

BIGOTRY AND VIOLENCE IN RHODE ISLAND

**RHODE ISLAND ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TO THE UNITED STATES
COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS**

This summary report of the Rhode Island Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights was prepared for the information and consideration of the Commission. Statements and viewpoints in the report should not be attributed to the Commission or to the Advisory Committee, but only to individual participants in the community forum where the information was gathered.

A SUMMARY REPORT

APRIL 1990

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THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

The United States Commission on Civil Rights, first created by the Civil Rights Act of 1957 and reestablished by the United States Commission on Civil Rights Act of 1983, is an independent, bipartisan agency of the Federal Government. By the terms of the act, as amended, the Commission is charged with the following duties pertaining to discrimination or denials of equal protection based on race, color, religion, sex, age, handicap, or discriminatory denials of the right to vote; the study of legal developments with respect to discrimination or denials of equal protection; the appraisal of the laws and policies of the United States with respect to discrimination or denials of equal protection; the maintenance of a national clearinghouse for information respecting discrimination or denials of equal protection; and the investigation of patterns or practices of fraud or discrimination in the conduct of Federal elections. The Commission is also required to submit reports to the President and the Congress at such times as the Commission, the Congress, or the President shall deem desirable.

THE STATE ADVISORY COMMITTEES

An Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights has been established in each of the 50 States and the District of Columbia pursuant to section 105(c) of the Civil Rights Act of 1957 and section 6(c) of the United States Commission on Civil Rights Act of 1983. The Advisory Committees are made up of responsible persons who serve without compensation. Their functions under their mandate from the Commission are to: advise the Commission of all relevant information concerning their respective States on matters within the jurisdiction of the Commission; advise the Commission on matters of mutual concern in the preparation of reports of the Commission to the President and the Congress; receive reports, suggestions, and recommendations from individuals, public and private organizations, and public officials upon matters pertinent to inquiries conducted by the State Advisory Committee; initiate and forward advice and recommendations to the Commission upon matters in which the Commission shall request the assistance of the State Advisory Committee; and attend, as observers, any open hearing or conference that the Commission may hold within the State.

Letter of Transmittal

Rhode Island Advisory Committee
to the
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

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The Rhode Island Advisory Committee is pleased submit this summary report as part of its responsibility to advise the Commission about civil rights issues in the State of Rhode Island. The Committee approved the report by a unanimous vote.

The Advisory Committee, in 1988 and through early 1989, received allegations that incidents of bigotry and violence continue to occur frequently in minority communities without any sign of declining. This prompted the Committee's interest in appraising how successfully the data collection system on crimes of bigotry and bias, mandated by the State legislature, was being implemented. In order to gain a comprehensive overview of the situation, the Advisory Committee held a community forum on May 8, 1989, in Providence by bringing together spokespersons of law enforcement agencies, community/minority organizations, and academic research community. This summary report presents the highlights of the forum and the ensuing discussion.

The Rhode Island Advisory Committee hopes this report will be of use and interest to the Commissioners as well as to State officials and citizens concerned about civil rights progress in Rhode Island.

Respectfully,

David H. Sholes, *Chairman*
Rhode Island Advisory Committee

Rhode Island Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights

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Acknowledgments

The Committee is indebted to its planning subcommittee members, Sarah A. Murphy (chair), Olga M. Escobar, Rhett S. Jones, John A. Thompson and Dorothy Davis Zimmering and to the staff of the Commission's Eastern Regional Division for organizing the community forum and producing this summary report. A complete transcript of the forum is available in the Eastern Regional Division office of the Commission.

Ki-Taek Chun, Deputy Director, Eastern Regional Division, was director of this forum project. He was assisted by Juanique S. Caldwell and Edna Nicholson. The project was under the overall supervision of John I. Binkley, Director, Eastern Regional Division.

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Introduction

In 1988 and through early 1989, the Advisory Committee received from Southeast Asian refugee groups complaints that incidents of bigotry and violence directed against them are increasing in frequency. The Advisory Committee heard from representatives of community services and civil rights organizations confirming that acts of ethnic, racial, and religious bigotry are indeed common and also that such incidents are not handled appropriately or expeditiously. The Rhode Island legislature passed a law in 1988 mandating the State police to develop and maintain a data collection system on crimes motivated by ethnicity, race, and religious. The Advisory Committee considered it now timely to hold a community forum on this topic to appraise the general situation, review the application of the law and call the issue of bigotry and violence to the attention of proper authorities and the public.

In order to cover varied aspects of this complex topic, the Advisory Committee scheduled four panels in the forum, which was held on May 8, 1989, in Providence. The first panel, "Trends and Causes of Incidents of Bigotry and Violence," provided a framework and background perspective, and included presentations of (1) the findings of a recent, large scale research project on civil rights crimes and (2) a summary of how civil rights and race issues are covered in the *Providence Journal-Bulletin*, a daily newspaper with the largest circulation in Rhode Island.

The second panel, "Collecting Information on Incidents of Bigotry and Violence in Rhode Island," dealt with (1) the current State civil rights laws and their legislative background, (2) the status of the state-mandated data collection system on crimes motivated by ethnicity, race and religious, and (3) the experience of the Boston Police Department's Community Disorder Unit regarding civil rights violations and racial incidents.

The third panel, "Incidents of Bigotry and Violence from the Victim's Perspective," was designed to provide an opportunity for representatives of various minority, civil rights, and community organizations to voice their views and concerns and make recommendations to law enforcement officials so as to stem incidents of bigotry and violence and better serve victims and victim groups.

The fourth panel, "Incidents of Bigotry and Violence from the Law Enforcement Perspective" consisted of representatives of local police departments from cities and towns with large minority concentrations. The panel was an opportunity for law enforcement officials to share their view of the situation and their sense of how Rhode Islanders may be better protected from acts of bigotry and incidents of violence motivated by ethnicity, race, and religion.

Panel on Trends and Causes of Incidents of Bigotry and Violence

Presentation by Professor Jack McDevitt

Professor McDevitt¹ presented the highlights of a 5-year research project recently completed by his organization, titled "The Study of the Characteristics of Civil Rights Crimes in Massachusetts (1983-1987)." The study is based on information gathered from confidential files² of the Boston Police Department's (BPD) Community Disorder Unit (CDU) and from interviews with individuals knowledgeable about civil rights violations in the city of Boston. These individuals included victims of racial violence, police officers assigned to the CDU, prosecutors, and local community leaders.

The CDU is a special unit of the BPD created in 1979 to investigate civil rights violations and is the first unit of its kind in the United States. The records maintained by the CDU are extraordinary in their detail, thoroughness, and accuracy. Copies of the original reports in all alleged civil rights violations and in all interracial incidents are forwarded to the CDU on the day following the incident. The commander of the CDU reviews all those reports and determines which of them may be violations of an individual's civil rights. If the determination is affirmative, the case is assigned to a CDU officer for investigation. Once assigned, each contact on a case is recorded in a typed memorandum and kept in the file for that particular case. For this reason, the research project staff was provided with unusually high quality information.

Major findings of the study are:

- Both whites and blacks have been about equally victimized (34.7 and 31.6 percent, respectively), and the third most frequently victimized group are members of the Vietnamese community (11.7 percent), followed by Hispanics (6.4 percent).³ Most racially motivated victimization in the city of Boston is committed by white offenders (62 percent), while a significant minority (34 percent) is committed by black offenders. Very few (4 percent) of the racial incidents are committed by individuals of Hispanic or Asian origin.⁴ As shown in table 1, white offenders victimize blacks about one-half of the time, Asian Americans about one-fourth of the time, and Hispanics about one-tenth of the time, whereas black offenders target mostly whites (86 percent).

¹ Assistant director, Center for Applied Social Research, Northeastern University, Boston.

² Data base of the study is a random sample of 425 cases consisting of 100 cases per year from each year from 1983-1986 and all of the 1987 cases investigated by the CDU at the time of the study's data collection.

³ From table I in Jack McDevitt, *The Study of the Implementation of the Massachusetts Civil Rights Act* (Boston: Center for Applied Social Research, Northeastern University, 1989), p. 43.

