil rights movement, many opportunities were created and these trends resulted in unprecedented numbers of minorities and women going off to higher education. For example, 41,000 to 588,000 minority college freshmen over the period of 1959 to 2004. Twenty year gains for women unparalleled, increasing their presence in higher education from 41 to 51, 57 percent of enrollments.

In addition, an incredible allocation of resources to creating opportunities and breaking down barriers of education were also an important part of the formula. But regretfully, we have seen, in the last 20 years, an extraordinary divestment and a reversal of this course of commitment and action in this country.

Some of the data and many of the data points into what I'll mention in my open remarks are indicated in my briefing sheet to you. But notable, I think, are that the divestment in this country at the higher education level, from the public sector, is evidenced in the fact that at the point of this initiation of the civil rights movement, when the

doors of opportunity for higher education were opened, 86 percent of federal aid was devoted to address need, to address the needs of students for whom economics or money is a barrier. Now the percentage of that federal money going to need-based aid is down to 51 percent, 267 percent of the money is allocated to the highest quartile of income earners, compared to 56 percent of federal money going to higher education, being devoted to the lowest quartile of income earners.

A consequent result of this is that for the lowest level of income earners in this country today, the net price of educating your child is six times your family income. So, for example, for a public four year degree, that would result in your having to spend 201 percent of your family income. One of the other resulting factors is that there has emerged a pattern of concentration or segregation of low income minority students in the more affordable community colleges, which is not to disparage, a comment to disparage the system of community colleges or the one that we sit in today, it is to say that the opportunities that have been open to us to chose among many. And I was a student at Villanova, as Bennie Mentioned, Dr. Flemming, in 1970, so I was indeed one

of the first beneficiaries of the doors that were opened to opportunity and recipient of the credit financial aid, which I am identifying as eroding and disappearing.

So the trend, at the federal level, is to really divest of the commitments that were made to create a closing of the gap between racism, between economic groups, relative to the achievement of higher education opportunity. Even in the State of Rhode Island, there has been a major divestment, which I don't know that I note in my remarks here but, over a 20 year period, there has been about a 20 year, a 20 percent decline in the allocation of Rhode Island resources to public higher education, and in the same period of time, almost an identical amount of resources added to the systems of correction, which gives rise to the question whether the policy in the state is to raise people to go to, raise poor kids to go to prison, as opposed to raise them to be educated and productive citizens.

While all this has been going on, it's accompanied by an astounding increase in the rate of poverty rising among children in this country, and in Rhode Island alone, one in five children lives in extreme poverty, that is 54 percent of the students.

Providence, our biggest city, rivals New Orleans with being the third poorest city in the state, in the country, for having poor children. Poverty creates severe obstacles for children and the families that they come from, and none of these obstacles have been met by the policies and the resource allocation practices that I've alluded to.

At the very least, they have certainly not been met by large scale strategies that we've undertaken in the last 20 years. And in this period of time, there has been an extreme redistribution of income, in the last 30 years, along the lines of educational attainment. So, as we close the barriers, I mean create more barriers to higher education opportunity, we are creating a polarity in this country along achievement, the opportunity to participate in the quality of life and as good citizens and productive citizens in this country.

Relative to education reform, I should say that while I'm indicting, essentially, the reform movement that has been undertaken in the last 15 or 20 years, at the same time, I understand the need to reform systems. But I think that what we have seen happen is that the systems reforms, in as much as they have not closed the achievement gap, have probably

worked better for grownups than they have worked for kids, in as much as they have not created opportunities for more parents to put their kids in more good schools, they have not been child centered, they have not really done anything to actually address what I think was in the mind of the Supreme Court when *Brown v. the Board of Education* began to address separate but equal education.

Rhode Island alone, after ten years of reform, as documented in the Education Weeks Quality Council Report, it's still very, very behind in having made substantial gains, notable gains in closing the achievement gap. We lag behind the United States in every category of policy dealing with standards assessments, accountability of efforts to improve education. We are below the U.S. average in teacher quality. We score below average in three or four of the categories that are used in that tracking report. The reading and math gaps between black and white, between Hispanic and white, between poor and non-poor remain the same after ten years of reform. This is all noted in the Education Reform, recent report, called "Quality Counts".

And high school graduation rates over this period of time have remained flat, our drop out rates

have remained flat as well.

These data points are all very troubling and they give rise to very serious implications in law and in policy, and as a matter of morality in this country, I feel as though, at all three levels, we have failed our children, both in the state and in the country. I think that one of the things that we might want to think about is to what extent No Child Left Behind is good for us or is bad for us. And I am of the opinion that, philosophically, it is on the right course but, in as much as it is predicated on correcting the current systems, and the systems have been so resistant to reforms, it's, by that fact alone, I think of a questionable strategy.

The other thing is what everybody knows which is that it is a mandate which is not funded and that sets forth time tables for the reinvention of current systems, which are impractical relative to both the fact that it's a reinvention and to the fact that the mandates are not resourced.

And in closing, I just would like to just emphasize the point that I made earlier about our country and our country willfully, intentionally creating a dual system of education by saying that if you go to the Ed Trust website, it's an organization

based in Washington and California that documents the mythology around the achievement gaps and documents within that, the many, many examples of when you have high poverty, high minority, you still can have high achievement.

To know what we know in this country about how you can bring about one after another good school and to intentionally prefer to concentrate on systems in favor of closing bad schools and opening good ones, replicating proven successful practice, constitutes a willful neglect that may have some implications in law. That's for you all to decide.

DR. FLEMMING: Thank you very much.

Our next speaker is Dr. Evans.

DR. EVANS: Good morning and thank you for inviting me to participate in this discussion on civil rights, a topic that's very near and dear to me. Some of you have heard me say that I grew up in rural North Carolina in the '50s and '60s and if you want to know about civil rights and discrimination, I can tell you about it, having experienced it as a child in school and in many, many other ways. However, that's not why we are here this morning, we are here to talk about what's happening today and with a particular focus, at least in this part of the discussion, on education.

I want to begin where Mary ended and paraphrase a quote by Ron Edmonds, who was the guru, as it relates to the effective schools movement. We do know everything we need to know as it relates to educating all children. We don't have to guess at that, we don't have to figure it out, it's been figured out. The fact is we haven't done it and how we feel about the fact that we haven't done it really says a lot about us and where we are going or not going. Again, that's a paraphrase, but that makes the point that I want to make.

We've made tremendous progress in this country since I grew up as a child, there is no question about that. The fact that I grew up on a farm, very poor, and am now a superintendent in an urban school district is testimony or a testament, if you will, to how far we have come as a country. But in some ways, some of the things that I experienced as a child are still being experienced by children in our schools today, which means we have a lot of work to do.

What I want to do in the next few minutes is share with you, oh, six or seven observations or make six or seven points, some of which have already been made, but I want to reiterate them.

And I wanted to bring the experience that I bring to bear, the experience as a teacher, as an assistant principal, principal, supervisor, university professor, chief academic officer. You've heard about my background, but also as a citizen in this country. I want to bring all that experience to bare as it relates to the points that I want to make.

The first one has to do with facilities, and I want to start with those that are most obvious and then deal with some that perhaps we don't necessarily see, but they are there, and this is going to reflect on experience in Providence, experience in Tampa, Florida, experience in Durham, North Carolina, where I have spent a number of years. And my most recent experience here is where I have perhaps the least experience, so I will reflect on a lot of what I see here and share with you some demographics as it relates to what I see here so you can put that in perspective.

A little bit about our district, as many of you already know, and some of the data was shared at the beginning of this conversation. The Providence School Department currently has a student population that consists of 57 percent Latino, 22 percent, approximately, about 22 and a half percent African

American or black, about 14 percent white, about 7 percent Asian, and those numbers vary from year to year, but they are changing from year to year. In many ways, you can say that our district is a majority minority district. In some ways, that though exacerbates some of the problems that I'm going to mention.

We also have, about 17 percent of our population is identified as special education, which is a significant improvement over past years because it has been as high as 22 percent in looking at data that reflect activity over the past three years. About 20 percent of our population is identified ELL, English Language Learners, youngsters who are in a program to help them with English acquisition. Even more interesting through is that 16,000 of our students go home every day where they speak another language, the language spoken in their home is something other than English, 16,000, that's significant.

Let me get to some of the observations that I want to make. First of all, facilities, and this reflects experience, again, in all three of the school districts in which I've worked. It is not uncommon to find the facilities where you have large

numbers of youngsters who are either low SES, low socioeconomic status, poor, in other words, or minority, to be in serious disrepair, as compared to the buildings used by their peers of other races, in serious disrepair. That's certainly the case here in Providence, it was the case in Tampa, and when I was in Durham, it was the case there.

A lot of work has been done in the two previous districts that I mentioned, a lot of work is on the drawing board for us to do here to address that. But that's a problem that we have to work aggressively to minimize as we address the issue of civil rights and disparities that we see. When youngsters go to school in a facility that's substandard, it says something to them about how we feel and about how the city, the state, the country feels about them. It's depressing, in many cases, and I could say a lot more about that but suffice it to say, it's a major problem.

A second one that has been alluded to already has to do with teachers and administrators in schools that are predominantly minority or predominantly poor. There are higher percentages of less experienced teachers in schools that are "poor" or include higher percentages of minority students.

Experience counts for a lot. When you look at factors associated with effective teaching, when you look at high quality teaching, the literature is very strong in saying that experience is a major factor so, when you have higher percentages of inexperienced teachers or administrators, the same problem exists for administrators in those schools, then you are having a direct impact on the quality of instruction. And the quality of instruction is one of those constructs that was mentioned earlier, it has a significant impact on the achievement gaps that we see. When you go to schools that include youngsters from, higher percentages of youngsters from higher SES backgrounds, middle class, upper class, you see higher percentages of more experienced teachers, again having a direct impact of the quality of instruction delivered in those settings.

The next item I want to mention is hiring practices and I'm saying that in a context of the number or percentage of minority teachers we see in classrooms where most or the majority of the students sitting in the classrooms are majority or low SES. It's not unusual for a minority youngster, a Latino youngster or a black youngster to go through 10 or 12 years of education and not have a teacher of their

same race, that is not uncommon, it is not uncommon, and we can give you the statistics.

In our case, we have, what, fewer than ten percent of our teachers are minority teachers. That's an issue, that's a serious issue that has to be addressed, an issue I observed also in Tampa and Durham, the two previous districts, so it's not unique to this area, but it's an issue we have to address. And again, I emphasize that condition also exists for administrators as well.

The next item I want to mention has to do with funding disparities and I think Mary mentioned funding. We've got to have more adequate funding models for education, we have to. To relegate our youngsters to not only the conditions, the other conditions that they have to survive in, and survive is the word in many cases, and then to provide us very limited resources to do the job that needs to be done really calls to question whether or not we are taking this job, education that is, seriously. I'm talking about the entities, the agencies, that fund us. And when you add to the fact that poor youngsters come to school typically several years behind their same age peers from higher SES backgrounds, that adds to the need for resources to not only help them to catch up

but then to keep pace, if you will, with their peers at other ages.

So disparities in terms of resources available to schools but then, once we get those resources, assuring that the distribution of those resources among the schools within the district becomes an issue as well. There are too many cases where there isn't an equitable distribution among districts, among schools that have high populations of youngsters from high poverty environments or minority youngsters, so that too is an added challenge, as it relates to resources. I can go on and talk about the disparities with regard to textbooks, with materials and other things that are resource oriented that adds to it.

Yet another area of concern, and I believe this was eluded to either by Dr. Hicks or Mary, has to do with the resegregation of our schools. Across the land, and this is a big, this was a big challenge in Tampa, across the land, desegregation orders that were in place to require that schools be desegregated are disappearing, the courts are now granting unitary status. Hillsboro County or Tampa, if you will, became a unitary school system in 2001. What that means is is the court is not supervising the racial

make up of schools anymore, they are leaving it up to the school districts to do it, and what's happening nationally as a result of that is that more schools are becoming racially segregated again. That's a challenge, that's a challenge.

The goal for any school district is to mirror the population for that entire community in the schools, and we are seeing districts move away from that and that's something obviously we have to consistently work on here as well.

And I'll pick up the pace because I realize my ten minutes is probably up.

Another item I'll mention has to do, and this was alluded to and this is a problem in Providence also, over-representation of minorities in special ed. As I mentioned, 17 percent of our population is special ed and it's not uncommon nationally, and it's the same here, to find youngsters who are behavior disordered or youngsters who are mentally handicapped to be represented two to three times more, when you consider the comparison of their representation in the typical population, in special ed. That is the same for us, it's a challenge that has to be addressed.

Lastly, this is one that you, it's

difficult to see. You can feel it but you can't see it. It has to do with disparities resulting from lowered expectations for youngsters who come from high poverty environments, who come from minority environments. There are many individuals in the community, unfortunately many teachers and administrators, who feel that they can't achieve to the same level as their peers from other races or other cultures, and that has a direct impact on student performance in classrooms and one that we have to work aggressively to combat.

There are a number of things that are happening obviously across the nation, in many progressive districts, to address these problems but, suffice to say, these are the challenges that I wish to add for your consideration.

DR. FLEMMING: Thank you, Dr. Evans.

I'm going to change the order here, at the moment, because we have the press here and we would like to hear from a young man whose name is Shane Lee, who is a student, and I will turn it over to you for a few minutes, Shane.

MR. LEE: Thanks. I'm a senior at Central High School, which is the largest high school in our district. And I'm just here to pretty much tell my

story from my perspective, what exactly did I see and what exactly it is that I wanted --. One thing that I know that smetimes happens a lot in districts like mine and with teachers is the difficulty with faculty and student connectedness. A lot of times what happens is that, at the beginning of the year, we have a classification process where some or many teachers that I know personally think they know, from the first day, who exactly it is that will be successful and who exactly it is that will fail, who will go to jail or die, positives versus negatives.

And it drives that relationship with that teacher for the rest of the year, which impairs the entire learning process, and I think that if that wasn't to happen, that we would somehow fix that connectedness between the teachers and the students, that things would be a lot better.

A lot of things I see, from my own eyes, is even the leadership of the school, the principal disconnectedness, and not only between the principal and students but between the principal and teachers, and I mean basically what I talk about is do they agree?

It doesn't seem like that people who are leading our schools, who we are supposed to be looking

up to, are moving in the same kind of manner, are moving with the same kind of energy and thoughtfulness. There is sometimes public disagreement, which I totally disagree with, and personal examples that I can mention.

Also, there is this other thing of the mistreatment sometimes or ignoring the fact the some people may feel that don't even have a position in the school community or that they don't even have a voice, certain populations more than others, like maybe the Latin American population that have English as a second language.

Sometimes I feel even my peers, in that sense, under the same roof as myself, is not going to be given the same education that that I'm getting, and it's due to the language. Resources are being pushed in that really get these students to join in our community, whether they are really truly assisted to the level that they should be assisted to, and with this impatience with the students who have English as a second language and things like that, are they truly included or are they kind of bypassed and isolated to this totally different program, that is separate from mine, as an African American?

When I look around at my classroom, and I

look around at the school activities and I look around at the school newspaper, do I really see them a part of the school community, as I do myself, someone who may be outgoing and trying to get involved with certain things, and are we being assisted to do that?

One thing for me, as a student, I don't feel that our interests are being harbored. I'm a very musical person, I love music, music is my desire, is my passion. I lost my mother at the age of seven, in 1994, to lymphoma and never had my father, and I'm a vocalist so vocalizing, for me, was my extreme escape, it's like the blood that runs through my veins, and we don't really have music programs.

When there is problems with, financially, one of the first thing that goes, extracurricular activities, music programs, sports sometimes and without having a thing that I think is my most tool, my strongest tool for release, then what am I to do? Now, suddenly, this place, this building that's supposed to be this inviting, educating, growing experience doesn't harbor my interests, the thing that it's my reason for coming to school, that is my, that is what I may minor or major in in college, it's not being harbored in my high school education, what I desire to do with my educational life, so now I'm

displaced and I may have lost interest.

I remember in my freshman year in high school there was no music programs, I don't think we had a steady teacher, and I was always unfocused in the classroom because I was thinking and anticipating about music so much that I would find myself banging on the table and getting in trouble for that. I didn't have it at home, I didn't have it at school and it affected me a lot. And a lot of my peers that had different interests that they didn't see that were supported by the school, by the curriculum, by extracurricular activities and after school programs were really, didn't know what to do because the reason why you find yourself at a place, the reason why you spend time at certain places is because there is something there that is important and relevant to your life. We are missing relevance in our school system.

