

RACIAL AND ETHNIC TENSIONS IN THE CITIES OF
CHARLESTON, COLUMBIA, GREENVILLE

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Findings And Recommendations

A Report Of The
South Carolina Advisory Committee
To The
United States Commission On Civil Rights

Wednesday, April 7, 1993
Courtyard By Marriott
347 Zimalcrest Drive
Columbia, South Carolina

RACIAL AND ETHNIC TENSIONS IN THE CITIES OF CHARLESTON, COLUMBIA, AND
GREENVILLE IN SOUTH CAROLINA

INTRODUCTION

The South Carolina Advisory Committee to the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights convened three panels of citizens in three cities to hear evidence of racial and ethnic tensions found within their communities. While their messages were cogent and factual, their delivery was often peppered with emotions, as they recounted incidents of racial upheaval and personal degradation.

Obvious throughout the three presentations was the common thread of racial tensions across neighborhoods, across the commerce community, across social settings, across the workplace, across school settings, and across establishments where social services are given to children, women, and men.

It is important to note that according to the 1990 census, the Black population constituted 12.3 percent of the resident population in the United States, up from 11.8 percent in 1980. On the other hand, the downside of this growth is the fact that Black men unemployment figures continue to rise. In 1988, this figure was 11.7 percent. In 1991, the figure increased to 12.9 percent. For Black females, unemployment is also a problem. In 1989, this figure was 11.4 percent. In 1991, the figure increased to 11.9 percent.

Summarily, therefore, it is obvious even to the casual observer that racial tension is brought on by racial disparity in hiring, in promotion, in firing. It is fueled by inappropriate law enforcement interactions. It is perpetuated by the displacement of Black families in the name of progress through eminent domain. It is reinforced by the white male dominated power structure, which comprises our financial institutions and government structures. And it is also subtle, with only outbreaks of blatant acts. It is compounded by the polite, southern manners that leaves it unspoken and unfronted until an explosion, until - perhaps - the next Los Angeles !

This summary, therefore, presents findings as collected at the three sites: Charleston, Columbia, and Greenville. Culminated from these findings are the recommendations offered by the Advisory Committee.

Charleston
June 19, 1992

Panelists Appearing Before The Advisory Committee

1. Mr. Robert Daily, Citizen
2. The Honorable Herbert Fielding, State Senator
3. Ms. Patricia Fields, Educator
4. Mr. Jim French, Publisher and Editor, The Charleston Chronicle
5. Mr. Thomas Johnson, Legislative Chairman, Charleston NAACP
6. Ms. Reid, Editor, Coastal Times Newspaper
7. Mr. Michael Rivers, President/NAACP on St. Helena Island
8. Mr. William Saunders, Executive Director/COBRA (Committee on Better Racial Assurance)

FINDINGS

1. In the City of Charleston, Blacks are 42 percent of the population. In the County of Charleston, Blacks are 35 percent of the population.
2. On the Charleston County Council, only one Black sits as a member. Therefore, Blacks continue to be under-represented in the political community.
3. In Charleston, Blacks continue to be the last hired or hired in the lowest paying jobs; the last to be promoted.
4. In the construction of new businesses, such as the Omni Place Hotel, available jobs for Blacks were domestic positions and even these were greatly reduced by the number of white college students hired.
5. With the construction of the municipal auditorium and the aquarium, hundreds of Blacks were displaced through eminent domain.
6. Between January 1992 and June 1992, the Charleston community maintained housing discriminating practices, as documented for this time period by the Charleston Branch of the NAACP.
7. The banking industry discriminates against Blacks, often denying them loans.
8. Although city and county employees have increased the numbers of employed Blacks, they have kept them in low managerial positions. Example: City employed 1,177. Of these, 37 were paid \$40,000 or more. Of these 37, only 7 are Black. County employed 1,440. Of these, 51 were paid \$40,000 or more. Of these 51, only 1 is Black.
9. In the Charleston area, one chain store is guilty of racial discrimination (documented) as seen in Wal-Mart's refusal to admit Black teens because of the color of their skin.