⁴ *Ibid.*, table II, p. 44.

TABLE 1
Race and Ethnicity of Victims and Offenders in Boston, 1983-1987

Offenders' race	Race of victims					Total
	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian American	Jewish	
White	19(9)*	108(53)	19(9)*	56(28)	2(1)	204(100)
Black	95(86)	6(5)	4(4)	6(5)	0	111(100)

Note: Modified from table II in Jack McDevitt, *The Study of the Implementation of the Massachusetts Civil Rights Act* (Boston: Center for Applied Social Research, Northeastern University, 1989), p.44.

* Numbers in parentheses are row-wise percentages.

TABLE 2
Reason for incident as Recorded in the Investigation by CPU

Reasons for incident	Frequency	Percentage
Passing through the neighborhood	100	30
Moving into a neighborhood	45	13
Driving through a neighborhood	24	7
Want victim to move	11	3
Working in a neighborhood	10	3
Prejudice	57	17
Other	90	27
Total	337	100

(Note: Modified from table V in Jack McDevitt, *The Study of the Implementation of the Massachusetts Civil Rights Act* (Boston: Center for Applied Social Research, Northeastern University, 1989), p. 47.)

• More than 50 percent of the incidents of racial violence identified in the study are acts of a very serious, potentially injury-resulting character. In 85 percent of the cases, offenders were not known to the victim. Close to two-thirds of the incidents involve more than one offender, frequently involving four or more offenders. This indicates that incidents of racial violence are most often a group phenomenon where a group of individuals attack a single victim who is a stranger to the offenders. Since the victims never did anything to precipitate the incident and never knew why (s)he was chosen as a victim, the victim can hardly be sure that the same thing will not happen again. This threat of victimization "hovers over all daily activities both inside and outside an individual's home and is extremely difficult to eliminate," leaving the victim feeling ever vulnerable.

• As shown in table 2, of all cases where a reason for the incident is recorded, over one-half (56 percent) have to do with the issue of neighborhood turf. For example, "passing through the neighborhood," "moving into a neighborhood," "driving through a neighborhood," and "wanting the victim to move out," etc., are typical reasons. Adding the category of "prejudice" to this neighborhood turf category raises the combined percentage to 73.

• The first step in apprehension and prosecution of an offender is classifying an incident as racial by the victim and the responding police officer. Interviews with victims and police officers reveal that this identification process is difficult and is encumbered with several problems.

(1) First, victims tend to misinterpret the first act of racial violence as simple vandalism unless it escalates or is accompanied by other clues. For example, a rock thrown through a window is not in itself an act of racial violence unless a message with racial overtones is attached to the rock, or until something else happens, such as a telephone call or a note left in the mailbox, providing a racial tinge. This tendency to misinterpret makes it likely that the prevalence of racial violence has been underreported, suggesting that the statistics on incidents should be viewed with appropriate caution.

(2) The second problem has to do with the reluctance of the victims to admit or declare that the attack was racial. Victims frequently try to attribute an alternative motive to the attacks. Investigators from the CDU indicate that they often have to convince victims that an attack is racial if and when the offenders say the attack was because the victim was in their neighborhood.

(3) Another problem is related to the attitude and awareness of the responding officer. Since the victim cannot be relied upon to make an accurate assessment of whether an incident was racial, the preliminary investigation by the responding police officer is crucial in the ultimate identification of these incidents as racial in character. The officer must be open to an interpretation of the incident as racial and be supportive of the victims if a majority of racial incidents are to be identified as such. The relative infrequency of racial incidents⁵ results in police inexperience and possibly insensitivity, which in turn may contribute to overlooking the racial character of an incident. For these reasons, it is probable that only a fraction of the incidents analyzed in the study could have shown up as racial incidents in formal BPD records. In fact, only 4 percent (19 out of 452 cases) of the racial incidents in the study were originally recorded as racial incidents or violations of Federal or State civil rights statutes. It is clear that racial incidents are vastly underreported. If the Boston situation is any indication, one may extrapolate and infer that, in general, only 1 out of 25 racial incidents is recorded as racial.

• Many police officers believe that the most effective element of the Massachusetts civil rights statute is the provision of both temporary and permanent injunctive relief for victims of civil rights violations. They believe that the most effective way to deal with civil rights violations is to quickly serve all possible offenders with a court order restraining a wide range of actions towards the victim or the victim's property. For example, if a victim's house is vandalized and the subsequent police investigation turns up the names of a number of likely offenders but no firm evidence against any one individual, the police can obtain a restraining order against all the individuals whose names were revealed in the investigation. These injunctions are then served on the individuals named, with a discussion of penalties for violation, and the victim is informed accordingly. The injunction serves to alert all parties that the police are aware of the previous violence and that they are prepared to act to prevent future

⁵ In 1985 the BPD investigated 5,036 aggravated assaults but only 183 racial incidents.

violence. By restraining alleged offenders from certain actions, the injunction can function as an effective preventive measure.

Incidents of Bigotry and Violence in Rhode Island as Reported in the *Providence Journal-Bulletin*

The *Providence Journal-Bulletin*⁶ provided the Committee with a computer printout of all articles relating to civil rights, racism, and bigotry and violence carried in the *Journal-Bulletin* from March 1984 to April 1989. Based on a review of the articles, Sarah A. Murphy⁷ made a summary presentation.⁸

The printout lists a total of 88 articles. They cover a wide range of civil rights-related topics, ranging from accounts of the Kristallnacht incident to the U.S. Supreme Court decisions and speeches given by civil rights leaders in Rhode Island. Fourteen of these articles are related to incidents of bigotry and violence allegedly motivated by race, national origin, and religion. Four of the 14 articles were carried in 1985, 1 in 1986, 2 in 1987, 5 in 1988, and 2 in 1989 (through April).

Of the four articles carried in 1985, one describes a multiracial conference of students from seven Rhode Island secondary schools exchanging experiences as victims of racial, ethnic, and religious prejudice and talking about what could be done. The remaining three are all related to incidents at Brown University. For example,

- The March 16, 1985, article carries the headline "Black students assert Brown is breaking 1975 agreements, and University says it has made many strides and is disturbed by tone of confrontation in charges." Black students compiled a list of 22 alleged racial incidents over the past 3 years, claiming that university administrators ignored violent verbal and physical attacks on third world students. Black students state that they were not accorded adequate protection by the university and its security officers.

- The March 22, 1985, article describes a rally of white students in support of black students' complaint of racism on the Brown campus.

- The third article, on April 13, 1985, said that black and other minority students held several rallies complaining of instances of racial harassment and a lack of programs aimed at minority groups. A call for a 1-day strike of classes was issued. Amidst this situation of mounting tension, Brown officials, including President Swearer, were to meet with minority student leaders to solve racial problems on the campus.

These articles, as a whole, inform the reader of an atmosphere of heightened racial tension and a discordant adversarial relationship between the university administration and minority students. However, they do not go much beyond that. The reader is left uninformed of such aspects as the types of alleged harassment and safety concerns, the details of the effort university officials have made to improve the situation, the changes

⁶ The Advisory Committee invited James V. Wyman, executive editor of the *Providence Journal-Bulletin*, Providence, R.I., to present a State-level overview on the trend and incidents of bigotry and violence in Rhode Island. He was unable to attend and instead provided the Committee with information used herein.

⁷ Executive director, Smith Hill Center, Inc., Providence. She is also Vice Chair of the Rhode Island State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

⁸ Upon reviewing the draft version of the report, Mr. Wyman provided the Advisory Committee with a response, which is attached as an appendix.

or improvement that may have taken place in recent years, and the university's overall plan of improvement.

In 1986 there was one article that is of interest to the forum theme. The May 5, 1986, article describes the spray-painting of a University of Rhode Island Jewish fraternity house and 10 cars in its parking lot with anti-Semitic, obscene references to Jews.

In 1987 there were two articles that dealt with talk show host Steve White's making racial slurs on his program at the WKRI radio station in West Warwick.

