

# Perceptions of Racial Tensions in South Carolina

South Carolina Advisory Committee to the  
United States Commission on Civil Rights

May 1995

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

## **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 1983 act, as amended by the Civil Rights Commission Amendments Act of 1994, the Commission is charged with the following duties pertaining to discrimination or denials of the equal protection of the laws based on race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin, or in the administration of justice: investigation of individual discriminatory denials of the right to vote; study and collection of information relating to discrimination or denials of the equal protection of the law; appraisal of the laws and policies of the United States with respect to discrimination or denials of equal protection of the law; maintenance of a national clearinghouse for information respecting discrimination or denials of equal protection of the law; investigation of patterns or practices of fraud or discrimination in the conduct of Federal elections; and preparation and issuance of public service announcements and advertising campaigns to discourage discrimination or denials of equal protection of the law. 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 3(d) of the Civil Rights Commission Amendments Act of 1994. 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.

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## Letter of Transmittal

South Carolina Advisory Committee to the  
U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

**Members of the Commission**  
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Cruz Reynoso, *Vice Chairperson*  
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Robert P. George  
Constance Horner  
Russell G. Redenbaugh  
Charles Pei Wang

Mary K. Mathews, *Staff Director*

Attached is an edited summary report of the transcripts of a series of three briefing meetings held by the South Carolina Advisory Committee in Greenville, April 1, 1992; Charleston, June 19, 1992; and Columbia, September 25, 1992, on racial tensions in the State. The Advisory Committee approved, by a vote of 10-2, submission of this report to the Commission.

The Advisory Committee is troubled by the refusal of public officials, white and black, in all three cities to participate in the briefing meetings and to respond to excerpts of the draft of the report. There was a general consensus among briefing meeting participants that, while racial tensions in recent years have proven to be less volatile in the State, they, nevertheless, remain severely problematic. Perceptions of alienation, fortified by isolation and exclusion based on race, were the order of the day in all of the briefing meetings. Also, with the renewed issue of the flying of the Confederate flag at State facilities, racial tensions have become further exacerbated.

Although the information provided does not result from an exhaustive review, it will be of value to the Committee for further program planning, and we hope it will be of interest to the Commissioners.

Respectfully,



Gilbert Zimmerman, *Chairperson*  
South Carolina Advisory Committee

## **South Carolina Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights**

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\* Not a SAC member when the briefing meetings were held.

### **Acknowledgments**

The South Carolina Advisory Committee wishes to provide a special thanks to Marianna Davis and the staff of the Commission's Southern Regional Office for their help in the preparation of this summary report. The forum and summary report were the principal assignment of Bobby D. Doctor with support from Christine Foster and Robert L. Knight. The report was prepared for printing by Gloria Hong. All work was completed under the supervision of Bobby D. Doctor, Director of the Southern Regional Office.

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## Background Information

**S**outh Carolina, the Palmetto State, has an overall population of 3,486,704, with 69.0 percent white, 29.8 percent black, and 2.2 percent others (including Asians, Hispanics, and Native Americans). In addition, the State has three distinct geographical regions: the upper State, with the city of Greenville as its hub, is relatively industrialized; the midlands, with the city of Columbia serving as both the State and regional capital, is driven largely by a governmental industry; and the low country, with Charleston as its

hub, is characterized by tourism and a sea-driven economy.

The city of Greenville has a population of 58,282, 62.9 percent white, 35.2 percent black, and 1.9 percent others. The city of Columbia has a population of 98,052, 52.6 white, 43.7 percent black, and 3.7 percent others. The city of Charleston has a population of 80,414, 56.6 percent white, 41.6 percent black, and 1.8 percent others. The above statistical information is derived from 1990 U.S. Census Bureau figures.

## Introduction

**I**n November 1991, the South Carolina Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights adopted a project designed to examine the issue of racial tensions in South Carolina. The decision to adopt the project was in response to the adoption of the same project at the national level by the Commission at a retreat in February 1991.

In an effort to support the Commission's project, the South Carolina Advisory Committee initiated a series of three briefing meetings in Greenville, April 1, 1992; Charleston, June 19, 1992; and Columbia, September 25, 1992. The Committee

invited knowledgeable citizens and public officials from these cities to discuss racial tensions and the extent to which they were increasing or decreasing. They were also asked to suggest recommendations for corrective action where needed.

The following is an edited transcript of the proceedings from the three briefing meetings which we hope will assist South Carolina and the Nation in forthrightly addressing racial tensions and what appears to be a "clear and present danger."



## **Greenville Meeting April 1, 1992**

### **Bill Whitney, President Greenville Urban League**

**I** only have a few comments concerning racial tensions in Greenville. I'll probably like to talk about not only Greenville but the greater south—State of South Carolina, and also, America. In 30 years of working in the area of civil rights, I have not seen the kind of racism that I have met, not only in Greenville or South Carolina or throughout America, as I have seen in recent times. I think part of it is due to the fact that we've had an administration nationally for a number of years who have said in so many words that they have deserted, I think, many of the gains that minorities and poor whites have made over the last 20 years. I see racism coming down nationally in various tones, which has been translated to people who continue to have bigotry and hatred on their minds.