Also, field trips and interns, things that you think of high school students doing and high school students experiencing during their high school education, I can see for myself. If you think of a high school student as a prominent or future executive or something like that, you make that time to spend in these business areas and these areas of interest in the community. I don't know how much the community

and schools is connected with employment opportunities and how much it is that we really have a connection and a system of connectedness that allows the students to go intern somewhere or to really be in a place of interest to study.

And I think that the disadvantage is really due to funding, it's under-funding and I was, because I was doing some study and this -- and not a -- but the city and the state constitution that each district had to be funded equally, and apparently our school doesn't have that.

School environment, the facility, is definitely like Dr. Evans said, it's not up to par, it's not where it should be. And to the extent that the environment affects the way that students learn and think, it's because your surroundings have a lot to do with the way that you think, it affects the way you think.

For one thing, on a clean wall, it's a lot harder to draw on a perfectly clean wall than it is to draw on a wall that's already dirty because now you have to think about the principle of what you are doing, and also, when you go into a spatial area, the surrounding, it also encourages you, inspires you to feel or think a certain way. If you are in a crappy

environment and you see that things are not really being taken care of, what do you think about the activities that are being conducted within this environment? It's almost like the disadvantage that's concealed within the way that things even look, then it's happened for a reason, is my point to be made by that statement.

There is also this push out mentality, and discipline structure, I feel we are missing intervention, intervention is really absent in my opinion, a student -- absent, you've got to -- for instance an example, school policy, when you are late, you got detention, and when you miss detention, you get suspended, you end up being suspended because of detention, and the students coming into schools in my district have a lot more and have a lot more challenging circumstances at home than students from other districts where we may be working a job to support our family, who is a low income family or --.

And I can't levitate public transportation which moves those students. I can't do these type of things, so I think that maybe policy change or even a change in a way that they go to to accommodate the fact that we use public transportation and these are ideas that you would think are self-evident to assist

the students, and to try to have intervention. The students, not many students -- not succeeding and having difficulty for no reason. The problem with the push out system is that I don't know if education is really the key motivation for our leadership. I think it's a lot about power and control, you keep power and control, they come on the loudspeaker and all you hear is about discipline and what should have happened and what we are doing wrong, and it's just about control.

The thought that these young adults may have thoughts in their mind, things in their head that actually make sense and actually are worthy of some of our leadership listening is -- you don't really think we have anything to say in an old-fashioned system. Sometimes I find faculty and staff a little bit condescending, due to the fact that I'm not included. I think that ownership, self-ownership is one thing that may make me want to be involved, and the fact that what I said or did had an effect on the school I was in really made me want to come in.

DR. FLEMMING: Thank you, Mr. Lee.

Dr. Gonzales?

DR. GONZALES: Thank you. For me it's a pleasure to be here in this building, it brings back memories. I'm thoughtful that CCRI has a long history

with the minority community in Providence and in Rhode Island. But before CCRI, I remember this building as OIC and the wonderful work that went on here in giving many of our community members opportunities to learn different trades, vocations and even professions, and it brings back to the days when Mary and I were doing work, in essence, coming out of Central High School with a sense of commitment, obligation to further open the doors that were opened for us.

So some of my thoughts are going to sound similar to Mary and Shane and it's because we are Centralites and also because we grew up in this city. The following are just a few disparities that I noticed that make urban minority youth more unable to succeed in our society today. These are more personal observations, but I'm sure that they can be verified through the different studies that compare urban and suburban youth and look at programs and services today, versus -- government and I know Mary mentioned that. And maybe I'm being a little nostalgic here, but I just want to point out my point of view.

I grew up between New York City, where I was born, and Providence, where I came at the age of 15. When I finished high school, I went to college, I went on to get a Master's Degree and a Doctorate in

Education. I came from a poverty home with a single mom and two brothers, you can say that we were destined to become a typical statistic. I believe that one of the reason my two brothers and I graduated from college was because my mother had finished her high school education and she knew the importance of education, but she had never been to college, she could not speak English, spent much of her time working, but that's not all.

We went through the schools, graduated from Central and Classical High School at a time were there were more support mechanisms than there are now. Large urban areas are losing the battle of the budget and therefore eliminating programs and services that have proven track records to help mostly minority youth stay focused on personal development and moving towards accomplishments of their personal goals. I see so many happy faces at the elementary levels and you get so many wonderful responses when you ask children what do you want to be when you grow up?

But as you move into middle and high schools, many of our children, children's happy expressions -- excuse me a second.

Many of our children's happy expressions seem to disappear. Langston Hughes say quite nicely

what happens to a raisin in the sun? Our children, our youth are victims of many types of neglect, they do not receive the proper nourishment, guidance and encouragement to succeed in life today. When I came from New York, I found part-time employment, I helped my mother out, I was able to buy my own clothes. Youth today find it almost impossible to compete for employment and internship opportunities and sometimes they have to work full-time, second shift, in factories and come back to school in the morning.

That's hard, if you are still going to school. What happened to Neighborhood Youth Corps, and CETA Programs, GIPTA and other types of employment opportunities for youth? While I was at Central, I played sports, I was in the band and I ask the question what's happening to our sports and extracurricular, co-curricular programs? After school and weekends, I went to the boys club, I went to the library. Right now, we are seeing several library branches closing up and too many kids overcrowding our after school programs.

Our suburban counterparts have fought to retain and added new programs. Most schools in the suburbs have complete sports, musical, extra and co-curricular programs, we haven't seen these in

Providence for years. That means that the youth in the suburbs are safer, developing well-rounded experiences and moving in a positive trajectory towards higher paying jobs and the security of having a well established adult life. They will more than likely finish a post secondary program, get a good paying job, have health benefits, buy a house and raise children who will also enjoy the same set of privileges.

The urban youth are stuck, they attend poorly funded schools and therefore receive inferior schooling, have little involvement in extracurricular and community experiences, are exposed to the most severe conditions in all socioeconomic factors and are compared to their suburban counterparts in all measures, SAT scores, reading and math assessments, etcetera, etcetera. Most of our students must learn to survive at early ages. How many suburban children depend on school lunch and breakfast programs as their only source of nourishment? Yet some of our students often report on Monday morning that their last meal was lunch Friday afternoon in our cafeterias.

How many suburban youth are forced to live with non-familiar, non-family members, adult members, and don't have a bedroom of their own, don't have

space to study and other resources in their homes? How many suburban youth are victims or witnesses to horrific crimes at very early ages, or become teen moms who later on become single parents with little education?

I believe I was fortunate to be a benefactor of the civil rights era programs, I am an affirmative action child. The programs established in the late '60s and early '70s have either disappeared or are unable to keep up with the needs of our urban youth. What good is it to have a successful college bound program with an impeccable track record of more than 40 years if every year you can only serve 60 students and we know that there are more than 600 students applying and who deserve an opportunity?

How can our youth compete when, today, more scholarships go out to more middle class families and our students are forced to take out loans for courses just about at any university? Worse than that, what happens to urban youth who do not have a legal residence in the United States but have been brought up here? Who is going to pay for their education?

They did everything we told them to, they have taken all the right courses, they have kept a

high GPA, but their families are struggling to survive and can not pay an out of state tuition. They will be forced to go work in the factories and will make little contributions to our society.

If our youth cannot break out of the vicious cycle of poverty, then they are destined to continue living in it and they will unfortunately continue to burden our society. No one really wants this. Yet, when decisions are made, it seems as though most politicians think locally, and they take back their piece of the pie to their communities and do not support the urban areas.

Why should we give wealthy families further tax breaks? It doesn't make sense to me. That sounds like a real welfare program, but we have unfortunately accepted the fact that well to do families will always get more opportunities than poor families.

These are my personal thoughts and do not include so many other relevant factors that are effecting minority youth. And one of the interesting things that I heard recently, and it's been a known fact, is that we have an over-representation of minority males and females who have relationships with the judicial system, so I'm hoping that that will be

addressed, and we don't have enough minorities, and in this case, mostly males, African American, Latino males who are not having relationships with high education institutions.

Thank you.

DR. FLEMMING: Thank you, Dr. Gonzales.

Now we'll have Ms. Wood, please.

MS. WOOD: Well, at the risk of sounding like a broken record, I really don't feel I can be any more eloquent than the speakers who have already preceded me. But I will try and bring kind of a state level perspective to some of the issues that you have already heard right across the panel, and you would have to pretty much have cotton in your ears not to see the similarities in the testimony that has preceded me.

I want to highlight three primary issues that go to the issue of disparate treatment of minority students in public education.

The first is the lack of an equitable system of funding public education. It's been alluded to by most of the other panelists but it is essential that this committee, as the Rhode Island Advisory Committee, understand that Rhode Island is in a uniquely bad status as it relates to the funding of

public education and equity because we have no equity funding formula functioning in the State of Rhode Island. That is a little understood fact. There is no legislation on the books in the State of Rhode Island that does anything to equitably distribute public funds to public education.

In the early '90s and coming forward from the '60s, there was a funding formula in play in Rhode Island, and in fact, at that time, it was considered to be one of the more progressive formulas nationally. It took into account factors such as community poverty, community tax capacity, student need. That formula was defunded during the banking crisis of the early '90s. As a result of the fact that the state could not keep pace with funding its then existing formula, there were lawsuits brought in the mid '90s by the urban communities challenging whether or not the funding was being distributed equitably.

The Rhode Island Supreme Court, and Shane brought this issue up earlier, ruled that there is no constitutional right to an adequate and equitable education in the state constitution in Rhode Island. Most of the other lawsuits nationally and in other states have ruled that language in state constitutions guarantees the right of some baseline of an equitable

and adequate education for public school students, that is not the case in the State of Rhode Island.

Because of that ruling, the general assembly, in 1997, suspended the prior funding formula, it is not legally active. And instead, funding to public education in Rhode Island is handed out on an annual basis based simply on the historical number from the year before with whatever adjustments the general assembly is able to make based on the available funds.

This has led to an increasingly disequalizing situation in this state and this is a critical issue that is unique in many ways to the State of Rhode Island, we are one of only a handful, if there are even a handful of states, in the nation, that have no systematic and predictable manner in which we distribute state aid to public education.

There is a second layer to that, which is that, over these years, there has been an equalization of public investment in public education, so you'll find that in cities like Providence, Pawtucket, Central Falls, Woonsocket, where the highest student need and the highest levels of poverty are found, as well as the highest proportion of students of color, there has been an equalization such that those

communities are able to invest, through state and local monies, about the state median amount of cost per child.

But that is grossly inadequate because this is a situation in which equal can never be equitable because in those communities that have the most degraded physical plant, the highest needs students, students whose parents are not as likely to have completed high school or college themselves. All of the factors that are relevant to funding formulas nationally in terms of need, capacity and equity, those are completely out of whack in Rhode Island because raising the city level of spending to the statewide average does nothing to create an equitable system of public education, it is grossly disequalizing.

So everything else that we can tell you about the system of public education pales by comparison to the fact that there is simply not an equitable system of funding and there is no constitutional guarantee for one. So we are standing on no bedrock, we are standing on shifting sands. And that is the fundamental problem, from the state perspective, in terms of what confronts minority students in public education in Rhode Island.

Having said that, there are some things that we can affect and the other two issues I would like to focus on are ones that I think we can affect, even given the current circumstance.

And I would of course passionately advocate that we need to change that first piece that I've laid out for you, but the other two pieces I would like to focus on are the system design of public education and the teaching, and learning and expectations in the classroom, and those also have been alluded to by everyone who has spoken here today.

The system of public education, for students of color and their families, often presents an impenetrable bureaucracy that is completely insensitive to the reality of the lives of children in poverty and children of color and their families. So there are any number of instances that I can point to to illustrate this point, you have already heard a number of them from Shane.

But if we were to have a system of public education that was designed with the consumer in mind, then we would design a system of public education that is designed around what we know about brain science, what we know about child development and adolescent development and what we know about the reality of

students' lives. Students who may be working in jobs in the after school hours not because it's an enrichment activity, as it is for a suburban student, but because it is a necessity in the household. Students who may be called upon in the early morning hours to care for younger siblings or other family members, all of these factors go into say to us that our system is designed in a way that is literally hostile to its own consumers.

So we create systems where we expect students where the brain science tells us, by the way, that once you get through middle school, you should not be going to school at 7:00 or 8:00 in the morning, it is biologically contraindicated. And yet we continue to structure our schools to be run around the schedules of adults, the schedules of public transportation and the schedules of sports teams, because those are the factors that really dictate that we are telling young people, whose brains are literally not biologically turned on, to be in school learning during the early morning hours.

And there are communities that have tried to change this, there have been some movements nationally to try and adjust what we know about brain science and adolescence, and they have been absolutely

shouted down by the forces of the status quo. But we tell young people that you need to be here at a certain time and you need to participate in your learning, and then we have these impenetrable systems of discipline that suggest that the appropriate result, when a student is missing time out of school, is to require them to miss more time out of school.

These are policies that we can control, these are things that we can effect, they are literally Dickensian, bizarre situations that we have created with this impenetrable bureaucracy that we can change. If people of will really examine the policies of public education and begin to look at their impact on the student, I believe that we can affect some of these things, even without changing the funding system, because we are simply ignoring the realities of our students' lives.

The issues that I would point to in this area are how do we effect the drop out rate? You do not effect the drop out rate by creating systems that say to students if you came late several days, then you are going to be in detention and if you miss detention because you have to go to work, then you are going to be suspended and if you miss a certain number of days of school, we have a policy that you can not

pass your class even if you have a passing average in that class.

So I call this kind of Dante's circle, you can just kind of go down through the policies that we've created that, each policy taken alone, seems coherent and rational.

Well you want kids in school, so you don't want them to be late, so there has to be some consequence and there has to be some participation. If you take them alone, they seem perfectly rational. When you actually experience them from the student's end of the tunnel, they create a system that is a hostile environment to school completion, and what we also know about adolescents is that they are more likely to throw up their hands and walk away than to stay and have a dialogue with you, and anyone who doesn't think that just doesn't hang around with adolescents.

So there are a few things that we know and should be able to change and I would like to encourage the panel to think about encouraging that kind of public policy change, the things that are within our control, because certainly many of us are sitting here this morning, kind of knashing our teeth about those things that feel beyond our control, since some of

these are huge societal forces in terms of racism, residential segregation, that may feel a little less penetrable.

There are things that we can and must change immediately, our attendance policies, our scheduling policies, our discipline policies and the discriminatory application of discipline policies, our enrollment policies and student assignment policies.

The resegregation of America's schools, in large regard, flows of course from the fascination with neighborhood schools and the fact that neighborhoods are segregated, so our agency is one of the only voices in the state that has been saying we understand the interest of both families and educators in creating neighborhood schools, but that is de facto going to resegregate the schools because of patterns of residential segregation.

And I think that Mary said it very well, that perhaps this is not the primary focus and it can't be the sole focus of looking at school reform, and unfortunately, I think there was a big detour taken in the '70s in terms of moving kids around without examining the quality of the programming to which you are moving the child.

But there is at least some back pressure

on this system to suggest that we have to really look at patterns of resegregation in the schools and whether or not separate will ever be equal, given other factors such as institutional racism, so those two things have to be examined together, if we are going to really be serious about it, in our view as an agency.

The issues of identification and placement in special education have been fully discussed and there are two sides to that sword in the cities because, actually, the identification numbers are 22 percent and coming down to 17 percent, those are the statewide numbers, those are not the Providence numbers.

There is this bizarre counter effect in the cities which is that there is an under-identification of some children with special needs, there is a rationing of services that are appropriate to the needs of those children that are identified. So we see much lower identification rates in communities where logic would dictate the identification rates would be higher, and those overall numbers are being pulled up by the suburban identification of students that may be disproporationately children of color, so that's a

very complex dynamic to unpack.

And I see that I need to wrap up my comments, so I'll close with the fact that there are some solutions that we think can be brought to bear, but we have to address funding, we have to address these policies of yesteryear that are not appropriate for our current public education student and we have to address the tyranny of low expectations in the classroom, which I didn't even really get to. But once you get through this incredible welter of bureaucracy and you get to the classroom, sometimes it wasn't worth showing up, so we really have to address where is the beef on the bun in public education.

DR. FLEMMING: Thank you, Ms. Wood.

Now we go to the panel for questions from the commission. Are there any questions that you would like to ask the panel at this time? So we will do the commission first.

CHAIRMAN ORODENKER: I have a question for Jennifer Wood. You spoke, Ms. Wood, about equitable funding and how we do not have that system in Rhode Island. Can you point to a state or a formula which does have the kind of equitable funding that you would propose for Rhode Island?