- According to the November 27, 1987, article, White allegedly referred to the Hispanic community as "spics" and the African American community as "niggers." Mr. White had been fired 2 years before by the same radio station for a similar offense. The Rhode Island chapter of the NAACP and the Rhode Island black media coalition demanded the firing of Mr. White.

- The December 4, 1987, article said more than a dozen groups representing racial and ethnic minorities joined forces to denounce Mr. White. They demanded an apology from Mr. White, but he reportedly said that he would not retract his comments. Mr. White had earlier announced that he would run for lieutenant governor.

In 1988 there were five articles. Three of the five articles dealt with the episode of a State GOP official's making a white supremacist statement and its aftermath.

- The August 10, 1988, article reports that Elmer A. Chipparoni, chairman of the North Kingston (R.I.) Republican town committee, said in a published article that white America is committing genetic and cultural suicide by allowing in too many blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. Also mentioned in the story are some of the negative responses and objections against his article.

- The next day's article reports that Mr. Chipparoni resigned from the post of the Republican town committee amidst a furor of criticism from Democrats, Republicans, and antidiscrimination groups. Included among his critics were Governor Diprete, GOP State Chairman J. Michael Levesque, Republican U.S. Senator John H. Chafee, spokespersons of the NAACP, the Urban League of Rhode Island, and the Rhode Island Coalition Against Bigotry.

- The August 26, 1988, article provides a followup on this incident. At the request of the president of the Providence chapter of the NAACP, Joseph T. Fowlkes Jr., State Republican Party Chairman J. Michael Levesque invited every Republican city and town chairman and every candidate for State and Federal office on the Rhode Island GOP ticket to a meeting with the NAACP. The purpose of the meeting was to talk about the role political leaders can play in eliminating racism and discrimination. A similar meeting was planned by State Democratic Party Chairman Sal Mancini. In this story, Mr. Fowlkes is quoted as saying, "It is not enough for politicians to denounce sensationalized instances and then go home and ignore it." His group is said to be looking for a commitment from political leaders that they will stand up and voice their opposition to racism when it happens, not only in an election year.

Of the remaining two articles (January 29, 1988, and May 18, 1988), one dealt with the disciplining of an East Providence school department bus aide for bringing into the high school a paper that department officials said was extremely vicious and racist in nature. The other described the interracial tension at Providence College, noting the allegation by black women students that they are being racially and sexually harassed on

campus and that the administration has been slow to take the situation seriously.

Two articles to date in 1989 (i.e., through April 1989) both dealt with the interracial unrest at Brown University.

- The April 29, 1989, article describes the outrage of minority students over a spree of racial graffiti at a dorm where about a quarter of the students are black, Asian, or Hispanic. It also mentions the distribution of a flyer that contains such phrases as "Keep White Supremacy (sic) Alive" and urges its readers to join the Brown chapter of the KKK.

- The next day's article states that Brown University President Vartan Gregorian, who assumed the Brown presidency on April 9, 1989, made a surprise visit to a dormitory and apologized to a group of Brown students for the flurry of racist incidents on campus and harshly condemned the acts, vowing to expel any culprits.⁹

A reading of these 14 articles carried over the past 5 years yields the following observations:

- (1) Of the 14 articles, five dealt with the interracial unrest at Brown University; one was related to an anti-Semitic incident at the University of Rhode Island; and another had to do with interracial tension facing black female students at Providence College. Thus, a total of seven or one-half of all stories on bigotry and violence carried in the *Journal* dealt with interracial incidents on college campuses.

- (2) Of the remaining seven articles, three were related to the white supremacist statement by two GOP town committee officials, and two were about the racial slurs made by a radio talk show host. Thus, about one-third of all stories (5 out of 14) carried in the *Journal* dealt with two specific incidents.

- (3) None of the articles reported on any issues of bigotry and violence at the statewide or community level. No story covers, and the reader is unable to learn from the *Journal-Bulletin*, what the situation is like regarding minority groups and refugees. Nor is there any coverage regarding what the level of interracial tension is at secondary schools or in communities, and how minority persons view the protection and treatment provided by law enforcement officials.

Since the *Journal-Bulletin* provides extensive coverage of a few isolated incidents and portrays individual incidents as reaching a closure, the reader is likely to gain an impression that racial relations in Rhode Island are calm. The *Journal-Bulletin* reader is likely to be lulled into a comforting feeling that racial incidents, when they occur, are taken care of appropriately and racial justice ultimately prevails. This image of racial justice is in stark contrast to the discomfoting picture of racial and ethnic harassment and intimidation, alleged police brutality, and simmering racial tension provided by other panels. (See in particular the third panel on "Bigotry and Violence from the Victim's Perspective.")

⁹ Since then President Gregorian has held several meetings with student representatives concerning racial incidents at Brown, and on Sept. 21, 1989, issued an open letter to the Brown community, reiterating unequivocally Brown's policy on racial/ethnic harassment and articulating Brown's philosophy on diversity and pluralism. Robert Reichley, vice president for external affairs, Brown University, telephone interview, Sept. 28, 1989.

Panel on Collecting Information on Bigotry and Violence in Rhode Island

Presentation by Captain John T. Leydon, Jr.

Representing the Rhode Island State Police, Captain Leydon¹⁰ described the status of the data collection system mandated by State law. After presenting statistics generated by this reporting system, he discussed some of the obstacles standing in the way of implementing the law. The Rhode Island State Police was mandated by State law¹¹ to develop by January 1, 1989, a reporting system to monitor the occurrence of crimes motivated by racial, religious, or ethnic bigotry or bias committed in the State. Captain Leydon pointed out that under Rhode Island law, crimes motivated by bigotry and bias include ethnic or religious intimidation, desecration of places of public assemblage, threat by terror, and threats to immigrants.

Working within the mandated timeframe, in December 1988 Col. Walter E. Stone, superintendent of the State police, mailed a letter to every law enforcement agency in the State explaining the new law. A form was distributed to the police departments to report incidents. The police departments are required to mail this form to the State police at the end of each month. The number of incidents reported since the beginning of this monitoring system on January 2, 1989, is as follows: none in January, two in February, six in March, totaling eight through March 1989.¹² To illustrate the type of incidents reported, Captain Leydon recounted the following:

- A swastika was spray-painted on the front of a home in Newport.
- Racial symbols and satanic symbols were spray-painted on a school in North Providence.
- A black teenager damaged a windshield of a truck of a white man who was moving into the teenager's neighborhood in Central Falls.
- A church service was disrupted in Woonsocket by four or five teenagers. After mass, parishioners found sacrilegious posters on the windshields of their vehicles.

The ultimate challenge in implementing the mandate of the monitoring system is to obtain adequate information on all crimes motivated by bigotry and bias and making sure that all such crimes are actually reported to the State police. According to Captain Leydon, two ingredients are essential in meeting this challenge. First, the officers have to be knowledgeable of the law and its implementing requirements. Each police officer should be fine tuned to telltale signs of crimes and be trained to look for and gather pertinent information or clues. Second, the public must be informed of

¹⁰ Adjutant of the Rhode Island State Police.

¹¹ R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-28-46 (1988). Development of system monitoring crimes motivated by bigotry and bias.

¹² The number of reported incidents in subsequent months was four in April, three in May, and one in June. Lt. Louis B. Clark, Rhode Island State Police, telephone interview, Sept. 19, 1989.

what the law is intended to accomplish and how they can help the law enforcement officials to implement the law. He elaborated on the need for specialized training of police officers, on the one hand, and educating the public, particularly the victim groups, on the other hand.

Presentation by Sergeant Brian Flynn

Sgt. Brian Flynn¹³ of the Boston Police Department, invited to share the Boston experience with the Rhode Island audience, made a presentation based on the experience of the CDU. With the court-ordered busing to desegregate schools in Boston in September 1974, numerous incidents of racial violence occurred in certain neighborhoods.