10. Black males suffer immensely at the hands of police officers. They are accosted, handcuffed, beaten, yet not charged. Thus, Black men in Charleston will not stop for police officers unless they are near a well-lighted or heavily populated area. There appears to be a total loss of trust with the police department in the City of Charleston.

11. Blacks suffer the pangs of racism through environmental issues. A factory on King Street had a recent deadly explosion, killing 8 people. The plant borders a very poor Black community. With chemicals leaking out of the facility, the plant has been fined for numerous health violations, but to no avail. Thus, the Black community continues to suffer with this environmental problem.

12. Institutions of racism exist in the City of Charleston: The Citadel and The College of Charleston. Hazing, shooting, and dismissal of Black students exist at The Citadel. Also, at The Citadel, employees who worked to establish the union were fired, then rehired by a sub-contractor where they lost all benefits. The College of Charleston, with its high enrollment of Black students, has less than 5 teachers and none tenured.

13. In public education, Black teachers are disappearing while white teachers are increasing in classrooms where the majority of students is Black. Onle one traditional Black high school remains: Burke High.

Columbia
September 25, 1992

Panelists Appearing Before The Advisory Committee

1. Mr. Morris Blackman, Professor/University of South Carolina
2. Ms. Barbara Brown, County Agent in Sumter, SC
3. Rev. Joseph Darby, Pastor, St. Phillip AME Church
4. Mr. David L. Dillard, South Carolina Black Media Group
5. Mr. Todd Ewing, Diversity Consultant
6. Mrs. Harriet Gardin Fields, Richland County Councilwoman
7. Mr. William Griffin, Business Owner
8. Mr. Jesse Washington, Executive Director/Greater Columbia Community Relations Council

FINDINGS

1. Racial tensions and conflict exist in the Columbia area whereby problems are obvious but there are less and less resources to work toward the resolutions of these conflicts. In fact, it appears that reducing racial tensions is a not a desire or priority of policy makers.
2. Many young white people in the Columbia area are unaware that they are racist and many young Blacks are not aware that they are discriminated against. There is no forum to help young people to know what these terms include or mean in terms of human rights.
3. European-South Carolinians are doing everything they can to keep Blacks as under-classes, for they fear that with the world becoming brown, they will be relegated to minority status. Thus the number of murders of young Black males increases while the acts go unpunished, in most instances.
4. The Black media is not very effective because of advertising restrictions. Therefore, either newspapers or magazines are going out of business or these print media are ineffective in terms of eliminating racism.
5. Two basic needs are required in a civilized democracy: a healthy population and an educated population. Neglecting either of these will cause the society to crumble. It appears that South Carolina and Columbia are failing under these two basic needs because of political neglect.
6. Racism is very critical in the Columbia area because many people are not openly expressing their anger about daily experiences in the workplace, in schools, and in places of businesses, such as banks. Thus, high-level tension exists !
7. Financial institutions discriminate against Blacks through their lending practices. This is wide-spread,

8. In Columbia, town meetings have been organized to help both Blacks and Whites focus on each other's needs and aspirations. Additionally, the police department has established police sub-stations in parts of housing projects. While these efforts are commendable, they have not unearthed the deep-seated racist tensions that are mounting day by day in the Black community where young Blacks show very little patience with the system-as-usual practices.

Greenville
April 1, 1992

Panelists Appearing Before The Advisory Committee

1. Mr. Larry Byrd, National Spokesman, Black Economic Education
2. Mrs. Julia Childs Adams, Coordinator, Greenville County Human Relations Commission
3. Rev. S. C. Cureton, Pastor, Reedy River Baptist Church
4. Rev. J. M. Fleming, Concerned Citizens for Equal Justice
5. Ms. Lottie Gibson, Chair, The Community Action Agency Board
6. Mr. Fletcher Smith, Member, Greenville County Council
7. Mr. Bill Whitney, President, Greenville Urban League