MS. WOOD: Actually, that's pretty easy,

you would take, I would advocate for drawing the best components from the formulas in a number of other settings, but the elements of an appropriate formula are well known nationally. You have to look at the tax capacity and tax effort in the local communities, you have to look at the student need and differentiate because a student who has no special needs, by which I refer to the fact that they may be learning English for the first time and have English as a second language, or have particular special needs related to a disability profile, those must be accounted for.

So you need to look at the community's wealth, you need to look at the student needs and have factors that balance the way state money flows so that it takes into account those two first factors. It's really quite straightforward, it's not that, it's not rocket science.

CHAIRMAN ORODENKER: And are you suggesting, together with that, that the support for the schools, at RIPAC, we've all know, for years, has been talking about shifting the funding from its nearly total dependence on the property tax to a state formula like an income tax, are you proposing that as well?

MS. WOOD: There are two pieces to this

question, one is the expenditure side, which I've been addressing myself too, as to what is an equitable amount that each community would have to invest in its students.

The second piece of that is the tax policy question, which is the revenue side, and the State of Rhode Island has to decide how it's going to fund its public schools, whether that will continue to be primarily from property taxes, and that would require the redistribution of property taxes, or whether it would be from some other state level tax, as has been done in other states.

DR. FLEMMING: I would like to also address that question, because a few years ago, I was on the governor's task force and there was a formula, and think this is the one perhaps you are referring to, and it seemed to have worked very well, and I can remember spending many hours with other members of this committee working out the formulas for them, and I didn't hear as many complaints about communities not getting an adequate share as I have heard in the last ten years. So I think there was something to that formula.

REV. HOLT: I have a question for Shane and then I would like Dr. Evans to respond to this

too.

Shane, I just wanted to ask you, one of the things you didn't mention or, if you did mention it, I don't like getting up early in the morning either, so I missed it. But what impact do you feel, the fact that there is a lack of minority teachers and staff in our schools? Dr. Evans said there was less than ten percent, I think, Dr. Evans, of minority faculty, do you think that plays a role in the atmosphere in Central High School? Do students notice that? Are they concerned about that?

And I would just ask Dr. Evans, as a follow up, you know, what you have in mind, knowing that you've just come, what you have in mind to increase that percentage, but I would like to hear from Shane first.

MR. LEE: Yes. I think that it definitely has an impact. Every now and then, you hear students say that they don't see that and what it does is it reinforces that idea that, as a minority, successfulness is something that is not something I'm supposed to have or that being a teacher or wearing a suit is a white thing, that kind of subconscious attitude that minority students may have because they don't see success, and I think that having minority

teachers would make success self-evident. It would say that he is a teacher, I can be a teacher, someone of my same race is doing this job.

I feel, you know, an extra connectedness, instead of this us and them thing that we have, that minority students may have, it's us and them because they don't the them. I mean they don't see the us in them and I think that that would really help the attitude towards success, thinking that it's a reality. And sometimes you need to be able to relate with people that have similarities to you, and it's easier to go to certain people, and for some students, it may not have a factor but, for some, definitely, I believe.

MS. LANGE: I would like to ask a question of -- oh, I'm sorry.

DR. FLEMMING: Right now, we would like to get, finish this, please.

Dr. Evans.

DR. EVANS: The question was what are we doing about or what ideas maybe do we have to address the issue of minority teachers, to get more minority teachers in our schools? Three strategies come to mind immediately, there are more, if I think about it, that will come to mind, and the ones that come to mind

are strategies that we are working to put in place. The first one is to create conditions to retain those we have because we loose a lot of teachers, a lot of good teachers of all races, but particularly, Latino and African American teachers, we loose them to other school districts.

So creating conditions, looking at the cultures inside our schools. In fact, Jennifer alluded to some cultural attributes that we have to address within our schools, but doing what we can to retain those we have is the first strategy and we have a plan for doing that.

Secondly, grow our own. We have a number of paraprofessionals, for example, who are African American, or Latino or other cultures, who represent other cultures and ethnicities, working with them, and encouraging them and providing the support that we can provide to help them to become teachers.

Those individuals who grew up in the community typically will stay in the community, and I'm personally familiar with a number of programs that can help us to accomplish that, working with the universities, working with populations that we have in our district and then helping to recruit individuals, just some grassroots recruiting, and then help them to

become teachers.

A third strategy is then just to recruit beyond the district. Traditionally, when I looked at some of the practices, particularly in Providence, in recent years, there has not been a lot of recruiting of teachers and so we are going to have to change that. We are going to have to go outside of this area and recruit teachers in, which means also we've got to have cultures that invite them and will retain them.

DR. FLEMMING: I would just like to interject this, that there was a time when Providence did have a teacher recruiter and who went out of the city, out of the state and brought in a number of teachers. She is sitting here in our audience, and somehow, that job should have never been eliminated.

MR. SHOLES: I have a question to the panel and it deals with charter schools. There has been a rash of publicity about the charter schools in Providence, Times Two is one, Paul Coffey School a second, there a number of others, and as the experienced administrators are professionals in this area, do you believe that what these charter schools are doing are able to address the problems that you have laid out today? I mean are they on the right road to solving this issue of disparate education?

DR. EVANS: I'll begin and then others will comment.

I admittedly don't know as much about the charter schools that are operating here. I know about them, I have visited one of them and I'm scheduled to visit a second, there is a lot about them I still don't know, so I can't adequately and thoroughly answer that question, but I have a lot of experience with charter schools, that was one of my responsibilities in Tampa. And actually, the district created charter schools to assist with some unique challenges that we had because charter schools, at least in Florida, could work beyond state statutes to do some things.

Once you remove the boundaries that many state statutes established, at least there, then many of the challenges were much easier to address, and at the same time, there, charter schools also did not have to function with contracts, with union contracts. That helped tremendously in being flexible to hire teachers and not necessarily look at a lot of the rigid certification requirements, some of the hiring practices that we have to have in place. And as a result, they were able to make some tremendous progress, particularly with high need youngsters, and

that was the area in which the district created charter schools, for youngsters who were severely disabled, and in fact, in our case, many of them we're paying tuition now in other places to place those youngsters.

We created charter schools to be able to house those youngsters, to address their needs, our homeless youngsters, our youngsters who had many other kinds of needs. So I don't see them necessarily as competitive, as many do, to what we do, and I think, given the right parameters, can get the job done, but I can't speak authoritatively about the charters in Providence, at this point in time.

MS. HARRISON: I have a personal experience with both the charter schools that you mentioned. For one, Times Square Academy is -- first of all, I was Director of Times Square before the academy was created, so I'm intimately familiar with that school. My son went to the school in its first three years of existence, and I have been on the board of the Paul Coffey Charter School since its inception and I was on the Board of Regents when both these charter applications came before the Board of Regents, and they were the first two charters that were granted.

First, I should note, just to correct the record, that I don't believe either one of these schools sought waivers, such as has been alluded to as the reason why charters can do things that other schools can't. Both of these schools shocked the Board of Regents by saying we'll do, under the same circumstances as you have to endure, a better job, and their record has proven that to be the case.

I strongly support charter schools, partly for some of the reasons I alluded to earlier. I think that it would be a good exercise for all of us to just, in the course of our, the next week, ask randomly of parents if you had a choice between sending your kid to a good school or to a school that's a bad school, a low performing school in a good system, what would you choose? And I think all parents would choose the school that is a good school, one that has achievement data to support it.

And similarly, relative, I can't, I know this notion of segregation being a bad thing, being visited upon this country again is a hot topic these days, but I'm passionate about believing that, again, if you ask a parent if you have a choice between sending your kid to a bad school that's got white people in it or a good school that has no white people

in it, just black people, I, for one, as a black woman, would say give me the black school that's got high achievement, I don't care about the people I'm in school with.

Now my experience is one that I went to a fully integrated system, so I'm not advocating segregation as such, I'm saying that the eye on the prize ought to be a good school, and that is what all of these reforms and these strategies that we have undertaken has eluded us at getting. Despite all the things that we've done, we still don't have choices of good schools to put our kids in. So who are we fooling? Who is all of this effort to the benefit of? And one of the things that I think is good about charter schools, in the sense of competitiveness, goes to Jennifer Wood's point earlier, and it's competitiveness and it's about the consumer being the central purpose around which your business is organized.

And that is one of the things that is completely lacking in the system of public education in this country, it disregards the central interest, the central satisfaction issues of the consumer, the parent and the student, and the charter school movement focuses on that in a very central way. And

for anybody who believes that charter schools pick and choose the kids that they, that go to their school, let me represent, you know, factually, that I watch very closely, I'm a strong advocate for making sure no such things occur under my watch at the school where I am on the board of directors.

I am also on the Board of Directors of the Met School, which is not a charter school but innovates as well. It throws out all of the traditional rules of engagement and says let's start with a clean sheet of paper, all the intelligence that we have available to us and deploy those to the end of having high achievement, kids who want to go to school, kids who want all the things that Shane just said and has the achievement data to back it up. So I think that that I think we need a whole lot more investment in this country, creating opportunities for good schools like charter schools do.

DR. FLEMMING: I have a question on the end and another, and at that point, I think I have to stop.

MS. LANGE: So, with everything that everyone has said up to this point, and with the current discussion about charter schools, it begs the question, shouldn't all our schools be functioning at

the same level as the charter schools or these alternative schools, like the Met School? Why do we have to have these different choices? Why can't all of our schools be functioning at that level and isn't that the goal, ultimately? If anyone wants to address that.

DR. EVANS: I would certainly say that, yes, that is the goal, for every school to operate in a manner that results in high student achievement, that all students achieve to their potential. For some reason, as Mary has alluded to, we haven't gotten there. We think we know what those reasons are, in fact I think we are fairly certain as to what many of the reasons are and a lot of it has been alluded here, ranging from funding, to the cultures that exist at many of our schools and many, many other things. Those challenges have to be addressed and until we address them in a meaningful way, things won't change.

MS. LANGE: So starting with a clean slate, like Ms. Harrison said, from the very beginning, just basically starting from scratch, like the Met School did and some of the other charter schools are doing, isn't that a place to start and saying, okay, it's obviously not working, the way we are doing it now, let's look at best practices, not

only within the state but all over the country, and see what we can do to change the current situation, as it is today, and just basically start with a blank slate and do things the way we know, from our own experience, the way they should be done?

MR. VINCENT: This question is directed towards Jennifer and Shane, and by the way, Shane, excellent testimony, I really applaud your testimony this morning. I'm just curious in terms of what you both said about the coming to school on time and some of the challenges, and I understand that we are living in an era of challenges in terms of the school day and whatnot. But we also have to reconcile it with the fact that kids have to come to school, I guess, on time. And I'm from an era, the '60s, where kids from very low income families may have had to take two, three, four busses to get to school and be there by 8:00, and they got there, and they got there.

Now that's 40 years ago, 37 years ago, whatever it is. I know things are different, but how do we reconcile the fact that there is these extenuating family circumstances but kids have to be to school on time?

MS. WOOD: My point wasn't necessarily that we should have some kind of incredibly open

structure, but rather that we shouldn't be knowingly placing barriers in the way of students' completion of their high school diploma. There is a lot of room for flexibility in the way we structure what we do because our goal is not to have widgets in chairs during certain hours of the day, but rather to have young people learning what they need to know to succeed in college and other post secondary opportunities.

So, instead of taking the status quo as the point of departure and saying to our students please conform to this status quo, why aren't we, as educators, asking ourselves what are the barriers that we can remove? Can we make it more attainable for the grievously high proportion of students who do not complete high school? I mean this is not a joke, this is a serious barrier, it represents over a million dollars in the life of a young person, if they do not complete high school. Most people would go to pretty long lengths if they were told you are going to get a lottery ticket and you have a good chance of getting a million bucks if you buy that lottery ticket.

Well that is your high school diploma, and you know, that's, when you look at it that way, why would we, as the adults and the professionals, put barriers in the way of that completion? I'm just

about barrier removal, it's not about this power struggle about who can define how the school day looks.

MR. LEE: I think that touching off of her statement with why we take all of the youth and young adults and ask them to conform to the status quo, that when people in the positions of power to make the changes start to decide, I mean make decisions on conforming to what barriers we have or conforming to what we need for us to get to school on time, so the point is, the question is how do we get across the fact that students need to be to school on time but they have these challenges? And I think it's maybe figuring out exactly what the challenges are, whether it's transportation or whether it has to do with the mind science that she spoke of, and accommodate that challenge.

And one suggestion that other districts or I mean other states that you hear about in the studies have tried; a later school day, and a lot of my peer will express the fact that they feel later on the day they can learn so much and participate so much, and around their second or third period, it's like the light bulb is on and why, for me, as a literary person, my most important class is the first class, as

soon as I open my eyes, which is English, early placement English.

So maybe a later day, finding out exactly, I don't think there has been any extensive study on what the challenges are for kids coming to school on time, there hasn't been any and I think that would be a first step.

DR. FLEMMING: One more question here.

MS. NOGUERA: Dr. Evans, you say that 16,000 children in the Providence School System goes home to a home that English is not the first language that's spoken in the house; how do you deal with the children that don't speak English at home? What is your relationship with the parents of those children that live in a home that don't speak English? One, and two, we hear often that if a parent doesn't help a child with the school work, that child will not be able to succeed because they need some kind of support at home. And I think that Jose mentioned that sometimes children, poor children, they don't have a special place to study or they don't have a room of their own at home.

But I want to hear how do you deal with that and how do you deal with bilingual education, ESL? What does it do, for instance, maybe Ms. Wood

can tell us the laws in Rhode Island that have to deal with bilingual education and ESL because it could be that in order for the child to learn English, the child will stay behind in other areas, like math and science and so on.

DR. EVANS: It's a great question because that is a huge challenge for us and one that we are wrestling now to do a better job at, we are not doing a good a job as we could do. In fact, we are not doing a good job at all, if you want my personal opinion, and we are aggressively trying to change that. Because of the size of our ELL population, and even youngsters who are not classified as ESL who go home to homes where other languages are spoken, it's incumbent upon us to make sure that we have a full continuum of services to support the youngsters, whether they are non-English speakers, they speak no English, or whether they've acquired some English skills to the point that they are now integrated in a regular English speaking class but need some support, if you will, from a teacher, and everything in between.

We must have a continuum to be able to address those needs, we don't at this point, it's spotty. We have bilingual services, we have dual

language services, we have supportive services, but they are, you can find them at different places in the school, and at any given time, a youngster who may need to move from one level to another may not be able to do that because of the absence of services in many of our schools.

So what are we doing? We are filling that gap. I met yesterday, actually, we about 60 of our ELL teachers to talk about ways in which we can do that and we are developing a strategy. Actually, we have a strategy, but they are providing us the expertise to be able to give that some substance and move forward with it, so we are actively planning to close that gap. That's dealing with it in our schools and our teachers, and that's going to involve a lot of training, by the way, for teachers that we have, who aren't or don't think of themselves as ELL teachers and they aren't necessarily teachers for whom ELL certification is required. Every teacher has youngsters in their class who are challenged with language, and so providing them service in ways that we haven't in the past is going to be important so that when they have youngsters, that they need to be able to call on a particular skill set to work with, they have it.

And dealing with the parents, we have a department of public engagement. In fact, Dr. Gonzales is the director of that unit and one of its tasks is to connect with our parents. We have a lot more to do in that area, it's a relatively new department, but to be able to work with parents and help them to help their children.

One of the things that I see us doing a lot more of in the future is providing opportunities for parents to learn English, but even for those who are challenged, to help them even in their native language, to help youngsters who are in ELL programs or programs where we are teaching them both in English and Spanish, for example.

And let me note that ELL is not limited to Spanish, we have many, many other populations that are making it very clear they have the same needs, so we've got to go way beyond what we are currently doing to address ELL in another area or other areas, plural, in addition to Spanish. But taking advantage, and Dr. Gonzales can talk about he and his department does, but taking advantage of the opportunity that we have with our parents that we meet with on a very regular basis. In fact, there are monthly meetings, I believe, that we have with parents, but to use that

to help them to help their children either in their native language, as they acquire English, or in English, once they become fluent in English, is the major strategy there.

And I'm going to ask Dr. Gonzales if he would speak to his department and what they are doing.

DR. GONZALES: Thank you.

And I do agree that it's so important to bring in the parents who are not necessarily able to communicate in English. A lot of the things that our office does with our schools is to try to identify what these parents need to better communicate and connect, for their children's sake, with us. So we have, for example, in this month of May, we have literacy workshops and math workshops for parents and we will not run those solely in English, we will run some, because the majority of our parents do speak Spanish.