As part of its continuing effort to cope with the turbulent situation, on April 17, 1978, the Boston Police Department (BPD) created the Community Disorder Unit (CDU) to address the problem of persisting violent racial incidents. The creation of the CDU was precipitated by the lawsuit brought by a minority family against the BPD for an alleged failure to adequately protect them. Sergeant Flynn believes that since its creation the CDU has responded to the problems quite successfully. He singled out several factors contributing to the CDU success, including the steady increase in the size of the unit, improvement in investigative techniques, and sensitivity training of department personnel on minority community and civil rights issues.

Sergeant Flynn underscored as the most important reason for the success of the CDU the passage of the Massachusetts Civil Rights Act in February 1980. This law adds a second penalty in a crime if the crime violates a victim's civil rights by providing stiff criminal penalties (e.g., 1 year's confinement and a \$1,000 fine if physical injury is involved). More significant, Sergeant Flynn added, is the provision in this law that allows the CDU to get an injunction or restraining order against perpetrators of civil rights violations. This provision was the best tool for the CDU in that it enabled the CDU to quiet down entire neighborhoods in the aftermath of a racial incident and allowed the CDU to protect the victims and the witnesses while the criminal charges were winding their way, often tediously, through the court system.

From the law enforcement standpoint and based upon the CDU experience, Sergeant Flynn made several recommendations regarding the most effective means of dealing with incidents motivated by racial, ethnic, or religious bigotry or bias.

- It is essential to legislate a strict civil rights law, the Massachusetts law being an example.

- It is necessary to create a unit in each city or town police department to investigate civil rights violations. Major cities may create an investigative unit, while smaller towns may appoint a designated officer or detective to conduct these investigations. He added that the designated officer or unit should not be the one that investigates complaints against police officers.

- Not only leaders of the police department, but also elected and appointed officials in the State and local governments must send out a clear message that civil rights are a priority, since the police investigates civil rights cases only as vigorously as the example and the tone set by the public officials.

¹³ Night commander of the Community Disorder Unit, Boston Police Department.

- Outreach efforts must be made to all segments of the community to gain their confidence and to educate them regarding civil rights. The presence of minority officers is essential. Special effort should be made to reach all minority groups (Asian American groups, in particular) and the gay and lesbian communities, since members of these groups do not have confidence in the system and often do not feel comfortable reporting incidents to the police.

- Training of entire police departments in the area of civil rights should be conducted regularly both in police academies and during inservice training for officers who have been on the job for a while. In this connection, Sergeant Flynn noted that personnel from the Boston CDU would be pleased to cooperate with and offer assistance in setting up such training programs in Rhode Island.

Presentation by State Senator David H. Sholes

Substituting for State Senator Jeffrey J. Teitz, chairman, House Judiciary Committee, Senator David H. Sholes¹⁴ made a presentation on the legislative background of the laws pertaining to discrimination, hatred, bigotry, and harassment in the State.

In 1981 the Rhode Island Assembly addressed the issue of discrimination, bigotry, and harassment and established the Commission on Racial, Religious and Ethnic Harassment.¹⁵ The purpose of that commission was to study religious, racial, and ethnic harassment in the State and propose some laws relating to those problems that would safeguard and protect the public. As a result of the commission's work, several laws have been placed on the books in the past several years.

The array of State laws designed to protect the citizens of Rhode Island against bigotry and violence that are motivated by race, religion, and ethnicity is as follows:

The first of such statutes is related to vandalism,¹⁶ making it a felony to vandalize, defame, or destroy institutions that are symbols of a racial, religious, or ethnic group. This category includes houses of worship, educational institutions, recreational facilities, community centers, and cemeteries. Focusing on the nature of the institutions or the facility victimized greatly simplified the task of the prosecution by eliminating the need to prove the specific intent to harass or intimidate in each case. Rather, the intent is assumed from the nature of the target of the unlawful act.

The second statute concerns the issue of civil action, which previous speakers repeatedly pointed out as an effective enforcement tool. This statute, commonly known as "Civil Action for Ethnic or Religious Intimidation or Vandalism,"¹⁷ deals with injunctive relief. Any person who is maliciously subjected to an act or acts that may be construed to harass or intimidate because of a person's race, religion, or national origin may go into superior court and obtain injunctive relief against a perpetrator.

¹⁴ Chairman, Rhode Island Senate Committee on Health, Education and Welfare. He is also Chairman of the Rhode Island State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

¹⁵ R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-80-1 *et seq.* (1984). Commission on Religious, Racial and Ethnic Harassment.

¹⁶ R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-44-31 (Supp. 1987). Desecration of places of public assemblage.

¹⁷ R.I. Gen. Laws § 9-1-35 (1982).

The violation of a civil action is a misdemeanor, and the injunctive relief is intended to stop a perpetrator from continuing the harassment or intimidation.

The third statute addresses the problem of intentional infliction of emotional distress upon an individual because of the person's race, religion, or ethnicity. Typical manifestations of this conduct are the letters or telephone calls from the American Nazi Party, the KKK, or other fringe hate groups. Legislation¹⁸ provides for specific authorization of a civil action by the victim against the perpetrator, and it also provides for a criminal penalty.

The fourth statute deals with paramilitary training. This legislation¹⁹ is aimed at preventing the establishment or maintenance of paramilitary training camps in the State. Although such activity has not been seen in Rhode Island, the neighboring State of Connecticut, in the past, has witnessed problems of this nature. The legislation would prohibit the training of persons in the use of firearms, explosives, or incendiary devices, knowing or intending that the same will be unlawfully employed for use in, or in furtherance of, a civil disorder. It is drafted to proscribe conduct rather than to regulate speech and thus avoids any infringement of the first amendment.

The fifth statute,²⁰ which was passed in 1981, provides that any person who threatens to do injury to another person, group, or their reputation, or property without authorization—the key element here is without authorization—would be punished with up to 2 years in jail and a \$5,000 fine;

Another related statute is an act²¹ passed in 1983 to protect recent immigrants to the United States. It is a misdemeanor for a person to threaten another person who is lawfully living in the United States because of his or her immigrant status.

The seventh statute, passed in 1988, is the development of a system for monitoring crimes motivated by bigotry and violence, which was discussed earlier by Captain Leydon of the Rhode Island State Police.

These laws, along with some others,²² passed over the past 8 years, collectively protect all citizens in Rhode Island from much harassment and intimidation motivated by race, religion, and ethnicity.

In response to a query regarding recent activities of the Commission on Racial, Religious and Ethnic Harassment, Senator Sholes pointed out two developments. In 1988 the commission drafted and proposed the bill pertaining to the development of a monitoring data collection system on crimes motivated by race, religion, and ethnicity. Since then, the commission has concentrated on assisting the State police in drafting guidelines that will enable every city and town to report uniformly the crimes covered by the act. Based on the funds appropriated by the State general assembly in 1988, the commission is in the process of establishing a hotline to allow the victims of crime motivated by bigotry, harassment, and intimidation to report them. The underlying rationale here is that some victims may not

¹⁸ R.I. Gen. Laws § 9-1-35 (Supp. 1987)

¹⁹ R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-55-2 (Supp. 1987).

²⁰ R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-53-2 (Supp. 1987).

²¹ R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-53-3 (Supp. 1987).

²² Others include R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-42-3 (Supp. 1987) dealing with ethnic religious intimidation and R.I. Gen. Laws § 11-5-10.2.(1988) providing protection for the handicapped from assault and battery.

want to report the incident directly to a police department; they may be looking for an impartial or neutral agency to report an incident. Or they may feel as though it is not a crime and may hesitate to bother the police department. In any event, it was felt necessary to at least get a handle on this issue of potential underreporting by providing an alternative means of reporting.

In response to a question from the floor, Captain Leydon explained that if a complaint of alleged police brutality is filed against the local police department or a member of the Rhode Island State Police, the case is turned over to and investigated by the FBI. A representative of the local NAACP commented that police brutality against minorities is not only a form of violence, but bigotry in itself, and as such should be covered by the current reporting system and be reported as such at the State level.

Panel on Incidents of Bigotry and Violence from the Victims' Perspective

Presentation by Joseph T. Fowlkes, Jr.