FINDINGS

1. In employment, the continuation of unfair practices exist as seen in employment levels and termination of employment. Public service jobs do not reflect the racial make-up of Greenville and private sector jobs concentrate on window-dressing, giving little meaningful employment opportunities to Blacks.
2. In education, injustices in disciplinary action handed out to Black students is documented. Additionally, where Blacks students are in the majority in public schools, buildings are allowed to deteriorate and schools are eventually closed, causing Black pupils to be bused.
3. In the judicial system, the false perception that all Black male teens are troublemakers or criminally motivated is evident among judges and lawyers. Blacks make up the largest percentage of people in prison and jails, yet a larger percentage of Whites commit crimes.
4. In housing, the act of red-lining exists in Greenville, and lack of enforcement of fair-housing practices continues to plague the Black community. Language in the HUD housing legislation places an undue burden on Black lower-income families living in public housing.
5. In the financial institutions, on a daily basis, Blacks suffer through discriminatory practices whereby loans are denied them. The Black entrepreneur seemingly fails before beginning a small business because of lack of sufficient capital.
6. In media, negative images of Blacks are portrayed across television and newspapers. The print and electronic media do not present Blacks in a fair and honest manner, emphasizing the positives. Also, the media ignores requirements of FCC regulations as they relate to racial minorities and the news media.
7. In health care, a lack of provisions for adequate services to Black communities exists. Affordable and adequate health care for lower-income Blacks is, for the most part, unavailable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Charleston

1. THAT the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights use its subpoena powers to convene a meeting of the Mayor of Charleston, the Chair of City Council, the Chair of County Council, the Chief of Police, the Head of the Ministerial Alliance, the Head of the NAACP, the Head of an African American Women's Group, an African American community activist, three African American teens, and three White teens.
2. THAT all-out efforts on voting be implemented immediately without interference with the goal of 90 percent eligible African Americans registered and 80% turn-out in local, state, and national elections.
3. THAT the church be continued as a focal point for reducing racial tension.
4. THAT an effort be made to organize the youth of Charleston for programs and projects to reduce and eliminate racial tensions.
5. THAT the media be sensitized to the need to participate in the harmonizing of the Charleston community.
6. THAT economics be used to help solve the problem of racial tension in Charleston.
7. THAT a time-table be set for reducing racial tension, with community folk participating in the decisions of this posture.
8. THAT the governing bodies of Charleston be compelled to make quarterly reports to the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights and to the communities which they serve.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Columbia

1. THAT institutionalized racism in the public school system be publicly addressed whereby specific recommendations will be printed in the news media and whereby a task force shall be formed to carry out the resulting recommendations.
2. THAT the Chief of Police be commended and encouraged to continue creating community-based police sub-stations in order to "connect" the people to positive strategies of law enforcement.
3. THAT the Greater Columbia Community Relations Council be funded appropriately in order to work effectively in eliminating racial conflicts and tensions in two important areas: financial institutions and the workplace.
4. THAT citizens form "watch-dog" components to present facts, figures, incidents, and solutions to situations such as the "drinking ordinance," a law seemingly aimed at young Black males while White males go untouched.
5. THAT the media - print and electronic - be called to task on releasing news that increases racial tensions and conflicts. The positives in race relations should be highlighted if newspapers are expected to maintain their circulation figures. The same applies to television and radio.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Greenville

1. THAT the leadership of Greenville come together to address problems related to race relations.
2. THAT the public school system be accountable for teaching a greater sensitivity of race relations, from the administration levels to the instructional level.
3. THAT an all-out effort be made to have Blacks and Whites, particularly the leadership, to attend this type of public forum whereby the leaders of the Greenville community can become sensitized to the racial tensions that exist in the city and its surroundings.
4. THAT problems associated with institutional racism be recognized, discussed, and resolved if the community is to advance.
5. THAT the implementation of a process begin in the very near future that would make individuals or organizations or agencies liable for discriminatory practices.

THE SOUTH CAROLINA ADVISORY COMMITTEE
of the
United States Commission On Civil Rights

Members

1. Mr. Gilbert Zimmerman, Chairman/Burton, South Carolina
2. Attorney Rudy Barnes, Jr., Newberry, South Carolina
3. Dr. Oscar Butler/Orangeburg, South Carolina
4. Dr. Marianna White Davis/Columbia, South Carolina
5. Mr. Milton Kimpson/Columbia, South Carolina
6. Bishop Johnny Smith/Greenville, South Carolina
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