They are still able to help children with literacy and math, once they understand what's being taught in the schools, and in spite of the language difference, so we do the workshops and we offer to them these workshops too and sometimes we are able to identify additional languages to run these workshops. Parents come and they feel more connected to their

children, they understand the new math programs and literacy, they understand that it's important to read, to have quiet time at home, do things. So everything that we are doing at the schools, we are trying to quickly get the parents up to speed and understand why we are doing it, why it's important and what their role is in helping us, and it's been quite successful. Did you want --.

DR. FLEMMING: Could I have Ms. Wood -- if you could respond, I think that she asked you--

MS. NOGUERA: Ms. Wood, yes, please.

DR. FLEMMING: --that she had asked you to respond, please.

MS. WOOD: Yes. The statutes in Rhode Island are very permissive when it comes to what is required around English language learners. There are two fundamental concepts in the Rhode Island statutory and regulatory structure, one is that it is ultimately the parents choice as to what program to enroll their child in. That's a very nice concept, I think it's a critically important concept in the law, but it's a hallow promise because if there are not meaningful, high quality program offerings, then you have a choice among what you have, and so that's the flaw in our system.

I think the system is conceptually correct in suggesting that there should be high quality, effective programming and a continuum of programming because English language learners are not a monolithic groups by any means. Even within each language minority, there are different needs in terms of literacy acquisition in the first language and the second language.

But having said all of that, until we have a meaningful continuum of program offerings, this promise of parent choice is a rather hallow promise because you may be choosing from among impoverished or inappropriate program offerings. So I think that's the side of the universe that we really need to strengthen, while I would advocate retaining this notion that a well informed parent choice is the right way to go.

DR. FLEMMING: I'm afraid that our time is up and I want to thank, personally, each of our panelists for you giving your time, and to letting us hear all of the things from you and letting us ask you questions, the members of the commission here also for their participation.

So we have another panel that is to take place here, after which the questions from the

audience and speaking will occur. Thank you so much.

(Applause)

(Whereupon, at 10:55 a.m., there was a recess.)

(11:03 a.m.)

MR. FERNANDEZ: Why don't we just begin. If we could start with Karen. If you could give your name, your affiliation and proceed with your statement. Thanks very much.

MS. FELDMAN: I'm Karen Feldman, Executive Director of Youth in Action. Is that fine? I'm going to go ahead with the testimony then.

First, I would like to recognize all the positive changes that have taken place in the police department since Colonel Esserman took leadership, and I want to say that I have found him and all of his command staff to be very committed, both to reforming the police department and to the needs of young people. Unfortunately, Colonel Esserman inherited a system that hasn't been well managed for a really long time before he came in and it's hard to fix things overnight, and that system had really not been accountable to the community and so a lot of negative things happened for a very long period of time.

And he inherited a lot of that distrust,

and so it's almost like a lot of things that they've carried with them, that they still have to be contending with, including officers that worked under the old system and the new system, so I just want to recognize that and say that I really have found the chief and his command staff to be very, very open to working with the community to address these issues, remarkably so and that, personally, I look forward to continuing to work with a lot of folks in the police department to improve the area of youth-police relations.

I have been running Youth in Action for the last eight years and have heard young people talk about their experiences with officers quite a bit. Also, recently, I actually facilitated a very in depth conversation with a number of Youth in Action members about this topic and actually had visited the Police Advisory Commission a little while ago with some of those results. So I'm going to be recounting what I've heard youth tell me because, personally, I've had pretty much only positive experiences, but it's really not about my experience, it's about what young people have recounted to me about their experience.

I have often heard youth talk in ways where their experience was unpleasant, and on

occasion, youth have talked to me about experiences where they did feel that their rights were violated. For the most part, the most common complaint young people have about officers is that they are rude. Sometimes they might swear at them, or they feel overpowered or disrespected. They feel that the officers use their power over them because they have it and no one is going to believe them because they are a young person.

And that's actually the most common thread that works for young people, which may not be a civil rights issue. I mean it's not necessarily a civil rights issue if someone is rude to you because they are allowed to do that. That also happens in schools and a lot of places to young people, but it certainly lends to young people not trusting officers and actually being afraid of officers. I mean all the youth at Youth in Actio pretty much look like your average young person which is, you know, especially if they are male, it's a baggy shirt and baggy pants.

I mean they all kind of, there is a youth dress in the way that young people hold themselves, but a lot of the youth at Youth in Action are not involved in anywhere where they should be afraid of an officer, technically, because they are not breaking

any laws, they are actually trying to do positive things in the community, but they are still scared of officers. They are afraid that officers will hurt them, maybe because of past experiences, maybe because of just what they heard, maybe because of general distrust, and because youth are so afraid of officers, they won't utilize them to be safe and they don't feel officers are there to keep them safe, which actually leads to more youth violence because youth say, well, no one is going to protect me, and when they see people getting shot, then all of a sudden they want to carry a gun.

And it also makes it very, very difficult for the police department to be able to solve crimes because the youth don't want to talk to the officers, so it actually really exacerbates the situation a lot. But I do think that there is something that we can do about that general perception. And I have seen situations where an officer is actually polite to a young person and doesn't get received well, and I questioned youth about that, I said why is that happening? And sometimes youth admit I just don't like cops, I don't have a reason, it's just what I heard, but sometimes a young person will say, well, that officer was nice but this other officer was

really rude to me, and cut me down and cursed at me, so I just don't like cops, and so they carry a previous experience, and so that also happens.

So there is a general way that officers interact with youth which would be really great for us to be able to work on, and I think it's the lack of consistency that makes it hard because there are really polite, really great officers, there are, and there are also officers that, let's just say are from the old school, and they aren't, and so it's the inconsistency and the community not seeing and young people not seeing when an officer is negative, being held accountable or when an officer is great, you know, seeing that. It's sort of that inconsistency, they don't know what they are going to get, so they just assume it's negative.

And connected to that, a lot of youth say that the most common thing they hear officers say is what are you doing? What are you doing over here? What are you doing? And so this feeling of, you know, they are always looking for us to do something wrong, and I'm going to talk about potential solutions in a little bit, I'll just maybe continue talking about the testimony piece. On occasion, I have heard youth talk about things that have happened that are more, you

know, they have been harassed, or they have been hit or they have been beaten.

There is a young woman at Youth in Action that talked about her brothers really, really getting hurt, both of them. We did have an incident where a young man, and this is now, and I have to say that this is before the current administration took place, this is a couple of years ago, but he mouthed off, but they beat him up in the mall, and then they took him back, and then they beat him up again, and he really got beat up,. And then he wound up getting charged but, because he was so angry, he never showed up, so now he has got a record. But there was a couple that saw it that was so freaked out that they wanted to report it, but had no idea how to do that.

And that's the other problem is when, this is under-reported, this sort of when it happens, it's under-reported because people don't understand what PERA is, people don't think anyone is going to do anything, so whatever small amount we are hearing, it's like a tip of an iceberg thing to think about. So I think that's the main piece. I mean I'm sure other people can address more direct stuff. I think that young males in particular, young minority males, feel that they get targeted more. Certainly they talk

about the issue more than girls do, so that's just another piece to bring up.

I really feel, in some ways, very, and I work with the police department a lot. I feel very sympathetic to their situation because I can only imagine trying to supervise people that I didn't see on a regular basis, it's really very difficult. It's one thing for to be able to supervise my staff and I work with them all day, but how, if I'm a sergeant, how do I know how my officer acts on the street? I'm not there to see it. I know what I told him how I wanted him to act, but I don't know that he did it, and what I hope is that all the great positivity I see in the command staff starts to really infiltrate in the police department in the officers' every day experience out in the community.

We did a training, and again, this is before the current administration took place, but it was with the, we went in because there is not really a youth training component, as far as I know of, in the police academy, or there wasn't, so we went in to do it and what happened was the scariest part was the, it was the current class, it was their comments about young people. I said what did you learn? I learned how self-centered and negative most young people

really are. Well, that was interesting because actually what we had was a group of young people who were talking about their great community work.

There were comments about youth's hygiene or youth being dirty, or what was the best part about this? When it was over. And they knew that youth were going to see it, and it may not have been the best training, we did the training to the best of our ability, but it was the kind of comments that indicated a psychology of where people might be coming from. And so the question is how do we influence the average officer, on a daily basis, who isn't maybe going to be in training? How do we influence that and how do we know what that officer is doing each day when he is walking out on the street and how do we support that?

And I think that's a very hard question to, I'm really sympathetic to how hard that's got to be for the police department to answer. I think there are some things that we can do right away to improve police-youth relations, which is critical to reducing youth violence, it's critical. We are not going to reduce youth violence if we don't improve those relationships, and the colonel has started a police activities league, that's a great idea. He has

officers in the schools, that's a great idea. The youth talked about the officers in the schools, they want to see those officers talk to them more, they feel the officers sometimes hold back.

So that's a great idea, having officers in a way where they interact with young people and young people can see who they are is a good thing. Getting PERA operational. I don't even know if it is operations. If it is, PERA is the Police External Review Authority. How do we get that so that it's really visible to the community? That when an officer is negative, something happens and when an officer is really wonderful, that's promoted. I mean how can we help the police department to promote these wonderful officers that are out there because I've dealt with a lot of them, so how do we look at those pieces?

And I also, I want to say that I can speak, Chace and I are actually starting, and Chace is at the other end, you'll hear from him in a little while, but we really want to sit with the police department and work on this issue, we really can improve police-youth relations. We are happy to work with the police department in their training, in their academy, I think that is a great idea. I want to say the department is doing a lot of hard work on

recruiting minority police officers, which is an amazing effort, and they are really working hard on that.

My real question comes down to the current officers who have been working 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, some of them were working a long time before Chief Esserman came in, and how do we, how do we help the police department to know what's going on with their officers and to somehow reward those officers that are doing great things, but also to have a sense of when that's not happening because there is a way to use your authority and then there is a way to be downright rude. And I know, and I can only imagine, I'm not an officer, and yet there is adrenaline rushing when people are trying to do things and people get mad.

And we had a situation in front of Youth in Action where a man was getting beaten by an officer, and I know that that, the officer tried not to, he held back but, after a certain point, he got pumped up, and in that case, I want to say it was a black officer with a white man, it was right on Broad Street. But there is an adrenaline rush that's going on, it's not easy to be an officer, so how do we, in a sensitive way, support the police department to work

on these issues because they still do happen?

And the scary part about that situation actually wasn't that officer, who the chief assured us was a great officer, and that man, who was getting kicked while he was handcuffed on the ground and all that, it was actually the guy who came, that had been part of the training, that I knew had beaten a different Youth in Action member, that said you know what? This is why your F'n training sucked, you can tell the F'n chief, file another A-1, I could case less. He is the one who scared me, not that officer who kind of got over-pumped up in his adrenaline, but the one that said that's why you F'n suck when we tried to talk to him about what was happening.

And it's an A-1 or an A-3? It's something that you get when there is a complaint against you, A-1, A-3? It's some kind of thing that you must get when you --. I can't remember because it didn't, it was like an A-1 or an A-3, he said you tile the F'n chief file another one, they are not going to do anything to me, and so he was the one that scared me because I knew he had beaten a young person before, I knew he had sabotaged our training, I knew he was there again cursing us out and he clearly did not feel accountable. Of all of the things, he scared me

because he is still out there, and you know what his job is? He trains the officers in tactical fighting, that's what he does, so that's pretty scary.

And so that's the kind of things that, personally, I want to say again, I am here to work with folks to make things better and I feel the current police department is here to do that. So I'm not saying there is not things that are wrong, I'm just saying we can work together and we can definitely make them better.

MR. FERNANDEZ: Thank you.

Our next speaker will be Captain Keith Tucker from the Providence Police Department.

CAPT. TUCKER: Thank you, Karen.

(Laughter)

CAPT. TUCKER: Hi. My name is Keith Tucker, I'm a Captain with the Providence Police Department, the Youth Service Bureau and I've been in the Youth Service Bureau for approximately four years. I've been on the police department 26 years, I've been in the Youth Service Bureau for four years, I've been in a number of positions around the police department.

I think a lot of the things that Karen said, they hold true, there have been a lot of issues with the Providence Police Department. And I think

looking ahead to things to come, Chief Esserman recognizes there is a big divide between the youth of today and the police, and one of our approaches has to be to try to lessen that divide and there are a number of things that the chief has implemented to try to get more communication between the police and the kids and more interaction.

And a few of those things, we talked about SROs. The Providence Police Department has 11 school resource officers and there are 9 secondary schools in the city in middle schools and high schools, and those SROs really have a lot of positive interaction with the kids as a role model for the police, for the kids to look up to, and to basically be here. They monitor lunches, they are there to engage in the kids in not so much structured things, although they do have some classroom time, but they also have the opportunity to talk to kids before school, after school, dismissals.

And on the other hand, they are also there to help the teachers keep a little bit of order in the schools. There are some issues in the schools, there are some disciplinary issues and I think you could ask any school principal who has a school resource officer, they love to have them, they don't want to lose them because it adds a little bit of bite into

what they try to do to keep these kids in order.

Last year, my SROs were responsible for over 350 arrests in the schools, and we are only in 11 schools, 9 schools rather, so you can imagine the issues that are going on in the schools. We are not talking about serious crime, but we are talking about disorderly type behavior, simple assaults, disorderly conducts, kids that shouldn't be on the campus that are hanging around, kids from other schools who are trespassing and those kinds of things. So the school resource officer approach is a big thing for the police department to try to foster more relationships between the kids and the cops that are out there.

Another thing that we are doing to be proactive is we are trying to focus on gangs, gangs are a big issue. We are fortunate in Providence now that gangs haven't taken such as hold as they have in some of the larger communities around the country, but gangs are here, make no doubt about it. I have a gang squad, I have five officers that work on a gang squad and they are out there talking to kids, identifying kids who may want to be involved in gangs, kids who are in gangs.

They work closely with the school resource officers. When our SROs find out about kids that are

maybe thinking about getting involved with gangs, we try to go out to these kids and talk to these kids, and then try to convince them what gangs are going to get them, get them in trouble, get them locked up, get them in situations that aren't going to help them on the rest of their life, so that's another approach that we've taken and I think it's paying off.

We also put on presentations for teachers and for students and parents that, if someone wants to put together a slide presentation concerning gangs and what's going on in their community or certain gangs that might be prevalent in their community, that type of information, we can share with them and try to let them know the signs of do you think your child is involved in a gang? What are the things that are happening at home that maybe make you believe that the child is involved in a gang? And those kind of approaches are available.

And the biggest thing, we talk about a philosophy. Karen made reference to how do we get these cops that have been on 10 years, 15 years, 20 years to change their way of thinking? Well it's about changing the philosophy of the police department. It's something that starts at the top and it works its way down, and we are committed to a

community policing model and that model basically identifies those police officers that are working a community, so those police officers are going to get to know the people in the community, the problems in their community, and it allows the people in the community to get to know their officers.

And when there is an issue or something that's going on, they know it's not just the policeman driving around in a patrol car, it's officer so and so. It's the foot patrols that the colonel has implemented. All new officers who come onto the police department are required to walk a foot patrol for a year, so the last class we graduated, 35-37 people, they walked foot patrols in the neighborhoods for over a year, back and forth, up and down the same streets, working in the same areas, getting to know the kids that live in that area, the people that work in that community, the people who live in that community, and it has a lot to do with changing the way an officer thinks because he is not anonymous anymore.

The people in the community know who he is, they know if this particular officer does something that the community isn't happy with, they know who the officer is, they know, he is not

anonymous, he can be found out.

And Karen made reference to how do the supervisors know what's going on? Because it's their job to know what's going on. We just don't send everybody at 3:00, hey, go on out there and we'll catch you back here at 11:00, hope you get some activity. They are accountable. When officers make arrests, they are required to have a supervisor respond to the scene, and they are required to look at the person who is arrested and see if there are any injuries on that person or, if that person wants to make a complaint of how he was treated by the police, he can bring that to that supervisor's attention right there at the scene, so that supervision is in place.

And people that have been around in any organization are always a challenge, to try to bring them around to the new way of thinking or what we might consider is the right way and they might disagree with that, and it's a long process. And as the chief has been here now going on four years, he has been committed to having recruit classes whenever he can. Whenever the organization has fallen below a certain number, he has hit the city up for another recruit class, so he has had the opportunity, in four years, to probably put about 100 police officers on

the police department, since his being hired by the city.