Mr. Fowlkes²³ opened his presentation by expressing his sense of exasperation and weariness, which in large part stems from having had to repeat himself at numerous meetings and hearings over the past some 20 years in Rhode Island. He has appeared at many panels, such as the forum sponsored by the Advisory Committee, giving information and talking about the same kinds of things repeatedly without much change taking place. He stated that he appeared at this forum with an ill feeling, which had to do with the perceived inertia and insensitivity of our political system to civil rights issues.

He noted that our society is at risk; we do not really seem to care about bigotry, discrimination, and racial violence in our society. He continued, "If we did, we wouldn't have elected presidents of the United States who promoted and gave sanction to acts of bigotry and racism and discrimination, an administration that used its civil rights division to oppose every civil rights legislation that had been hard fought and won over the many years."

Referring to recent incidents such as a Hispanic family being run out of the Federal Hill area, a black family in Cranston being vandalized, a swastika painted on the East Side, the growth of skinheads in Rhode Island, and incidents at both Providence College and Brown University, Mr. Fowlkes asked the Committee if one still needs to come and talk about bigotry and violence. He claims "because of the kind of negative things that go on from the White House all the way down, bigotry reigns supreme in our nation." He suspects that those who are in control, those who are in control of economic development, do not want to see a change. He added "That is a feeling from my gut and from the people who are in the minority communities and don't have the opportunity to come before you and speak." He suggested that one of the first things the Advisory Committee might do is to say to the current "gentler and kinder" administration that there are people out there who do not believe the President.

Presentation by Stephanie Gurwitz

Regarding the rise of anti-Semitic incidents in the United States, Ms. Gurwitz²⁴ noted that in the past year incidents of vandalism and harassment increased by 18.5 and 41 percent, respectively. She felt the rise of anti-Semitism has been especially high in a number of States in the South that have very small Jewish communities.

She expressed two concerns regarding incidents of anti-Semitism and bigotry. When incidents are committed by school-age children or young

²³ President of the Providence branch of the NAACP, Providence.

²⁴ Director of Community Relations, the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island, Providence.

teens, there is a tendency to shrug them off saying, "Well, it's just kids playing pranks." In her opinion, it is not a simple prank. Whether a child knows the history of the holocaust or the Nazi philosophy, when a child draws a swastika on a Jewish institution, he or she knows that swastika is going to hurt somebody. And that is not a prank, especially when it is done in cemeteries. Even when young offenders are apprehended by law enforcement officers, they tend to get off lightly if it is their first offense and they have not broken the law previously.

She also discussed the problem of underreporting and its ramifications. Incidents of bigotry and violence occur much more frequently than the reported number indicates. She recounted her typical experiences at discussion sessions on anti-Semitism held in Jewish communities. At the beginning of each meeting, almost everybody says that there is no anti-Semitism, and they have not really experienced any. By the end of the meeting, though, every single person is able to give a personal experience that they have had within the past 2 years.

Incidents would go unreported because victims either they do not feel it is something that should be reported or that anybody is going to do anything about it or anything can be done about it. Ms. Gurwitz strongly feels that people need to know that they are not alone when they report the incident, and they are not alone when they follow up on it. In her opinion, combatting this deepseated feeling of futility and helplessness will not only help eradicate the cause of underreporting but contribute toward building a sense of solidarity and forming a coalitional basis for sustained struggle against bigotry and violence.

Presentation by Carlos Gonzalez

On behalf of the Hispanic community in Rhode Island, Mr. Gonzalez²⁵ spoke of the fear and concern the Hispanic community is feeling due to an increase in the incidents of discrimination motivated by racial, religious, and ethnic prejudice, immigration status, or physical appearance.

As specific illustrations, Mr. Gonzalez described four incidents:

- A Colombian woman, Mrs. Gomez, went to the Rhode Island Division of Motor Vehicles office to obtain a driver's license. She presented an alien card and a utility bill to prove her Rhode Island residency. These two documents were not enough²⁶ for the processing official and a third document, a Colombian birth certificate, was presented. Not only was that document insufficient, but the certificate had to be left there to be verified. At this point, Mrs. Gomez took the birth certificate away from the official and walked away with her 8-year-old son. The official followed her outside the building, calling her insulting names and making ethnic slurs. Fearing physical harm, Mrs. Gomez ran to her car.

She is still without her driver's license and afraid to return to the division of motor vehicles. Mr. Gonzalez added that such ethnicity and national

²⁵ An official of Progreso Latino, who was substituting for Patricia Martinez, executive director of Progreso Latino.

²⁶ According to the Rhode Island Department of Transportation, Division of Motor Vehicles, a person applying for a State driver's license must prove residency by showing any one of the following documents such as utility bill, tax bill, insurance policy, lease agreement, academic report card, payroll check with name and address, personal check with name and address, and other documents that establish residency in Rhode Island. Elaine Phillips, assistant administrator, Rhode Island Division of Motor Vehicles, telephone interview, Sept. 26, 1989.

origin-related abuse by the officials of the division of motor vehicles is quite common, and the experience of Mrs. Gomez is not unique. Many Hispanics complain that they have been asked to present a green card and a work authorization as well to obtain a driver's license. Sometimes they were even asked such questions as, "What you are doing here and where are you from?"

When Progreso Latino calls the division of motor vehicles office, the typical response is, "Oh, that didn't happen here. We are sure we can handle the situation." Mr. Gonzalez observes that Hispanics face more or less the same problem every day. It does not matter where they go, Woonsocket, Providence, or Pawtucket; it still happens.

- Mr. Garcia was stopped on Route 95 by a Rhode Island State trooper and asked to show his driver's license and automobile registration. Although Mr. Garcia was not charged with any offense, he was asked to follow the trooper, which he did. After a few minutes of following, Mr. Garcia was stopped again by the same trooper and was issued a ticket for speeding. The trooper stated that Mr. Garcia was speeding at 70 miles an hour. As far as Mr. Garcia was concerned, he was ticketed for following the instructions issued by the trooper. Mr. Gonzalez noted that this kind of situation, which might be called a case of entrapment, occurs frequently, but Hispanic people do not contest or fight the alleged injustice because they do not feel there is much of a chance to win against a policeman or a State trooper.

- The third illustration pertains to a group of over 40 Hispanic employees at a factory. Because most of them are undocumented aliens without proper papers, they are abused verbally and physically. Some of them have been pushed to the ground and called animals. Vulgar and obscene language has been routinely used against them by both supervisors and American coworkers. They have been warned that if they speak up or make trouble, they would be fired or the Immigration will be called in. In addition to this type of intimidation and abuse, more prevalent is the demeaning harassment Hispanics receive because of their inability to speak English. When Mr. Gonzalez accompanied, as interpreter, a Hispanic lady to get an X-ray picture taken, he observed discourteous, unprofessional, demeaning treatment such as: "Shut up, stand here; don't you even know your own name? What are you doing here? Okay, move over here—come on, and lift the hand."

In concluding his presentation, Mr. Gonzalez made three observations. First, the incidents he described are common occurrences and are increasing in frequency, creating a strong sense of distrust of the American system in the minds and hearts of Hispanic citizens of Rhode Island. The undercurrent of such apprehensive mistrust prevents them from assimilating into a new culture and frustrates their dream of becoming a part of an American society. Second, the wide gap created between the minorities in Rhode Island and the community at large is attributable mainly to the ignorance of the latter of other cultures and its insensitivity towards members of other cultures. Third, the well-meaning community, civic, or civil rights organizations are often guilty of (a) a condescending attitude in coming down to the Hispanic communities and telling Hispanics what their problems are; (b) not having effective representation of minority communities in their structures; (c) having too many meetings, hearings, and conferences without making substantive progress, without solving problems. He concluded that as a result a sense of exasperation sets in and grows.

Presentation by Reverend Moises Mercedes

Rev. Mercedes²⁷ described several incidents that he was either personally involved in or aware of to indicate the prevalence of prejudice, demeaning stereotypes, and insensitivity directed toward Hispanics on the part of law enforcement officials, public agency officials, and the general public.

The first incident took place in Providence just a few days before the forum. There was a drug raid on the first floor of an apartment building; a Hispanic family lived on the second floor. The raiding officials broke the door to the second floor apartment. The victim did not speak English and did not understand what the loud conversation among the officers was, but he realized they were serious when he was hit with a gun in the head and fell to the floor bleeding. They started kicking him in his back. Another person was in the bathroom shaving, ready to take a bath. He was pushed out of the bathroom naked, and there were two female police officers. When he tried to get his pants, he was pushed down on his knees. A knee came to the left side of his face, knocking him down on the floor where he was handcuffed and left lying for about 20 minutes, naked in front of the women and cold without any clothing. Reverend Mercedes saw marks on the man's arm and the left-hand side of the upper lip and the cuts in the head. This man also recalled hearing one of the officers saying in Spanish, "This guy has a hard head."

The second case involved a person of color with an accent who was looking for a job. He presented a temporary card from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to the prospective employer, who asked for additional identification. He presented his Rhode Island driver's license, which was not enough. He then presented his social security card, which also was not enough. Finally the prospective employer said, "We need a letter from the immigration." This person went to the INS, where he was told, "We don't give those types of letters. The card we gave you as a temporary resident should be enough." When he went back to the employer, they did not even open the door for him.

A third incident involved Reverend Mercedes himself. When he was quoted in a local newspaper regarding an immigration issue, a woman called his office to say, "You foreigners do not belong here. You should go back where you belong." When he responded by saying the Indians might say the same thing, the woman caller added, "but the Indians lost." His concluding remark was that the victims of bigotry and violence are not going to lose, but simply to get even.

Presentation by Sovan Sip

Mr. Sip²⁸ described the life of Southeast Asian refugees and immigrants in Rhode Island, who are living in an environment of racism and fear. Worsening the burden of adjusting to a new country with totally different customs and language, their life is made more difficult and stressful because they do not feel physically safe. They are afraid to go out on the streets after dark. They are afraid of reporting to the authorities or getting involved with the law enforcement or government authorities.

²⁷ Chair of the Rhode Island Immigration Reform Steering Committee. He is also pastor of the Star Jacob Church A/G, and commissioner of the Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights.

²⁸ Executive director, Socio-Economic Development Center for Southeast Asians, Providence.

Mr. Sip gave two examples to illustrate his contention. In April 1989 a female colleague of his was driving on Hanover Street in Providence. She saw a Cambodian girl who was just getting out of Central High School being harassed by a group of kids. The woman called the girl to get into her car quickly because she was afraid that physical harm might be done to the girl. When the girl jumped into the car, the harassers started throwing rocks and broke all the windows. The damage was over \$1,000. According to Mr. Sip, this type of harassment, intimidation, and terrorizing is not unusual.

The second incident occurred in early 1989. One day Mr. Sip received a call from a Cambodian family saying that there was an emergency in the family. Upon arrival, he learned that the actual incident took place the previous night, but the family could not call at the time because family members were physically beaten and could not get to the phone.

According to Mr. Sip, this is what happened that evening: A man walked into this family's house uninvited and asked for a cigarette. As the young man of the family was reaching into his pocket to pull out a cigarette and a lighter, the uninvited guest started beating him with a stick, without any provocation and without any reason. When his parents came out to the living room to stop what was going on, they got beaten as well. The whole family was beaten severely, suffering bruises and cuts. (Mr. Sip passed around several photos of the family members with readily identifiable injuries and bruises on their faces, heads, and arms.) Mr. Sip called the police, who came and made a rather quick investigation and left. About 10 minutes after the police left, the family received a letter which said, "If you still live here, we will kill you." Needless to say, the family was seized with terror and petrified by the followup letter of threat. The victim's family quickly moved to Lowell, Massachusetts, and Mr. Sip's organization could not pursue the matter legally any further.

Mr. Sip added that although this particular incident happened about 3 months ago, similar incidents do happen frequently, and Southeast Asian refugees and immigrants live under an invisible reign of terror, locking themselves inside the house after dark. Mr. Sip offered several recommendations.

- A police unit should be established, equivalent to the Boston CDU, geared to deal with interracial or ethnic disorders. The police department should make greater outreach efforts to educate and alleviate the mistrust of the court and government system harbored by Southeast Asian refugees and immigrants so that they will report incidents to the police and cooperate with the law enforcement. An essential ingredient of the outreach effort should be informational materials translated into languages refugees and immigrants can understand.

- The U.S. Department of Justice should investigate incidents of bigotry and violence directed against refugees in Rhode Island.

- A meeting of all ethnic, racial, religious, and community leaders should be held. The issue of bigotry and violence is not restricted to one or another group; it may be whites against blacks, blacks against Asians, Asians against Hispanics, or non-Jews against Jews, etc. He believes that the problem is a deep-seated one, requiring a sustained discussion from diverse perspectives and deserving collective community action.

Presentation by B. Jae Clanton

The Urban League of Rhode Island was created 50 years ago to combat racism and discrimination in housing and employment in the State of Rhode Island, Ms. Clanton said.²⁹ After 50 years, the league is still in business struggling with some of the same issues of bigotry, discrimination, and racism.

Over the past year, incidents of racism have surfaced many times on college campuses, including the incident of the preceding week at Brown University. The Rhode Island Coalition Against Bigotry tried to bring together a group of organizations that together could begin to deal with some of the racial incidents on college campuses. The effort was not very successful, largely because it was busy responding to incidents of racism and violence in the community. Reflecting on her experience, Ms. Clanton said, "The thing that really disturbs me is that many leaders in our State from the State and local levels were silent on this issue. I want to repeat: I think our leaders at the State level and our local communities were silent on this issue."

She noted that the Urban League has received reports of police brutality and incidents of bigotry and violence involving Hispanic communities, Asian communities, and black communities. She thinks that a lot more happens than is reported to any agency or authority, and it is necessary to implement the monitoring data collection system now mandated by the State law, which is the responsibility of the State police. She emphasized that for an effective implementation of the monitoring system, a climate must be created where people trust the system and feel comfortable in coming forward to report incidents.

Ms. Clanton concluded her presentation by emphasizing one recommendation, that the leaders of the State, including the Governor and the mayors of cities and towns, should come together and let the people of this State know that this is a high priority in the community and that racism in any form will not be tolerated. We need to begin to take some leadership in this regard, she said.

Presentation by Grace Osediacz

In order to avoid recounting similar incidents, Ms. Osediacz³⁰ limited herself to presenting only two cases that she had been working on personally in recent months.

The first case had to do with a 15-year-old boy, a student in the Central Falls school system, who received mental abuse and physical assault from one of his teachers. The case is now in the process of working through the system, with a third party mediating between the school system and the parents. The solution may possibly include the State department of education and the local law enforcement agency. According to Ms. Osediacz, this case reminded her that a student receives disparate treatment from teachers if the student is of a different color and of a different ethnic background from the teachers, or acts in the classroom in a fashion different from his or her peers. Ms. Osediacz feels this case is typical of the general situation in the Providence school system where 56

²⁹ Executive director of the Urban League of Rhode Island and chair of the Rhode Island Coalition Against Bigotry, Providence.

³⁰ Director of the Rhode Island Coalition Against Bigotry, Providence.

percent of the population is minority but only 5 percent of the teaching staff is minority.

The second case deals with a woman who was frustrated and angry because of the way she was treated by State agency officials. When the woman called Ms. Osediacz's office, she was hysterical because she had no food in the house to feed her three children and yet she could not get food stamps. According to the woman, on several occasions in the 2 preceding weeks she called the department of employment security to obtain food stamps, but department officials either hung up without proper resolution, or told her to call Ms. Osediacz. When Ms. Osediacz walked into the agency with the woman, within 10 minutes the woman was able to get her food stamps. It is Ms. Osediacz's feeling that the basis for the different treatment was that the, "applicant was poor and black, and the agency worker just didn't have time for her; they couldn't have cared less." Recalling that this woman was born in the United States without any language barrier, she wonders how bad it could be for an immigrant or refugee. Even though it may not be violence in the traditional sense of the word, it is clearly harassment, and its effects are devastating. Ms. Osediacz stated that these cases are typical of what she and other community workers run into frequently.