So that's roughly one fifth of the police department that knows nothing but this philosophy and this approach to policing, and that is because as those new people are coming on, that means a lot of the older people, the ones that were really entrenched in the way they thought and the way they were doing things, that means they are retiring, and that's what changes an organization is when you can get that kind of turnover.

I mean some people might have thought they were going to hang on here for 25 or 30 years realized that this department is not a place they want to be now because they have to work harder, they have to be held accountable and they have to show some progress in the way that they are doing their job, and that's something that the chief has brought to the police department.

Other than that, I will talk about the Police Activities League, I mean it's something that the colonel has felt very highly of. He has engaged a couple of my school resource officers at two locations, in partnership with the recreation department. After school, these kids from certain

middle school areas that have been targeted to be part of this activity and PASA, the Providence After School Alliance is supporting it. We have kids bussed from the middle schools right to these activities, Newneconicut Rec Center and Davey Lopes, and these kids are engaged, after school, for a couple of hours, they are not on the streets.

We'll probably, between the four day program, from Monday to Thursday, we'll probably reach over 150 kids who have a positive interaction with the police officer who was involved in this program, the recreation director, and we also engage high school kids. PASA was able to fund us to hire six high school kids to work at each location, so those kids are working with the middle school kids and also those high school kids are working with that police officer, and it helps to foster that relationship.

That's about all I have.

MR. FERNANDEZ: Captain, thank you very much.

I would like to welcome Erick Betancourt, a street worker. If you could, tell us a little bit about street workers and what your take is on interactions between minority young people and the police.

MR. BETANCOURT: My name is Erick Betancourt, I work for the Institute of Non-Violence, I am a street worker. My story is a little unusual, I'm an ex-offender, I served two years in the ACI here in the State of Rhode Island, so my point of view is a little different. I did have police discrimination, I grew up in the Salmon-Manton Avenue area, the 02909 area, really unusual but no relationship with the police at all. Our interaction with the police was they are the authority, we are the victims, so never really had that looking up to them kind of point of view.

At one point, I did sign up, and my trials and tribulations, and I did sign up to become a police officer. That was one of my, one of my goals was to become a police officer but with the issues that happened in the year '99 and 2000 with the police officer that was murdered, it kind of changed my point of view.

Other things, my time in being in prison, some of the correctional officers were aggressive, and again, there were others that did a great job. Now, I'm fortunate to be on the other side of the podium, at some points, because my interaction with the community is really intense. I'm with the gang

members, I'm with ex-offenders, I'm with other criminals at any given time, and I still get isolated, I still get picked out as one of the victims, unless I show my identification and have to really prove it to them who I am.

MR. FERNANDEZ: Excuse me. For the benefit of the panel, can you just tell us a little bit about the street workers program and what your interactions are day to day?

MR. BETANCOURT: The Institute of Non-Violence Street Workers Program is a tutoring and mentoring program for the youth in the community. We help youth advocate, advocate for the youth in the court systems, you can catch me at Sixth District, mostly with the juveniles, helping with their issues. Other things, job placement, GED, driver's ed program and basically the needs of the individual, we try to cover those needs of each individual.

Is that clear?

MR. FERNANDEZ: Yes, thanks.

MR. BETANCOURT: Now my transition, I was, again, fortunate to be able to have the support that I have with the institute. The Family Life Center is also a re-entry program that was a great help for the ex-offenders, but working on the side that I am now,

I see, I still see discrimination and I think there should be more interaction with the police officers. The perception that we have as being the youth or the young group of kids that we are now is really distorted.

I've seen some success with the SROs in the school because of my relationship with the middle schools and high schools, so I've seen that. One of the schools is the Roger Williams, Roger Williams Middle School, it has a Hispanic SRO, which I think is beneficial because of the population of the kids in that school.

And that's pretty much most of my testimony.

MR. FERNANDEZ: Thank you, Eric.

And I would like to introduce Chief Stephen McGrath, the head of the Cranston Police Department. Thank you, Chief.

CHIEF MCGRATH: Thank you very much for having me here today. I've been the Police Chief in Cranston since February of 2005 and Cranston has a police department of 151 police officers for 80,000 people in about 28 square miles. We are vastly different from a city. I've heard us referred to as a suburb, a bedroom community and a small town that

wants to be a city, so we have some of the same problems as our neighbors in Providence and Warwick that are a little bit larger than us. However, not to the degree or the level that they do.

We are fortunate and have the luxury of implementing preventative strategies. Our commitment to the schools, for one, is huge. We have there DARE officers at the elementary school level, as well as two individuals who teach DARE and other programs on a substitute basis to fill in when the demand is there. We also have three school resource officers, one of which we added last year, last spring, for the middle schools. We have two high schools and three middle schools.

The dedicated school resource officers at the high schools were so busy and so occupied that they could not get to the middle schools on an even basis, and we were learning that that was allowing for serious problems to develop at our middle school level, violence among the young children toward each other, toward the teachers, their bus drivers, toward just about anybody that they could be violent toward.

And it was a little bit disturbing to see that children of that age in a so-called bedroom community could be so violent and the type of assaults

on each other that were planned and calculated, and students being jumped and beat with weapons outside of schools, and stabbed, and the growing gang culture in Cranston.

I agree with Captain Tucker, we are very, very fortunate that it hasn't been developed to the point of a larger city. However, we saw that the problem was developing, and spoke with our neighbors in Providence and implemented a gang intervention strategy which includes our school resource, we have an officer dedicated to that function, as well as our school resource officers when school is not in session.

The school resource officers and DARE officers are all dual-encumbered now because I don't have the luxury of 500 police officers either, so their duties change as the school year lets out for vacations and summer vacation so that we can address the growing problems.

In Cranston, we see things like, during school vacation in April, there was a spike in vandalism and graffiti. Graffiti is a problem for just about every city and town that I've talked to, all the police chiefs, but every time school lets out, we get a spike in those type of issues.

I believe, as a police officer who grew up in the City of Cranston for most of my life, I still live there, and I believe that police officers are given an incredible authority, but with that authority comes tremendous responsibility and accountability. And that responsibility is to everybody that either lives in the city, passes through the city or does business in the city, and they cannot treat anybody any differently, under any circumstance, regardless of their ethnicity, economic status. I mean Cranston has, is diverse in that nature, you can go from one corner of the city, which is relatively low income, to some that are probably the highest income in the state, some of the most beautiful homes you can imagine.

And I was really taken by what Shane Lee said earlier because we go to the high schools on a regular basis, and we have particular problems at one high school in our city more than another, the constant threats of violence, shootings for retribution for various things that have happened among the youth at that school. And one of the things I notice when I'm there, outside of the school, is the number of young people that have no backpack, no books. I'm assuming they have homework because just

about everybody at the high school level has homework.

They really don't appear to have a purpose, and he had mentioned that you have to have something that's relevant in your life or maybe something that drives you. And I think that's where hopefully our intervention strategies are working in the city, where the police officers stop, whether it be at a ball field, or a basketball court or outside school, when school let's out, just to talk to the people that are out there. Sometimes we get people that don't belong there. We had 52 arrests at one of our high schools, which that may not be alarming for a larger city but to us that's a significant amount of young people arrested, and that was in one year, one school calendar year.

So the goal of the Cranston Police Department is to continue to practice our intervention and prevent the problems that we see growing and coming into our city.

A couple of the programs that we've started over the past year or two is we've, a very popular Adventure Camp program, which is open to all children 12 to 15 years old. It's in conjunction with the National Guard and it's done at Camp Fogarty, and I know they reach out to other police departments and

each department is given a week during the summer to attend.

And I attended it last year for a good part of one day myself and it's a confidence building, teamwork building, decision making week where the children are, they are exposed to the ACI where they have inmates speak to them and tell them how their poor decision making and lifestyle choices got them into the ACI. Some of these kids are more at risk than others, some are not at risk at all, they just want to participate in an adventure camp for a week. But it's a highly successful program and I wish we could do it all summer, but you only get so much time.

And getting back to what Shane Lee had said, if there were more opportunities like that for some of the at risk kids who have difficulties at home, who don't have the luxury or are not fortunate enough to have a structured family, and somebody to guide them and give them good advice, I think we could better accommodate their needs.

Thank you.

MR. FERNANDEZ: Thank you. Thank you very much, Chief, and you are passing the microphone to Chace Baptista, who is also with Youth in Action, and if you could, introduce yourself, Chace, and give your

testimony.

Thank you.

MR. BAPTISTA: Hi. My name is Chace Baptista, I'm a 20 year old college student and I go to CCRI, I also am a VISTA at the Providence Police Department in District One, so I have a pretty broad view of both sides of the story, whereas I'm a young minority male, who lived in Providence all of his life, so I've had a few bad run-ins with the law, of course. I've been stripped to my boxers at the age of 16, outside, in the summer, with all my friends, for no absolute reason, no drugs, no guns, then told all right, have a nice day, go home. I've been pulled over in front of my own apartment, after playing a game of basketball. I don't know why, it was my apartment but, evidently, sometimes things happen.

But on the flip side of that, I have worked in District One, worked with the police officers face to face and I, it's thrilling how easy and how quickly the change happens, once you understand who the officers truly are. They typically, in Providence, a lot of the officers are white. So, with that being said, I'm a young minority male, all I see is a white face with a blue hat and a uniform, that's it, the name doesn't matter, the name

changes, but I get the same treatment.

So something that needs to happen, first off, is a desensitization of the badge, where it's not just a name, it's a friend, it's somebody who coached you when you played basketball, somebody who helped you when you walked across the street. By working in District One, I get to see firsthand the idea of community policing, and through my work there, I see how it happens and it works.

Police aren't just police officers in Kennedy Plaza and downtown, they are friends, they are members of the community. The sergeant says hi to every person that passes by, people come and talk to the officers, the officers speak to people. The conversations aren't about what are you doing, where are you going, they are more about how are you doing? What school are you going to next year?

So I feel that the community involvement within the police department is key to changing the way we relate to the officers, especially in the City of Providence.

Also, diversity is a major issue, whereas Providence is one of the most diverse cities, yet our police department that does not reflect that. Obviously the new administration is working hard at

changing these numbers, and it needs to be changed so that we can really, I feel that police and youth, there can be a point in time where we can all work together and be united, where we understand that police have a job to do.

And also, it's not personal anymore, it's not because I'm black, or because I'm young, or because I drive this car of I have this, it's because I'm doing something wrong. A lot of times we carry things that wed don't even know about, things from the past, things that happened to other people. A lot of times, when you live in Providence, and you are young and you are poor, you are seeing your best friends carted away to jail, you are seeing family members carted away to jail. They are taking away the people you love and you don't even understand why because you are too young, so you carry all of that with you into every interaction with every police officer you have.

Obviously, the deck is sided against the officer and it's only through us working with the officers, working with the police that we can change our ideas and our preconceived notions about them.

Thank you.

MR. FERNANDEZ: Thank you very much to all of you for your testimony and I would like to solicit

questions from the committee members, starting with Reverend Holt.

REV. HOLT: Last year, in Providence, we had a number of young people who were murdered, shootings, killed, whatever. As I recall, most of those young people were in the minority community. I would be interested to know from Chace, or from Karen or from Erick, I think particularly, what you feel the reaction was with minority youth after those killings?

MR. BAPTISTA: Just from my point of view and being a minority youth, I guess, in case you didn't notice, fear, I guess, would be the first thing, and it's not afraid of the police, it's afraid of, it's this fear that's almost like a cultural fear that exists where you don't think you can be successful, you can't make it, you can't do anything.

Over the past years, I've lived in Providence for about ten years and a friend of mine has died every year due to some type of violence, whether it's gun violence, that past ten years. So, every year, you see a different friend, a different person you play basketball with or a different person you went to school with, and now you don't see them anymore, they don't exist, they are just a memory.

Their face is on a t-shirt that you wear

every now and again, and it's scary because you feel that you can't be successful, you can't ever leave this environment. Regardless of if they were doing something wrong or whether they are doing something right, you can't be successful. That's how I feel.

MR. BETANCOURT: My concerns with that, my personal, I spent most of the time supporting the families of those victims in last year's murders and some recently this year. They have dropped substantially, they have dropped. I think the issue, and I think we are addressing it at this moment because of the fact that I've been able to participate in the gang presentations that they do in the middle schools and in the high schools, and I think, with the knowledge that the kids are gaining from that, it's making them more aware of the results to their acts.

A lot of the kids are not aware that a gun charge could hold into a federal penitentiary or it can lead, or, even as a juvenile, it can lead to other long term issues. So I think, right now, I'm assuming that, within the next couple of years, the kids will be more knowledgeable and have more knowledge on the charges that come with these actions. I don't blame the police officers, I don't even blame the police officers that arrested me, it was because of my

ignorance and because of my lack of knowledge of what I did.

So I think the change is going to come, and with the impact of the murders, kids are going to start becoming more aware that this is not a video, this is not a game that you die and you come back to life, this is reality.

MS. FELDMAN: I think last year, in particular, because there were so many, one after the other, it was really overwhelming for youth and really, like Chace said, really scary, particularly when Errol Clinton lost his life and he really didn't have any history of being involved in pretty much anything, it really, I had a lot of young men just saying you can't go to a party, somebody looks at you funny, and then you said something and then somebody is killing you, and just a fear of just going anywhere and just doing even normal things, that that could result in you getting killed.

And particularly in that, so it was really hard because we would have, first, it was Barry. Then it was, it was one after the other and the youth, at first, were crying and then, after a while, they were just shell-shocked. It was just like, well, why cry anymore?

And a lot of youth talked about, well, I'm going to get a gun, if I can get a hold of one, which is what I talked about. If you don't think that, if you don't believe that the officers are there to protect you and you are scared of them, then you need to protect yourself, which of course makes the whole thing scarier.

Youth don't know that the more the youth, a young person that carries a gun is far more likely to get killed than one that doesn't but, in their mind, it made sense, I'd better get a gun because it could happen to me next, I've got to arm myself, and that was also very scary. And it really, psychologically, it's a terrible thing to keep watching people die when they are young and not be supported to process that. I mean that kind of effects you through your whole life, so that's just an issue.

There really isn't a young person at Youth in Action, for the most part, that doesn't know someone that got shot or at least got killed, so what does that do to a generation of young people? What is that doing to their development, that we are creating that?

The other thing, in my position, that was

really very challenging, was particularly with the Errol Clinton situation, I had youth who were near after witnesses, who had seen it, who were there, who were dealing with it from that end. I also had a young woman, who had been to Youth in Action, who is a Youth in Action alumni, and that was basically her younger cousin, and she wanted answers but none of the youth that were there were giving them because they were all scared. There was like 100 kids there that saw it happen and nobody saw anything because they were, Jennifer Rivera, we are all going to, no one is going to protect us, and so it makes it really hard to, you know, solve a crime.

And then she wants to come to Youth in Action and question kids because her younger cousin just got killed for no reason, and she knows kids saw it and she knows Youth in Action kids were there. And then I'm in a situation where I feel really bad that she is angry, but I can't really have her come and start questioning other youth who are dealing with their own loss. And so I actually personally felt really stuck in the middle there because I have an allegiance to her and an allegiance to the current youth. And she really, in the end, she was very angry with me because I didn't want her to come down and

question people. So I think it has a tremendous effect on young people, for sure.

MR. FERNANDEZ: Thank you.

Ms. Glass?

DR. GLASS: Hi. There is a couple of things that were said that I just wanted to speak to and number one is about collaboration. >From my own experience, I don't know how we are going to make any difference without collaboration, and obviously, that's what most folks are trying to do, and so I wanted to be really positive about that. The other thing I think Chace alluded to was the personal contact. I think that the captain and I have spoken on the phone, without ever meeting each other, for about the past 30 years, about Take Back the Night Marches, marches about violence against women.

And when I first called, there was horrible animosity, not between, with us personally, but between police and a group, a group saying something different, and this was women walking in the street, that kind of thing. And I think it's extremely analogous to any movement, but the reason I bring it up is because I do feel that, with perseverance and with change, now when I call up, they go, oh, it must be April, Jodi is calling so it must

be time for Take Back the Night.

So I truly want to be able to speak to, I never thought I would be on the same side as the police in my daily actions as an activist, so I wanted to publicly say that.

Where my issue is now is about training. So we are talking about how do we reach "old school" officers, and particularly, you were saying that maybe one fifth of the officers now have only served under Dean Esserman. I mean that's just a blessing that we can't take for granted, but there are more folks who have not, and he is one person who has had an unbelievable effect, but my concern is also those other officers, they are just as present and just as powerful. And in my role as a trainer dealing with hate crimes, some of you know from getting too many calls from me, Norman Orodenker certainly is aware, we can't get in to do trainings.