Ms. Osediacz recommended that it is time the leaders of the State take some collective action. They need to be aware of what State agency and other public officials are doing, and pay attention to what takes place at the linkage point between State and public officials, including teachers and the recipients, the public. Also they need to realize that distrust, frustration, and growing anger are festering in the minds of the victims and minority communities. She ended her presentation with a note of apprehension and warning: "I think what will happen is that we may see more violence that becomes more and more apparent. People are not going to sit by and allow their car windows to be broken; people are not going to tolerate that. They are going to turn around and smack somebody and that is the last thing I would like to see happen." She ruefully added that in some way it may be the only way to get people to sit up and take notice.

The ensuing discussion and exchange between panelists and SAC members brought forth the following points:

- Greater and more effective enforcement of the laws that are currently on the books both at the Federal and State levels is one thing that can and should be done. It will be a necessary, big step toward improving the situation in Rhode Island.

- As for the prospect of improvement in the near future, several panelists conveyed a weary sense of *deja vu* and a feeling of futility. These panelists pointed out that the problems discussed at the forum are not new revelations and that pertinent recommendations have been made in the past. People get tired of talking and talking without noticeable signs of progress. One panelist said that the United States is more segregated in terms of housing, employment, the inner city, and the suburbs than ever and that over the past 10 years has really gone backwards. The need for a strong national leadership from the President and the Federal Government was prominently mentioned. Another panelist claimed that if Americans as a nation ever really want to resolve the race issue in this country, they can.

- People are afraid of others whom they do not know or do not come in contact with. Lest people react out of fear when faced with others in an

adversarial or tense situation, we must begin to give our young people a sense of appreciation of others and their different customs. When we begin to instill that sense in our young people from an early age in our school systems and throughout the fabric of our society, we will have begun to combat some of the issues surfaced at this forum. In the same vein, Mr. Sip recommended that interaction or dialogue between government agencies and communities should be initiated immediately to open channels of communication and to attain understanding by both sides.

- Many SAC members were frightened by one aspect of the bigotry phenomenon discussed by several panelists, i.e., the mistreatment and harassment minority persons receive from public agencies, for example, at the department of employment security and the division of motor vehicles. This phenomenon, which SAC member Norman Tilles called, for want of a better phrase, bureaucratic bigotry, is alleged to be widespread and pervasive. There was a growing consensus among SAC members and panelists that this topic needs to be brought to the attention of the general public and State officials and the Advisory Committee should pursue it further.

Panel on Bigotry and Violence from the Law Enforcement Perspective

Participants on the panel were Commander Richard Delion, Pawtucket Police Department; Patrolman Roland Grant, community relations officer, East Providence Police Department; Edward Lavelle, administrator, Newport Police Department; and Commander Richard Tamborini, Deputy Chief of Police, Providence Police Department.

None of these law enforcement officers found any increase in incidents of violence stemming from bigotry and bias in recent months. Mr. Lavelle indicated that since his department started collecting information on such incidents in January 1989 under the new Rhode Island law, only two incidents had been recorded. (For discussion of the law, see the second panel above, "Collecting Information on Incidents of Bigotry and Violence.") Mr. Lavelle also pointed out that such reports do not fully measure the incidence of violence motivated by bigotry, since such incidents are underreported for a variety of reasons, including fear of retribution and fear of social embarrassment.

There was also general agreement that it is difficult to distinguish between a crime of violence and a crime of violence motivated by bigotry. Patrolman Grant was certain that differentiation is possible although they are very close. Commander Delion cautioned that, in ensuring an accurate report on such crimes, it is important to see that the information put in the system is factual and not speculative. Mr. Lavelle reminded those attending the forum that the police wear uniforms and, as a result, people do not tell the police all the things they would like to say and all the things that they feel.

In sum, it seems clear that representatives of law enforcement agencies in Rhode Island agree that bigotry and violent crimes resulting from it are a problem in Rhode Island. They are, however, confident that modern tools of law enforcement and the new Rhode Island law mandating the collection of data on crimes motivated by bigotry and bias will help citizens, their elected officials, and the police to understand the problem better and to devise solutions to it. All four police participants indicated their departments would vigorously uphold laws against such violence.

Each also offered solutions to crimes resulting from racism and other forms of ethnocentrism. These solutions may be divided into three parts: education and training; use of minority personnel; and developing partnerships with community organizations and individuals.

Education and Training

Commander Delion thought it important to identify violence resulting from bigotry as an issue to be studied and taught in Rhode Island's municipal police training schools, and that this should be one of the highlight topics of such training. Patrolman Grant of East Providence stated flatly that education can reduce prejudice, and the police officers out there need it. Such education will, he cautioned, cost money. Mr. Lavelle emphasized the importance of continuing the training of officers, saying that the Newport

Police Department would welcome expert training and take advantage of whenever the opportunity presents itself. Mr. Lavelle suggested that it would be impossible to try to train several thousand police officers in the State of Rhode Island to be more sensitive to the special problems of minority groups, but that individual departments might select persons to be trained in this area, who in turn could assume responsibility for training their fellow officers.

Use of Minority Personnel

Commander Tamborini testified that in Providence officers from minority groups serve as counselors in incidents where racism and other forms of bigotry may be a factor. Commander Tamborini explained that the reasons for such assignments stemmed from the awareness that it may sometimes be extremely difficult for a nonminority person to understand the demeaning nature of bigotry or harassment, even to the point of investigating such complaints objectively. Mr. Lavelle pointed out that Newport, despite a minority population of 9 percent, may have fewer problems than might be anticipated because the percentage of employees in the city's police department reflects the demographics of the general population. In Pawtucket there are, according to Commander Dellon, one black officer and at least 20 officers of Portuguese descent, half of whom are bilingual. Given the substantial increase in the number of Hispanics in Pawtucket, Commander Dellon went on to say, the department recognized the need to expand the number of Spanish-speaking officers and arranged to have courses taught in that language without cost to law enforcement personnel but with very little success.

In sum, panelists representing local police departments agreed on the importance of providing initial training on the relationship between bigotry and Rhode Island's future police officers. And they all agreed on the importance of continuing such training for the policemen and policewomen on the street.

Partnership with Community Organizations and Individuals

Participants from the law enforcement agencies also agreed on the importance of working with individuals and organizations in the minority community. Mr. Lavelle outlined his department's efforts to instill in the community a sense of obligation on their part to keep the police informed, to tell the police what is going on, to be partners in the efforts to try to make their streets safer. An important part of this effort in Newport has been to put patrolmen back on foot, to get them out of their cars and into regular interaction with the people for whose safety they are responsible. Mr. Lavelle believes this approach has worked. Because of the ongoing ties between such officers and Newport residents, he is confident that no serious racial problems are brewing there. To complement these outreach efforts, the Newport Police Department has established some close ties with social service agencies in the community.

Patrolman Grant indicated that East Providence once had a police cadet program that brought minorities into the police department. But the program was discontinued for lack of funds despite the fact that it improved relations between nonwhites and the police.

In Providence, Commander Tamborini noted, the police department had established a liaison with formal minority organizations and leaders. In Newport, special efforts have been made to reach out to a public housing

neighborhood populated by a number of minorities. And finally, the East Providence Police Department tries to have interpreters and translators available on each shift. In East Providence persons arrested are read their rights in Portuguese and Spanish, but Patrolman Grant concedes that when a translator is needed for one of the Southeast Asian languages, the department has no choice but to call International House, hoping to get somebody.

In sum, the law enforcement officials who testified during the forum understand the necessity of reaching out to minorities, of getting to know them, and of understanding their perspective on bigotry and violence. The representatives of police departments realize that minority-group members are often suspicious of the police, and their lack of trust in law enforcement organizations may prevent them from being open and candid about racial harassment, bigotry, and violence. The departments have developed various strategies to improve relations with the minority peoples they serve, and in their opinion some of these tactics have improved police insight into the minority community.

Panelists' presentations indicate that the police are concerned with racial, religious, and ethnic hatred and that they have developed appropriate responses to cope with it. They expect that the new law requiring Rhode Island law enforcement agencies to report crimes of violence stemming from bigotry will improve understanding of the problem and may help the police to develop new strategies. Education and training, the use of minority personnel, and community outreach all require funds at a time when the State is running a deficit and Rhode Islanders seem far more concerned with such pressing problems as the drug traffic and the crimes it produces than with controlling and punishing bigots.

Commander Delion of Pawtucket put it well when he observed that each department must address what its own citizens perceive as the most important crime within its borders. Although police must play an important role in its leadership to diminish acts of bigotry, the community must not sidestep its responsibility to educate itself on its own priorities. The emerging consensus was that if Rhode Islanders make it clear they will not tolerate racial, religious, and ethnic hatred, that they are willing to spend money to eliminate such hate, and that they want those guilty of violence stemming from it to be swiftly and surely punished, then violence motivated by bigotry will soon disappear. But so long as neither the citizens of Rhode Island nor their elected leaders place bigotry and violence among their priorities, it will continue.

Summary

The community forum on bigotry and violence consisted of four panels, each dealing with different facets of the phenomenon. Sixteen panelists participated in the forum representing law enforcement agencies, minority and civil rights organizations, the State legislature, and the academic research community. The highlights of panelists' presentations and their ensuing discussion are summarized here.

According to the results of a recently completed research project on civil rights crimes in Boston, incidents of racial violence are usually a phenomenon in which a group of individuals attacks, without provocation, a single victim who is a stranger to the offenders. Since civil rights crimes are often committed by strangers without provocation, a debilitating sense of vulnerability lingers on in the victims long after the incidents. In over half of the racial incidents where some reason is recorded, neighborhood turf or territoriality is claimed to be the cause. Several factors make identification of racial violence difficult such as the victim's misinterpreting the nature of an incident, the victim's reluctance to report the incident, and the lack of sensitized awareness in responding police officers. There was general agreement that by restraining alleged or potential offenders from certain actions, the court-ordered injunction can function as a most effective preventive measure against incidents of bigotry and violence.

Over the past 5 years, the *Providence Journal-Bulletin* carried a total of 14 articles dealing with incidents of bigotry and violence motivated by race, national origin, and religion in Rhode Island. A review of these 14 articles shows that a few selected incidents were given extensive coverage by carrying articles over several days, usually giving a sense of progress and closure. Such coverage is likely to develop in the reader a false feeling of comfort that racial incidents, when they occur, are taken care of appropriately and racial justice ultimately prevails.

As mandated by State law, the Rhode Island State Police Department has developed and placed in operation a data collection system on crimes motivated by bigotry and bias. This system compiles data supplied monthly by local police departments. The ultimate success of the monitoring system rests on two ingredients: (1) the fine-tuned training of each police officer to the tell-tale signs of crimes, and (2) the education of the public regarding the intent of the law so that law enforcement officers can more readily implement the law.

The community disorder unit of the Boston Police Department believes that it has been effective in dealing with civil rights crimes, thereby contributing to the curtailment and prevention of civil rights violations. Its success is attributable to (1) the injunctive power accorded to the police by the Massachusetts Civil Rights Act of 1980 against perpetrators of civil rights violations, and (2) the sensitivity training police officers receive on minority community and civil rights issues.

The Rhode Island State legislature has enacted, in the past 8 years, an array of State laws designed to protect its citizens against bigotry and violence motivated by race, ethnicity, and religion. These laws: (1) make it a felony to vandalize, defame, or destroy institutions that are symbols of a racial, ethnic, or religious group; (2) enable any person subjected to

harassment and intimidation because of race, religion or national origin to obtain from the State superior court injunctive relief against a perpetrator(s); (3) prohibit the establishment or maintenance of paramilitary camps in the State; and (4) make it a misdemeanor for a person to threaten another person who is legally living in the United States because of his or her immigrant status.

In stark contrast to the image of relative tranquility on racial issues conveyed by the *Providence Journal-Bulletin* as described above, panelists representing minority, civil rights, and community organizations portrayed a situation where incidents of bigotry and violence recur and interracial tension is rising. In particular, these panelists underscore the following items.

(1) Since 1980 national commitment to the advancement of civil rights causes has eroded, being replaced by a rise of anti-civil rights sentiment. This change in social climate has spurred incidents of anti-Semitism, ethnic or racial harassment and intimidation, and outright violence.

(2) Many incidents of bigotry and violence go unreported. Underreporting of incidents give rise to a false societal complacency. Two concurrent actions should be taken to improve the situation; one is to sensitize law enforcement officials to minority community and civil rights issues, and the other is to assist the public to build trust in the system so that they will report incidents to proper authorities and help the police to enforce the law.

(3) There is a wide gap, even a schism, between the minority communities and the community at large. Members of the Southeast Asia community receive the brunt of interracial hostility from white citizens and feel unprotected by the police.

(4) Members of the Hispanic community report incidents of alleged police brutality. Frequently, they are targets of ethnic harassment and intimidation by employers and coworkers, and are also victims of "bureaucratic bigotry" committed by public officials and employees.

(5) There is a general perception that elected or appointed public officials are not really concerned about civil rights issues and, hence, efforts such as the community forum held by the Advisory Committee are deemed to have little impact. This feeling of cynicism, weariness, and futility was evident in several panelists. One panelist suggested that, given the climate of receding civil rights concerns, the leaders of the State of Rhode Island, including the Governor and the mayors of cities and towns, have to play a catalytic leadership role. They need to come together and let the people of the State know that racism in any form will not be tolerated and that this is a priority in the community.

Representatives of the law enforcement agencies agreed that although crimes resulting from bigotry and bias are a problem in Rhode Island, they have not found any increase in such incidents in recent months. A successful implementation of the State-mandated data collection system on crimes motivated by bigotry and bias will be instrumental in better understanding the problem of bigotry and violence in Rhode Island and devising solutions to it. These law enforcement representatives made three suggestions for dealing with the problem of bigotry and violence, namely: (1) education and training of police officers; (2) extensive use of minority personnel as police officers and as interpreters and translators; and (3) fostering partnerships with minority community organizations and individuals.

The Providence  Journal-Bulletin

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JAMES V. WYMAN
VICE PRESIDENT
AND
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

January 15, 1990

Mr. Ki-Taek Chun, Deputy Director
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights
Eastern Regional Division
1121 Vermont Avenue
Washington, DC 20425

Dear Mr. Chun:

The following is the statement I would appreciate having appended to the Rhode Island Advisory Committee's report on bigotry and violence that we discussed last Friday. I am grateful for your follow-up call on the matter and the opportunity to place our responses in proper perspective.

STATEMENT

Last spring, the Journal-Bulletin furnished the Rhode Island Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights with copies of stories relating to our coverage of incidents of bigotry and violence in Rhode Island from March of 1984 through April of 1989.

The material provided was drawn from our computerized data base of coverage and focused narrowly on the key subjects of "bigotry and violence" that we understood the committee's inquiry and subsequent report would center upon.

It became apparent upon receipt of the committee's draft report in early December that the scope of its inquiry was considerably broader than that of our response.

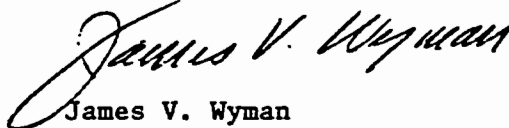
Mr. Ki-Taek Chun
January 15, 1990
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STATEMENT CONTINUED:

In light of this apparent misunderstanding, we immediately initiated a broader data base search and delivered a substantial computer printout package of additional stories to the committee on December 13, 1989.

The package included news coverage and editorial comment on issues ranging from discrimination and racial bias to housing and refugee problems and concerns. We feel the additional material would provide anyone reviewing it a more valid perspective of Journal-Bulletin coverage commitment and performance in these areas over the period tracked in the report.

Sincerely,



James V. Wyman
Vice President and
Executive Editor

JVW:adm