So I'm always stymied about why there is a hesitancy, and maybe the folks here don't have that answer, but there is always a hesitancy, aside from the fact of overtime, so we'll give that up, but we offer free trainings, as do many folks, I'm just speaking for myself. But I do find that the more we get in there, we meaning community activists, the

better the conversation is going to be both ways, and I just, I feel a resistance to trainings and that confuses me, so I don't know if anyone can speak to that.

CAPT. TUCKER: Well I know you wanted to skirt over the overtime issues, but let's put it in perspective though. The 100 people that have been hired under Colonel Esserman, they make up the backbone of the people who are responding to all the issues in the neighborhoods day to day. Those are guys in the patrol bureau, those are the people that are working 11:00 at night until 7:00 in the morning, 3:00 at night until 11:00 at night, so they have more of an impact.

Even though they only represent about one-fifth of the police department, they probably represent, you know, one-third of the entire patrol bureau, and those are the people that are coming to your homes, and taking reports and dealing with the youth out there on a daily basis, so it is more.

I mean when you think of 500 bodies in an organization and then you have to start, it's a 24x7 operation, divided into three shifts. That doesn't mean we ever have a time where we have 500, 400, 300, 200, we are lucky if we ever had a time where we had

100 people working at the same time for some large event and having a lot of people mobilized. So training is an issue because when you train across shifts, now you have to deplete all the shifts. You just can't train one shift, who is going to work that time?

So there is a lot of thought that goes into training. We do have a police academy, we do have a Director of Training, Lieutenant Desmaris. We do have Major Montaro, who is in charge of the whole training division, and if you have a trainer that you think is really worthwhile for the police department, all I can say is contact them and impress upon them the importance of this training. And I've never known the colonel to turn down a training that he thought was worthwhile for his people because he is definitely big on education and training for his people.

CHIEF MCGRATH: I would like to address the training issue because, as a police chief, I would like to have much more training available. One of the problems we run into, and I think other police departments have the same problem, is contractual obligations only allow for 40 hours per year of in-service training, not including the firearms requalification, and that time gets to be very

precious. And I know that I believe either you or your agency has been to our training facility and we appreciate it, we would love to have you back, but that is just one of the problems that we run into as administrators.

MR. FERNANDEZ: Mr. Vincent?

MR. VINCENT: Yes. First of all, thanks, Captain Tucker, for being here and my question is directed to you.

I applaud the fact that you have supervisors that go out to the scene and have an arresting officer make out the report, you have supervision. But I still think there is some uneasiness in the community, there are still some issues, and my question to you, and I'm not trying to be negative, is who supervises the supervisor, to make sure that that offending officer, if there is an offending officer, is dealt with by that supervisor? To make sure there is not a wink and a nod, and it's okay because you are the nephew or the son of a good buddy of mine so, you know, just don't do it again, slap on the wrist. Who supervises that supervisor?

CAPT. TUCKER: Well we are a paramilitary organization, we have a chain of command, so I mean the sergeants who are out in the districts have a

district lieutenant and they are responsible to that district lieutenant. And each district lieutenant is responsible to a captain and each captain is responsible to a major, but that doesn't mean people have to go through the chain of command to make a complaint about an issue with the police. I mean, obviously, if PERA is up and running, and has an office and a phone number, people can complain to PERA.

We also have an internal affairs bureau headed up by Inspector Colon and I think, if you go into any substation of the police department, you are going to see a little card there that's going to have every important number of the police department. And people shouldn't feel like they have to go through the chain of command to get something up to the top. I know that the chief has taken many a call from people who have had issues in the community and I know that he will address them personally, if he is able, or he will delegate it to someone who is responsible.

People should not feel that they should be intimidated to make a complaint, that the process is open, the process is there. We have hearings, we do discipline police officers and obviously we want to make things better for the community out there, and if

we have an officer out there who is not doing his job or he is treating people badly, we want to know about it because the more people that can come forward and talk to us about this particular officer, the easier it is, it's going to be for us to take action.

And I would implore anybody who has any issue with the police, don't hesitate to call, we want to be told when our people are not doing the job they are doing and it's important to us because, you know, we don't want to live in a dream world, we want to know what's going on out there. Let's be real, let's know what's happening out there, and if you don't tell us, we don't know, and I would want everybody to just know that, that we are receptive to a call and we want to know what's going on out there with our police officers.

MS. LANGE: Can I just add something to that? I have a question from somebody in the audience and it refers to the same issue.

What are you doing to let the public know that there is a channel or a process that they can go through when they feel that they have been harassed or intimidated by a police officer? Is there some kind of procedure in place that the community can easily get to?

CAPT. TUCKER: Well the police department has a website and I know, if you access that website, it will tell you how to make a complaint against a police officer, there is a--

MS. LANGE: The website?

CAPT. TUCKER: The website of the police department. You would just go to the City of Providence Website and it link up to the Providence Police Department Website, and it will explain how you can make a complaint concerning actions of a police officer.

MS. LANGE: So, besides the website, is there any other outreach that you are doing?

CAPT. TUCKER: Well anybody who comes to the counter of the police station can obtain a form, anybody who goes into a substation, who talks to somebody who works in the substation, should be able to obtain a form to make a formal complaint against a police officer.

MS. LANGE: But that has not been publicized to the community, that that's the process that they have to go through, to fill out a complaint form?

CAPT. TUCKER: I think there is always room for more information to be put out there. I

think anybody who really feels strongly about making a complaint can find out a way to do that with relative ease just by going to the police station and asking. We have forms available right at the counter of the police station to make complaints against police officers.

MS. LANGE: But sometimes just going into that police building--

CAPT. TUCKER: I understand.

MS. LANGE: --can be a little bit intimidating for some people and it might be easier--

CAPT. TUCKER: I understand. At one time, I believe PERA--

MS. LANGE: --to do it a different way.

CAPT. TUCKER: At one time, I believe PERA would have those forms available at their organization also, so people wouldn't even have to go to the police department but go to the Providence External Review Authority?

MS. LANGE: Where are they available? The Providence?

CAPT. TUCKER: Providence External Review Authority, I believe they have the forms also to make a complaint against a police officer.

MS. LANGE: So there are organizations

that have the forms available.

MS. FELDMAN: I'm mean I really aware, within this conversation, how important it is to let the community know what the, what resources there are and that they'll work because I think a lot of the reasons people won't even check is there has been the history of lack of accountability before so, if I do this, no one is going to, nothing is going to happen anyways, and so I think it's really making me wonder what is PERA doing? I mean I know that PERA is down the street from Youth in Action, I know the building that's there, I went to a meeting, but is there a brochure?

Because we would put it out at Youth in Action and we would put it up. Is there any way that folks here know someone from PERA or know the executive director of PERA? Maybe we need to sit with them and the Police Advisory Committee as a next step and say, okay, how do we let the community know there is a way to address this because the more the community feels that they can address an issue, the more you are going to be able to know what those officers are doing. The more the community is going to see things happening, the better their impression is going to be, the better the relationship is going

to be and the more we are going to get done in solving crimes.

This is better for everyone, and it can be as simple as making a brochure and just handing it out. I mean, honestly, we can hand it out at John Hope Settlement House, at the Urban League, at Youth in Action, at Broad Street Studio. There is a ton of places that service youth. If we could get that information out by making a simple brochure, and I actually don't know what PERA is doing right now, I mean I actually don't even know myself. That would be great to get that going.

MR. FERNANDEZ: Chace?

MR. BAPTISTA: And just also that, to piggyback off of what everyone has been saying, we have come to a point where we need to, I feel, market the police department, our officers and the whole station. We have to let it be known that we are trying to make change here and that, in the past, once again, we are bringing so many things culturally, and from our history and our interactions with the police officers that why should I even fill out a form? Why should I even make that phone call? Why should I even go to the website? It doesn't matter.

So what we have to do is be proactive, and

go after those people and be aggressive in communicating with them and letting them know that this police department is here for change.

MR. FERNANDEZ: Ms. Noguera, a question?

MS. NOGUERA: Yes, Chace, I just want to tell you that I'm sorry about the loss of your friends. I think that we need to recognize that because the fact that you mentioned it, there is still pain there, and I don't know what we need to do to eliminate that pain.

One of the things that really concerns me the most is that when you talk to young people, many of them say that they feel safer in school. Yet, in schools, we hear this morning, that some of them are being pushed out. That's I think what Shane mentioned, that they are being pushed out.

But also, they are concerned that they may not be here tomorrow, that they may die today, and I don't know what do we need to do. I know that you talk about collaboration, and I know that there is a police presence in the school system, and there is Youth in Action and there are other community-based organizations that are willing to work with the police in order for us to be able to make our streets safe for our young people. And I don't know what

recommendation you can give us or tell us that needs to happen or what do we need to do in the community for that to take place because I am really concerned that our young people are not thinking about tomorrow, about going to college, but they are thinking that tomorrow they may not be here, so I don't know if anybody would like to address that.

MR. BAPTISTA: I think it all comes down to support and strengthening the support system, and if that support is not our home, then we can have it in the community. I also feel that the police department can be one of those support systems that can help change youth's lives. Obviously it's very tough to focus on school when you are like, well, am I going to get shot? Is this going to happen? Am I going to get jumped? Should I join a gang? All these ideas are running through your head and that's why it's almost some sort of sick cycle that exists where you are so focused on everything outside of school that, when you are in school, that you are not really in school.

We have to start working on changing the environment, changing what people view their environment as, and also making success more accessible to people. If you grow up in the projects

and all you see is drug dealers and pimps, then what do you want to be when you grow up? A drug dealer or a pimp. If you grow up next to doctors and lawyers, you want to be a doctor or a lawyer when you grow up. It's the environment and it's also the role models, who live in your community, who have to take a stand and say we are not accepting this, you don't have to be this way.

MR. FERNANDEZ: Yes, Karen?

MS. FELDMAN: I'm so sorry to keep answering every question, I'm going to try not to do that after this, but I really wanted to address this one. One side of it, certainly the police, better policy-youth relations will help to reduce this violence issue, but the other piece of it is that young people don't have enough support. I mean it's what Chase said, flat out, and it's not there and we can say, oh, there is a Youth in Action or, oh, there is Youth Pride Incorporated or there is New Urban Arts. These are tiny organizations.

Youth in Action is reaching 100 a year, right? And 9th and 10th graders, there is 4,200 9th and 10th graders in the City of Providence, so we are talking about a lot of kids we are not reaching, and in reality, the chief gets frustrated because Kennedy

Plaza is the after school program for them, they have no place to go, there is no jobs. If you are 14, you can't even get a job and there is not enough jobs for all the youth anyway, and so the real reality is what are we offering young people in addition to a challenging school environment? We are not doing all that well on that either.

That's really growing them as people, that's growing them with a set of skills that they know they have hope for and we are not really doing that. And actually, one of the things that Chace and I are working on right now is I am executive director of Youth in Action only for another three weeks. And after that, I'm actually working to start a project with some Youth in Action alumni that's called Young Voices, that's going to start to look at what do we need to do for our high school students right now? It's too late for the seniors, it's too late. We didn't do it in time, we lost them.

It's almost too late for the juniors, that's another, sorry, it's another 4,000 kids that, now, that, now, unfortunately, Chief Esserman has to deal with for the rest of their lives and they have to deal with, but it's not too late for the 9th and 10th graders at all. With the right programming and the

right support, they will do fine. Chace was not doing well when I first met him, we also, p.s., hated cops, and so you see the kind of change that can happen in a person when the right investment is made and it's there.

And so that's what we are working on that we would love to partner with people on is how do we create the blueprint for every 9th and 10th grader for the City of Providence because they all could be doing well, every one of them, if the right support was there, and how do we start to pull people around that table with youth at the forefront, not sitting on the sideline as a token, but young people in the forefront saying this is what we want to see for youth. Because until we really do that, we shouldn't be surprised that youth, it is true the police department and the schools are dealing, as Chace said, with everything that's going on outside that's not there, that could be there.

We know what works with young people, we are just not showing the will and the organizational skill enough to do it. We are not showing the will, but we could be, and we don't have to have these outcomes for this set of 9th and 10th graders that we have for the current 11th, 12th graders, the drop

outs. I mean the truth is a third of the kids are dropping out. I don't know if you all know, two years ago, in Central High School, 17 percent of the kids at Central got accepted to a four year college. That's 17 percent, don't count the third that already dropped out, okay?

So we are not doing it right now, but we could be, and if we have that sense of urgency, we'll pull ourselves together and dedicate ourselves to that, and young people won't have to watch their friends getting killed, that's only, that's only a symptom, that's a symptom of a bigger issue that we, as a community, could pull ourselves around.

MR. FERNANDEZ: Thank you, Karen.

We have time for one more question from Mr. Waldron.

Thank you. Oh, I'm sorry, sure.

MR. BETANCOURT: I just wanted to address that question. I just want to say, from my experiences, the most important part is relationships with the kids, I think everyone here could play that role. Besides our individual lifestyles and titles that we have, I think everyone here could play that role. The kids just need love, they need somebody to listen to, somebody to talk to and somebody who can

understand them. And before I was a street worker, I also volunteered in the Buckland Park, the west end area, to be a volunteer basketball coach, just out of love, so I think everyone here could play that role.

MR. FERNANDEZ: Thank you.

Mr. Waldron?

MR. WALDRON: Thank you very much, it's been very informative.

I guess I sort of have a statement and a question. It's difficult being a police officer and it's difficult playing that role, there are some very bad people out there who have very violent tendencies, and when an officer shows up, on the spot, a judgement call has to be made or someone could be seriously hurt. Growing up in Providence, it was always a dual relationship, you didn't like them until you needed them, and then you hoped you got a good one that was going to protect you.

So that's a tough call and I think that that is only going to come with more relationships within the community, but also understanding that the violent crimes are getting more severe in our communities and a lot of that has to do with the socioeconomic status in our communities, and you can track that nationally and you see the same results.

I've heard a lot today about Youth in Action about youth that are involved in high school and college, I'm a little concerned about the ones in a juvenile offenders program, there is thousands of kids throughout that system, throughout multiple states.

In the early '80s, I worked with juvenile offenders, right at the training school in Sockonosset, taking them out of there for skills training. We had a very high success rate with those kids. Some of those personalities, when directed positively, fared well. The percentage rate for that program was in the high 80s. I would like to see more involvement with the police departments and officers within the training school facility. I do work there. A lot of those kids are just doing time and they are being trained for the ACI, and I think that that's an important venue to go.

The kids that are enrolled in programs, I think that the percentage of data of failure is lower. The 60 percent that's dropping out of the schools have one course of action and it's going to be problems. Perhaps some type of involvement with officers in a training school, because that's, in between the training school and the ACI is a crucial time. I do intakes within the ACI and the youth that are in there

and they are kids, and as I grow older, the youth get younger but the young adults that are in that prison are in the 20s to mid 20s. That is the majority of the population and they are all out of the same zip codes and those zip codes, again, are the lower income areas.

So I'm concerned that there has not been a lot of discussion today about the ones that are not enrolled in programs and the ones that are not getting access to some of the programs that are being worked on. And also, those same personalities that are not being worked on are the ones that are running into the police officers and are having bad incidents. A bad person is a bad person, not all people are bad. Police officers have to make a judgement call and it's difficult. I would not want to be a police officer today at all because it's a scary place. These home invasions, it's nasty.

The federal government put out a report that 75 percent of our youth are going to be dropping out of high school within the next five year period. The possibility for one of us in this audience to have a home invasion by one of those youth is very high. We need to work with them more in that intermediate change where they are dropping out of school, that

first 12 month period, into the training school, from the training school when they get out, before they start to get themselves into more serious crimes and end up in jail. They are not working, they are not making money, they are going to find a way to get it, and in most cases, it's going to be a bad way.

Thank you.

MR. FERNANDEZ: Thank you, Mr. Waldron.

We are going to move on to the next portion of our program so, at this time, I know that at least one committee member has to leave and some panel members have to leave but, before you leave, I think we ought to all thank you very, very much for your candor, your time today and your commitment to your work. Thank you all very, very much.

(Applause)

CHAIRMAN ORODENKER: The next portion of the meeting this morning will be dedicated to those members of the public who wish to make statements. Several of you have signed up to make statements. If you want to make a statement and you have not signed, please go to the check in desk and sign up, and we will add you to the list and we will call your names in the order in which you have signed up on the sheets.

But please keep your remarks in line with the discussion this morning, and keep them to the point and short. We would like to limit each speaker to no more than five minutes, so make sure that your remarks fit in that schedule.

Because of the short time frame we have, rather than take a break at this point, I think we will move right into the next portion of the program. Again, on behalf of myself and commission, the Rhode Island State Advisory Commission and the United States Commission on Civil Rights, I would like to thank all those people who have participated and all the panelists who have participated in the program this morning.

Our first speaker, our first public speaker this morning, is Juan Rosales.

Juan, are you here? Okay, thank you.

MR. ROSALES: Hello and thank you very much for this opportunity, I really appreciate it.

It's been kind of hard working out there in the community and my, the reason what I'm speaking of today would be parent engagement. I think we have all seen that parent engagement, the Providence School Department posts that everywhere you go, parent engagement, how to involve parents, what the

importance of it is. However, I didn't, I still don't hear as much about it as I believe should be, you should hear more about this, this kind of issue, because we happen to know that parents are a very important part of children's education and I also believe a very important part of children growing up in the community as well, as citizens and as such.

You just don't want to hear when parents become involved, it's not only about when bad things happen. We usually get called to school because something went wrong with our children or something is going on in the children's education or classroom and what not, we want to see more involvement, for example, with music. We happen to know that music, art, sports and different kinds of programs like that have been cut off the Providence School System.

Now there is no involvement there between the parent and child, okay? So there isn't a way to, for a child and a parent relate to one another, be proud of, you know, there is some kind of consistent out of school kind of activity where parents and children can actually come together.

The other thing that I kind of what to talk about is also about how we usually talk about a direct correlation between income, poverty, and the

lack of education or of that kind of situation. Every time I go to these meetings, I always hear about how we, like the Providence School Department, at the last meeting that we had of the Parent Leadership Council was also about let's get together with SOS and let's ask for more money so that we can run more programs, and I believe that parents out there do not, they already know that they are being taxed, their properties are being taxed way too much, and the gas prices, people working two jobs, being a single parent.

These are all issues that very much hit at the heart of what happens to our children in their education, but worse than that, what happens to a relationship between a parent and a child. When you talk about asking for more money, then you are talking about a parent needs to work harder, needs to have a second job, needs to be, you will draw the parent away from the house and away from the relationship between them and their children, so we don't want to hear this anymore, we really don't want to hear that anymore.

I also kind of what to emphasize about why we need more money in the school system, it's either more programs or change the programs that we have. Whatever happened to making the program that we have,

that we know is working, better? What ever happened to that? Why do we have to change the entire program? Why do we have to, you know, start all over again? And with that also comes the relationship between parent and child. We know that, for example, teachers need to be trained into this new program so they can learn the program, so they can implement the program, so the students can learn, but who teaches the parents about these programs?

There are, for example, in circulation from Mr. Osiris, and no that I don't want to take over that for you, but I know that, for example, that he speaks about mathematic concepts. When you are, for example, come from a two language household where English is your second language, not your first language, concepts need to be explained. How do you explain to a child concepts in their second language? Not as good as you can do it in their first language, I'll tell you that much right now, so then parents need to be educated also.

When you talk about parent engagement, we have also what you call a parent leadership council. This parent leadership council needs to be formalized, we do not need, this parent leadership council should not just go into the Providence School Department and

listen to the Providence School Department heads, only Providence School Department people who work there, okay? We don't want to be trained into what the Providence School Department does. Parent engagement should be more about, parents want to be engaged, for example, more about directly what happens to my child, and directly what happens in my classroom and directly what happens maybe, perhaps, in my school.

But when you show up at these council meetings, they want to involve you in what's going on district-wise. You burn people like that, you do not, you are not engaging a parent, you are actually taking the parent and removing them from that kind of situation. I want to see, for example, I would love to see, for example, a way, when you talk about parent engagement, get into more of the reality of what happens to, what is true to the parent, I think one of the first panelists mentioned that.

For example, 16,000 students speak two languages but yet, English as a second language, that's exactly what it is, it's a second language, but you want us to be proficient in that. That's kind of tough, if you do not have the parent involved.

One of the things that I have mentioned in different situations has been, for example, what

happens when a child develops in a second language more than a parent develops in that same second language, there is a division, one goes one way and the other one goes in the opposite direction, there is no bridge to gap that. One of the things, and I guess I have to leave you with this, would be please stop, stop replacing education for a language, it doesn't work, it's not going to work.

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN ORODENKER: Thank you, thank you.

(Applause)

CHAIRMAN ORODENKER: Our next signed up speaker is Miguel Sanchez. I don't know if, here he is, okay.

MR. SANCHEZ: It's been a long morning for some of us and I'm not the bearer of good news, and for that, I'm very, very sad.

Last night, we were at the Hispanic American Chamber of Commerce and the president of the chamber talked about the lack of achievement within the Latino population, student population in Providence and Rhode Island, and it wasn't encouraging for an educator, it wasn't encouraging for the students and it wasn't encouraging for the business leaders who were meeting there. Because we are

talking all the time how this population is increasing, how we need to do things for it, and the more we talk about it, the less we give to that population, the more we take, and I'm going to give you examples of that.

And you will hear that, at times, I'm talking with some passion, with anger, because we've been knocking on doors and people do talk, but they do something else, and that brings a lot of anger.

You are talking, I am Miguel Sanchez-Hartwein, I have been in Rhode Island for the past seven-eight years, and I went to URI and I will tell you let's go back. My parents, when I was 16, I graduated high school when I was 16, I was one of those students, and my parents decided for you that you needed to go to school in the United States. Going to university wasn't an issue because my parents were educators, so I could have gone for free to a university in Puerto Rico, but that didn't happen, they decided that I would come to school here and then, later, they sent me to other schools in Europe.

When I came to school here, they decided that I was going to go to a school in what they called a black college. It was a tremendous experience. However, it was the first time that I did experience

what I definitely could see as racism. Being born and raised in Puerto Rico, whenever we see a, whenever I see a sign of bigotry, I jump because I wasn't brought up to experience it. When I went to URI I was told bluntly that I was there because of a quota, and in a very educated manner, I had to say why I was there. Was that a good experience? No, it wasn't. Was it an educational experience for me, to have to explain that to my classmates? No, it is not for anyone.

So we are talking, and this is, this wasn't two decades ago and this wasn't a decade ago, I don't think it was five years ago. So with that, I will tell you that the issue that brings me here before you is the elimination of the Department of Language and Culture within the Providence School Department and the lack of a plan to have its functions carried out by a staff that is appropriately trained to do so. Like many people that have given their testimony before you this morning, I believe there is a disconnect between what the research says the customers or students in Rhode Island want and need and what the school district is doing.

There is a story that basically did research on what are the needs of the Latinos in Rhode Island, I call it the red book. So I mean look at it,

it will jump at you with this color. It is not a new publication, it's been available since 2002 and it's been available at many levels. This story indicates, which was published in 2002, indicates that, in 1999, Latino children accounted for 13 percent of the children in Rhode Island public schools, the number of Latino children is 58 percent in Providence schools. Comparing 2000 scores of Latinos in the 4th and 8th grades, national assessment of educational progress tests in math, science, reading and writing, a higher percentage of the Rhode Island students tested below the basic level.

In the 4th grade, less than one third of Latino students attained a basic level of achievement in any of the subjects, and in the 8th grade, the results were somewhat better. Compared with NET teest takers in Rhode Island, Latino students also showed the lowest outcomes. We have talked about poverty. Do you know that we have the distinction to have the poorest neighborhood here in Rhode Island? It is not Louisiana, it is not Mississippi, it is here in Rhode Island. The census tracks were CHisPA is the Center for Hispanic Policy and Advocacy, that is the poorest neighborhood.

I experienced so because a good friend,

Olga, took me to Providence. I had been living here in Tiverton where the grass is green, where the beach is beautiful and working in Boston, I never paid attention to it. So I was brought here by Olga, and when I saw Elmwood, I was like oh, my god, whatever happened here.

Data provided by the Rhode Island Department of Education showed that, in 2001, Latino drop out rates for the state stood at 36 percent, with higher percentages in Providence and Pawtucket. The tendency in the last three years has been for the Latino drop out rates to increase, only 16 percent of Latino students graduate from high school, the lowest graduation rate of any ethnic group in the state.

What were the recommendations of the Marie C. Gaston Institute report? Well the included the provision of English classes, the improvement of educational climate in the schools by increasing the academic expectations, like the student, Shane, said, containing the misplacement of Latino children in special education, developing curricula that are relevant to the lives of the students. Have we done that? No. Instead, we shut down, we dismantle the Department of Language and Culture.

We have tried to meet with the school

department to address these issues. We have planned meetings, CHisPA has planned meetings and the answers and the questions that we have asked have not been satisfactory. We have been receiving complaints --.

May I finish or do you want me to stop?

CHAIRMAN ORODENKER: Well, but we are running a little bit over time, so I would appreciate it if--

MR. SANCHEZ: Okay. If you want me to stop, I will stop. Do you want me to stop? Okay.

CHAIRMAN ORODENKER: If you just have a couple of more remarks, why don't you finish up. We do have your written report, which will be made part of the record, thank you. But, if you just got a minute, another minute, you can wrap up.

MR. SANCHEZ: One of the things that I want to call the attention to is the fact that there has been some issues very specific to the closing or the dismantling of the Department of Language and Culture, one of them is that CHisPA staff has handled cases where school directors have sent written communications to monolingual parents. Parents have brought suspension letters to CHisPA so we can translate them. Schools have asked parents to bring their own interpreters, this is a very huge issue and

this is a barrier to access to a quality education. Another thing that is very specific is the lack of books.

CHisPA runs one of the alternative schools as a contractor/grantee for the Providence School Department. When I first arrived to CHisPA, before the school year began, we requested textbooks for all the students, but we were told that there were no textbooks. The lack of access to textbooks may create a disparate impact for these students who are already under pressure to perform well. These are the issues that I wanted to bring to you, these are very specific. We are here because we want to address them, we want good solutions that may work for the students.

CHAIRMAN ORODENKER: Thank you, Mr. Sanchez, we appreciate your comments.

(Applause)

CHAIRMAN ORODENKER: And your written report will be made a matter of public record.

Our next speaker is Johnie Skye-Nje. I think I pronounced that right, I'm sorry if I didn't.

MS. SKYE-NJE: Thanks for having, hearing me today. My name is Johnie Sky-Nje and I am the District Reform Facilitator for the Providence School

Department. Some of the materials that are available over there are the result of work that we've done with young people across the high schools, as well as some data that have just put together to help increase our engagement with the community. But I'm not speaking today on behalf of the Providence School Department, I'm speaking as a private citizen, it's important that that's known.

I'm a mother of four children, I live in the City of Providence and I've been working with young people for the past ten years as an educator at the elementary, middle and high school level, as a community partner, from the higher ed perspective, community based arts center perspective, think tank perspective around issues of high school reform and now I work in the central office. It's going to be difficult for me to speak in five minutes, so I'll be fast.

But I want to start by saying the first day that I walked into a Providence public school, I felt like I was a camera in the wall, looking down at a very absurd reality. Everybody acted like it was normal and it's not. And I would say ten years from that first day, I would still, I'm here to report that it's still not normal, what's going on, and it's not

okay. I'm going to give you some examples of that and then I want to talk about a recent policy, that the governor is proposing, that I think is a major hit on any kind of movement towards supporting civil rights in the state or in the country.

I want to start by talking about the disconnect in our schools between who the adults are and who the young people are. We talk about it in terms of environment, in terms of role models, but I think it's deeper than that. We have a natural chasm that's developed through age, but we also have race and ethnicity, class, culture and language that creates a disconnect. It's not just about not providing young people role models, it's about the lack of understanding that translates into behavior by the adults that's damaging to young people.

And I wanted to talk a little bit about the ways that I see that happening. Just in terms of data, 85 percent of our student population is brown and 82 percent of our faculty are pale and middle class, so that's a bit of a disconnect.

Let's see, I'm going to start by talking a little bit about facilities, and I have a lot of questions, more than I have answer. We ask young people to dress down for gym in our public high

schools, but we don't provide the public, private space to dress, we don't provide them a secure place to keep their belongings and we don't provide them with showers to clean up after they exercise. What kind of messages are we sending? How many times does a student have to tell me that they are in pain, holding their rear end until the end of the school day because the school bathrooms are in such disrepair and so disgusting that they are going to wait until they go home to use the bathroom?

(Applause)

MS. SKYE-NJE: How many times do I have to hear a student tell me that they would learn chemistry, they don't understand their teacher, but they would learn chemistry if they could take the book home? But the school doesn't allow them to take the book home. Either they don't factor in loss, as every good business does, they don't build systems to make sure that the books get returned or they have already made the determination that students aren't interested in learning and won't be able to independently. I think that the messages are dangerous.

We have school stores across our high schools, who are running the school stores? The adults are. What's being sold in our school stores?

Candy. We are not selling books, we are not selling pencils, we are not selling materials that help support student engagement in school, we are not selling gym uniforms so the students can dress down properly.

In one of our large public high schools, what's the consequence for now dressing down for gym? Suspension. Not failure for that day, not a demerit for that activity, in a school that does not support with private space for dressing down with a secure locker, with showers.

We are suspending kids and denying them access to their education because of what? Because of authority? Because of control? Because of power? What is it, what is the message we are trying to send? We know now, from 20 years of zero tolerance data, that there is a direct correlation between the number of times that we suspend young people from school and the likelihood that they will drop out. We also know from plenty of human development research what it takes to engage young people in positive behaviors.

And when we have a culture in this city and in our country where we say get out of my class and get out of my school, a throw away culture, a push out culture, as Shane described it, how is it that we

are building, we are building this human fabric that our community rests on? Where are our values? These are the things that trouble me. The control and order piece, you know, we have a principal in a system that, at the beginning of the year, announces to all students you will not leave class unless you are bleeding. How do we raise, how do we bring young adults into adulthood when we don't even give them an opportunity to self-manage their own bodily needs, and their thirst and their need to go to the bathroom? What are we saying?

Are we preparing young people for incarceration or are we preparing them for empowered lives as able citizens to participate in what we think we live in, which is supposed to be a democracy? When we, when administrators and adults use language like lock down in a public high school to describe a shutting of doors or everybody out of the hall, what messages are we sending to our young people about their opportunities and their potential?

Let's see what else I want to talk about.

Clearly, there are a lot of resource implications with the Providence School Department, that hits arts, music, social services. Our young people need supports, they need resources, but I think

deeper than that is a sense of will and I think that the will that we lack is directly related to a heavy labor reality in this state, in particular, that is built to protect the white middle class, and has money and has influence, and as such, impacts the way that we make decisions, not necessarily about young people but more so about protecting jobs and adults.

I need to end on something really important, I want to say a couple of quick things, one is that I think we need to move from this notion of diversity and start talking about human dignity.

I think that we need a common definition of human dignity in this city, in this state and in this country and I think we are missing that, and I think that we also need to redefine public servitude and really think about what it is, what our responsibilities are, as public servants of this community, not to judge this community but to understand who this community is and change our practices and policies so that we serve it appropriately.

And then I want to end on the piece that is most troubling to me, which is that the governor has just proposed to draw a circle around Providence, Pawtucket and Central Falls and call it the

metropolitan school department or school district. This is dangerous, hopefully illegal and hopefully you will make a very strong statement about what this means. Why can't we, now there is no question we have 36-39 school districts in the state, we are small. There are cities that manage more students than we have here. There is no question that we have overhead and administration that's ridiculous, and again, union and labor has a big role in that.

But if we are to consolidate, which is not a bad idea and something that we probably need, why can't we connect Providence to East Providence? Why can't we connect Pawtucket to Smithfield and Cumberland? Why can't we connect Central Falls to Lincoln? What are we thinking when we draw a circle around the disparity and decide that that's the answer? Do we have a desire for integration? Do we want to really be this American fabric that we are sold from childhood? Is this in fact our aim? Do we have a sense of humanity in terms of our values system? What is happening?

I think that if this commission were to make any statement, it would be to the governor that this is grossly negligent, irresponsible and inhumane, to even put that kind of idea on the table.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ORODENKER: Thank you very much.

(Applause)

CHAIRMAN ORODENKER: Our next speaker is Mr. Norman Lincoln.

MR. LINCOLN: Thank you very much for allowing me to speak a few minutes, I think, I hope that's all I'm going to take. I appreciate everything that you are trying to do. I must tell you, and I don't want to be too long with this, but I was born and raised in the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, 1938, and entered the Providence School System in 1944. Unfortunately, for this individual, I knew, from day one, what my life was going to be like because of the life that my family and myself were about to live. So in 1955, I had to make a decision for Norman Lincoln, and that was to leave the Providence School System because it was not doing anything for me.

I entered the military service where I proceeded to become the adult that you are supposed to become. I served my country, willing to give up my life, if necessary, that didn't happen. I came back to the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations because I felt where I was born is where

I should try to make a life for myself and for some of my people.

Unfortunately, I will tell you today, from 1955 to the present day, this citizen is not satisfied with the way anything is going. I am disappointed and those people who claim to have had the power to ensure that every one of our citizens, black, white or otherwise, in the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations have the opportunity to get to the American dream, and that's not happening.

Our problem is our 39 cities and towns, which I call them the 39 cities of their own doing. We must, and you must and those in power must realize that the 39 cities and towns are dividing our people here in this state, they believe that they are their own identity. I've been involved in this for quite some time, I'm sick and tired of the charters, some that they create themselves, some that they ask our general assembly. Our general assembly members, our politicians, are for themselves, not for us, and when we complain or when we decide that we want to run, they make it impossible for us to do so.

I am hoping and I am praying, from 1938 to this day, that I will not give up the battle until god calls me home or, as I say, my commander. As a young

man I know and as a young child I know that, in my time, our school teachers were not married, they were in the community, we knew them, they were everywhere. The justice system is another situation that is intoleraable. Training school for boys, what is this? A training school for girls, an ACI that has got more people in there than they have in college, and yet it's costing us more money to keep them there.

So we are not about the business of protecting this state and this is all I know. I've been around the country, the citizens, I've been around all over, but I decided to come back home and see if I could make some change, and yet I find other folks not wanting to get on the same page and I think that's what we need to do. We need the politicians, who we vote for, to be accountable to us. Our governor believes that when he takes office he becomes an identity within himself, he forgets that we vote for him. Our councilmen, our representatives, those who represent us believe that when we vote them in, we lose control of them. We have to let them know that it's not that way.

I don't know what goes on in Massachusetts and Connecticut, I don't know what goes on in South Dakota, or Alabama or Mississippi, but I know what

goes on in the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. And I'm the one who says I will work with you to do whatever necessary to make this state a great state, as it started out to be. I really believe this in my heart and I will work with you, work with anyone, to make this state what it was supposed to be when it first started out.

I carry with me today our constitution, it's our constitution of fed, the constitution of state and I say to everybody they should read it, whether they come from here or not. When you come in, you are welcome, you read our constitution. Our constitution is basically the same as the federal constitution, but we have some inaccuracies within our constitution. Learn our state, if you are new here, learn our state. Keep your culture. I know what my race is, I know what my culture is, I know what my religion is and I know what my political party is, and I'm not going to give that up for anyone. So we must be as we see the man on the state house, the independent man, and we can be independent women also.

So, as I leave you tonight, I hope that my words can echo out what Dr. King said: judge me by the content of my character but not by the color of my skin. And I will leave you with two sayings, ability

is of a little account without opportunity. That's what Napoleon Bonaparte said, and you can't keep a man down without staying down with him, that's what Booker T. Washington said and I believe this.

So I leave you and I thank you for what you are trying to do.

(Applause)

CHAIRMAN ORODENKER: Thank you, Mr. Lincoln.

Our next speaker is Everett Muhammad.

MR. MUHAMMAD: Greetings, I had to turn it on first, and peace be unto you.

First, I would like to say it's unfortunate that some of the commentary that most matters you have allotted the shortest period of time, because it really is the voice of the people that you need to hear the most, and I mean the common man and woman, these people.

I think what we've seen and witnessed here today is what amounts to a stinging indictment of the failure of school systems throughout the country, including Rhode Island, but we are responsible for Rhode Island, so we should be trying to do everything that we can to improve things.

One of the statements that I heard

earlier, that struck me as one of the most profound, is what the superintendent said, he said basically we know everything we need to know to make change. Well why is it not happening then? If we know everything that we need to know, then that means that we are just being negligent in taking care of our most precious commodity, which is our children. Does that make sense?

Now I just want to repeat some of the statistics that we heard because I think it was Ms. Harrison that discussed the willingness and the desire to make change, and it's just not there, it's not there, and who is suffering?

Well the reason why it's a panel to hold briefings on disparities against minority youth is because it's us that it's impacting. It's the black, Latino and other young people whose lives are being ruined on a daily basis and who are going into these killing fields that we call schools, where there is a hostile environment, where there is no running water, where teachers are unresponsive to the needs of the students, where real learning is not taking place.

And I have to ask what are we, because there is a dual challenge here because we who represent these communities of color, how long are we

going to sit by and allow people who really don't love our children to handle their education? They are destroying them, and this is real.

There is a movement, and I think we felt some of it a couple of days ago in Providence when 20,000 people marched on the state house. The right of people to be a part of and to determine their own destinies is growing on a daily basis. The largest movement that gathered in this country was a part of the Million Man March in '95 and culminated in the Millions More Movement in 2005 in Washington, D.C., where we saw a very, very broad based coalition of groups united to do something for self. Now why that's important is because we've sat around today and we've all agreed that the funding is woefully inadequate and we know that.

We've sat back and we've watched how the school funding has gone down 20 percent while the money for prisons has gone up 20 percent, so where did the money go for schooling? To the prisons. So are they teaching our children to be criminals? Well I say a very strong argument could be made, it's simple mathematics.

Brother, you had mentioned, see because time is really of the essence for us and I would

appreciate it if at the conclusion of this program, if you could tell me the study you were reading that said 75 percent of our children will be dropping out of high school in the next five years.

I work with ex-offenders right now, that's what I do for a living, but I've also been a youth counselor, I'm also a community activist and organizer, and we wonder why our people are in such bad shape, it's because we are not taking care of them on the front end. And if 75 percent of our children are going to be locked up in the next five years, then we don't have another day to waste, we've got to do something today, today. So, please, I would like to get that data. In fact give them the data, they are the ones who need that, need that study.

I would like to say a few comments on the justice side of things. I've been involved to a great deal with trying to bring about police reform in this state and I say on panels, many of them around or many of them having been started because of the killing of our brother, Cornell Young, Jr. I've been instrumental in helping to establish PERA, the Providence External Review Authority, but I have personal experience that I can speak of also and run-ins with the police, and until the police really start

respecting us as human beings, there is never going to be a change. I don't care how many mechanisms we put in place, there has to be real respect established for people.

PERA is located on the corner of Comstock Avenue and Broad Street, and when people have problems with the police and you want to file a complaint, that's where you should go, because there it's too, the reason why they set it up that way is because it's too intimidating to even go down to the police station, they will not help you, for the most part, they will not help you, and if they do, it's very short.

And I'm going to wrap up my comments right now, sir, I see you lifting up the mic.

Three problems that face our youth, in terms of justice, is because when policemen do wrong, usually they are not held accountable. If you look at the volumes of police complaints that have been filed, and then you look at how many were resolved satisfactorily, where there was actually a reprimand, you would find that, in 98 percent of them, nothing ever happened, so real accountability needs to happen.

Second, the code of silence, I've been in the courtroom. Filing a complaint is just step number

one, but I've been in the courtroom and I've seen them parade them in, and the lie right down the line. I'm not saying there is no good police at all, but I'm saying let's keep it real.

CHAIRMAN ORODENKER: All right, thank you.

MR. MUHAMMAD: So those are the comments that I would like to offer, thank you very much.

(Applause)

CHAIRMAN ORODENKER: Thank you very much.

MR. MUHAMMAD: And I would hope that you would really do something with them and not continue the having all this information and doing nothing with it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ORODENKER: Your remarks have been taken down by the stenographer and we will make sure that they are included with the record on this report, this investigation.

Our next speaker is Osiris Harrell.

MR. HARRELL: Good afternoon. I regret that I have to come up here after my deal beloved brother and minister, Everett Muhammad, but I'll do what I came to do. I didn't really come, when I got here this morning, I didn't really pay attention to a lot that was going on because I came with one intent and that's to get something said. So I wasn't really

interested in what a lot of people were saying because I've heard it all before, I've seen these kind of panels assembled, I've heard the rhetoric and to no avail, so I came today to specifically say something, get it off my chest and be gone.

Brother Everett and Johnie related, Johnie, they said a lot of the things that I wanted to say, but I'm going to reiterate some of those things and I promise not to be long, but I'm going to try to be strong.

Dr. Evans has said, in the beginning when he was speaking, he had talked about how we had made so many strides since he was in school, since I was in school, since a lot of us were in school, and I beg to differ, I don't see those strides. I mean he said he was a farm boy and he was able to become a doctor and become superintendent of the school system.

Well I don't think today there is many young black males that can have that kind of dream, I think that that dream has been killed in young black men. I heard people talk about numbers, percentages, statistics, but I didn't hear anybody mention the fact that 58 percent of the drop out rate in the City of Providence is African American males. That should be the first thing discussed here this morning,

especially Dr. Evans being a black man. I mean if I was a doctor and superintendent, being a black man, the first thing on my agenda would be to try to fix what's wrong with the school system--

(Applause)

MR. HARRELL: --that is failing our young black men that are setting them up to become convicts, go to prison, drug addicts. Back in the '70s, after the civil rights movement and all, the government decided they wanted to appease us, as black people, and one of the things they did to appease us was to offer us project housing. If you look at the word project, it means to study, you are going to study. You are going to take people from a low income or socioeconomic bracket and you are going to group them together in a maze because that's what most project housing, if you go to any state, any city and look at project housing, it looks like a maze.

So now you are going to put them in this maze like rats, and you are going to study how they react and you are going to compile your data, how many drop out of school, how many go on to college, how many become prostitutes, drug dealers, drug addicts, how many die, how many end up in prison. So now you compile this data, and I'm sorry if I'm speaking in

this conspiratorial tone. I'm a father and my son is nine years old, I have a nine year old daughter and I have a seven year old daughter. I know my son is brilliant, I know that if you give him a break, he'll show you how my grandfather made a pyramid, see, because that's how creative black people are.

We are not dumb, we are not genetically inferior, as some scholars have tried to say, even him a book, some years ago, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, or we try to put forth this idea that we are genetically inferior, that's not the truth, we built the pyramids and more. So, if you allow -- but if you take away from our creative side of our brain, the right side of the brain, and you overload the left side of the brain with a bunch of nonsense, Christopher Columbus discovered America. Now all this stuff is not going to be any use to you, but then you kill the right side of the brain, you don't allow for any creativity, no art, no music.

Now it has to be that there is a conspiracy. In an article I wrote I said that No Child Left Behind is a declaration of war on our children. Why is it that our federal government will allocate funds to our district but then dictate to them how they are to spend those funds? So our

district can't make the decision to bring back programs, such as music, art and those programs that will help develop and give balance to our thinking, to create the creative side of the brain, the right side of the brain. So now we have our children losing their interest, they are dropping out.

And I mean black children are very creative. If you study the science of melanin, the chemical melanin that gives your skin pigmentation, you'll also find that it also gives us a certain level of creativity and if our children are not allowed to tap into that side of the brain.

One last thing. Hiring teachers from outside that come from white suburbia, that their only image of a black male is in handcuffs, or committing crime or as an ex-convict, how are they going to relate to our children in school? Recently, recently, I was invited to my children's school for Black History Month to read to the class, I read to six classes. One teacher complained to the principal, so I wrote the teacher a letter and I asked her why did she invite me into her classroom only to go behind my back and complain? And I said that I thought that she was a racist.

Well this teacher went to the department

and they banned me. They sent me a letter to my house telling me that if I wanted to be involved in my children's education from this point on, I would have to do so through their mothers but, as a black, they didn't go this far, but I'm going to add this part, as a black man, I'm no longer allowed to participate in my children's education. Well I guess you know what I told them, and so I just wanted to say that, you know, I don't, you spoke about segregated schools and I myself am a product from that, I come from the South in the '60s. I went to all black schools, my educators were black, they cared about us learning.

These white people coming from suburbia, they don't care about these young black men learning. They have this preconceived notion about who and what we are and that's what they are going on. And I thank you for your time.

(Applause)

CHAIRMAN ORODENKER: Thank you very much.

Our last speaker this morning is Stephanie Cannady.

MS. CANNADY: Thank you for having me. Well I've listened to everyone all morning this morning and I really didn't even know what exactly I would say today. But I can honestly say that I am a

female, black female, who is a strong person in this community and I am a product of a hard working, trying black female. I want to start my story out by saying I have a male son who is 21 years old. We have lived in three different states and I would just like to say that with the three different states, we have had the same problems, namely, my first topic, police brutality.

Racial profiling has caused my son to now, at 21 years old, finally graduating out of high school. He has been in and out of prison at least ten times due to picking him up, saying that he had drugs on him, picking him up, saying that he has no license, driving with a suspension and the list goes on, and on and on. During his early years before high school, he was legitimately trying very hard in school. They, the school, said that he was goofing off in class and not paying attention so, you know, after I while, I said, well, gee, is something really wrong with my son?

Well after discussing with my son, I found out that many of the teachers already didn't like him so, of course, his grades go down. He was not accepted to go to that school anymore because he had been getting suspended three and four times. Not to

mention he had been in and out of prison, going to court, most, he went to court more than he went to school.

So here is a dilemma here. I'm a parent who is struggling to keep her son in school on a regular basis when the police are supposed to be there for the community. They are supposed to be there to help parents and help the community better itself, and in fact, they did the opposite in my case.

So I had to put my son in an alternative school where he learned absolutely nothing. I visited the school one day just because I wanted to see what exactly he was learning. There were six desks there, no paper, no pens, and in fact, the teacher was off somewhere having a cigarette. So what message are we really trying to send here? So of course I moved away from Lynn, Massachusetts because it wasn't doing anything for my son's mental stability, so I moved from Lynn, Massachusetts and I said you know what? Let me see what Providence has to offer.

I came here with the expectation that, it being a small state, it shouldn't have the big, huge problems that Massachusetts has, but I was wrong, once again, I was wrong.

So I hope you understand my frustration as

a single parent trying to raise a black, now, man and not getting the support that the school system is supposed to guarantee. I once went to Washington, D.C. and I had the honor of meeting my state representatives. We had plead to them about the education issue here and the equal federal funding that needed to be here, and they stated to us there are funds, there are funds.

You tend to wonder who is responsible for getting these funds and signing off on these funds. Washington, D.C. stated, and I will quote, if Rhode Island will be accountable for the funds that they have here, Washington, D.C. did not have a problem with adding, and doubling and matching those same dollar amounts, so who is responsible for getting that?

I've already done my job, I've gone to Washington, D.C. and I have pleaded my case severely because not only am I the only single parent in my community, but there is many single parents. We are fed up, we are tired of trying to keep our black children from going to prison.

This is supposed to be a free country, why is it that I'm still feeling like it's 400 years ago and slavery again? We have had our Bibles taken from

us back in slavery, we have had all of our education stripped from us, beaten out of us, and it's still the same way. When are we going to overcome? When are we going to overcome? When are we going to give, when are we going to get our rights? We deserve that, we have marched for many, many years and we are still trying to march. When are we going to stop marching? When are we going to stop begging?

I don't get it, or is it that the government can not get it? I think I got it. I'm a tired, broke down, single parent and I'm tired of trying to fight the system.

Thank you.

(Applause)

CHAIRMAN ORODENKER: Thank you very much for that heartfelt testimony and you asked some very good questions. Hopefully, some time, we'll be able to answer those, but you asked some good ones.

I would just like to remind everybody here this closes the public hearing for the day. Please remember that if you wish to submit any written statements, the record will stay open until June 3, 2006 and if you want to know the address at which those written statements should be submitted, please see Barbara De La Viez at the end of the table and she

will tell you exactly how to do that. Thank you all for coming--

MS. NOGUERA: Mr. Chair?

CHAIRMAN ORODENKER: Thank you for your participation.

MS. NOGUERA: Mr. Chair, can I say something?

CHAIRMAN ORODENKER: Yes, Olga.

MS. NOGUERA: One of the things that I would like to recommend that if we call Dr. Wood at the Department of Education and maybe she can provide information on the bilingual education, what are the laws, what are the regulations to be part of the package, if that's possible.

CHAIRMAN ORODENKER: Sure, thank you, okay. Thank you everybody, the meeting is adjourned.

(Whereupon, at 1:10 p.m., the meeting was adjourned.)

**CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript in the matter of: Briefing by the Rhode Island Advisory Committee

Before: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

Date: May 3, 2006

Place: Providence, Rhode Island

represents the full and complete proceedings of the aforementioned matter, as reported and reduced to typewriting.

Marty Farley

Marty Farley