We're also suffering, and have been suffering for a number of years, from a downturn in the economy. When we have an economic downturn, we always see people become very, very selfish. At the same time a few, very few, blacks have upper management jobs. A few blacks have jobs in middle management, and so often this is translated to the fact that we have made it as a race, which is not true. Racism and bigotry, I think, not only in the job place, is more than they have been in many years. Today in Greenville, South Carolina we do not have blacks in upper management in the numbers close to—even near close to the racial makeup of Greenville County. I'm talking about senior management in public offices, in public jobs such as government. Also, Greenville enjoys having the largest corporate community in the State of South Carolina. Although we have many blacks in middle management in corporate Greenville, we still have not penetrated upper and senior management. I think this is due to the tone of the nation currently, [in those] program talk shows that [are] prevalent throughout the country, and also here in Greenville and many other moderators.

[They're] not neutral, they are very much leading . . . toward what I consider as racism.

### **Lottie Gibson, President Board of Directors SHARE, A Community Action Agency**

I appreciate the opportunity to come and share today. I must admit that when I received this invitation for this discussion today, I thought it was an April Fool's joke since it's happening on April 1. I said, "I cannot believe that they're going to provide for me an opportunity to say how I feel about racism." Certainly racism, in my opinion, is on the rise in Greenville County. . . . I see very clearly racism, which I perceive to be a behavior and an emotion. You can see it, you can feel it, but you [cannot] put your hand on it. . . . I think it hurts most, or it affects us most, through our economic arena in that we see as we observe jobs through our industry. We see very few minorities in administrative or policymaking positions where, really, the money is made. We see in [local] government very few minorities or blacks in decisionmaking positions. . . .

We hear problems from teachers and other support staff in the education system where they say that people that they work with do not consider them to be a part of a team. They work around them and above them and below them, and they never work, really, with them. We see students being kicked out of school for [minor] kinds of [mis]behaviors where whites do this very same thing, and they, if at all, get slapped on the wrist, and they continue to be a part of the school system. Through our judicial system we see police brutality. We see behavior like, for instance, a young person 14 years old weighing less than 100 pounds being held over an open railroad track and swung in to the air by four policemen. And only one of them being dismissed from his job when, needless to say, that this kind of behavior could have caused the death of that young man. . . .

But it bothers me that we've spent so much time trying to build positive relationships and move forward in a progressive way, and at the [turn] of this past [decade] with the election of President Reagan, he made it almost popular to be different, to have a trip down memory lane, to have a resurrection with the good old days. And, as I see younger people moving into leadership positions, particularly whites, it seems as if they're having a resurrection with their grandfathers' and their great-grandfathers' attitudes and ideas and policies. . . . And I hope that your agency will be able to communicate with the administration, and have them know that the laws that they [have] sought to change has really made it difficult for those of us who are black to live in America in what we perceive to be a dream of everyone enjoying the life here.

**S.C. Cureton, Pastor  
Reedy River Baptist Church,  
Mauldin, SC**

First, let me say that racism is still very much alive in Greenville and throughout this nation, as we all realize. . . . And I think a blind person can see it, a deaf person can hear the echoes coming from Washington that they support that. And that is the reason why we have it within our counties, our States, and etc. When I think about here in Greenville in our county, for example, where we have more than 1,300 employees, and out of the 1,300 employees, there is only one [black] individual who has a salary of \$40,000, in the low \$40,000, and you've got 34 or more [white] individuals whose salaries range up to \$85,000. Out of the ratio of blacks in Greenville County, I think I'm in the ballpark, about 20 or more percent here. So that is evidence that we have racism in Greenville County.

And when we look at our schools, even in spite of having a black superintendent, when I look at many of our schools, I was just informed on yesterday, probably the largest school in our county has a principal and three assistant principals and three or four counselors. And out of that whole group there is only one black counselor. And, of

course, I understand that the [students] are 25 to 30 percent black. That is racism. I think that we have got to be concerned about having black mentors in our schools at top positions to give leadership. When I think about what we have here in Greenville, a black student who committed a crime to a certain degree, a very young child, and was put out of school. And, of course, the judge reversed that decision, and the school board still will not allow her to come back to school. And I have been informed that we have plenty of whites who have committed similar crimes, probably even worse, and they have been patted on the hand or on the shoulder and have gone back into our school system. So, that is evidence that we do have racism in Greenville.

Again, when I think about our methodology of electing government officials, whenever a black run[s] against two or three [whites] and gained almost a majority, and you have a runoff. And, of course, I guess it's not racism, and yet, it is racism. . . . 99 percent of the time whenever you have a runoff against a white, then automatically the white will win. . . . Yes, racism is alive, and racism is much alive in Greenville, in particular.

**Julia Adams, Director  
Greenville Human Relations  
Commission**

I wish to thank you for the opportunity to speak today on racial and ethnic tensions in South Carolina. . . . We're aware that these tensions do exist, not only in South Carolina but throughout the Nation, and also in Greenville County. As the director of the Greenville County Human Relations Commission, we field complaints each day from citizens of Greenville County and its municipalities. And quite often these complaints that we receive allege discrimination, unfair, or unequal treatment in the areas of employment, housing, and education. Our commission quite recently has been monitoring school board meetings and this type thing, looking at reassignments. In monitoring the reassignments that are going on in Greenville County, and in view of what has happened yesterday with the new Supreme Court<sup>1</sup> ruling, I

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Supreme Court decision, Mar. 31, 1992, on school desegregation.

think we will be doing more monitoring and research as it relates to education. Because we see this as being resegregation through education. But we have seen practices as it relates to education, zoning patterns, and political pressures in the reassignment process.

Also, we received complaints in the employment area. And . . . one area that we feel the Civil Rights Commission needs to be aware of is that people sometimes assume because laws are passed, particularly under Title VII, which law, whether it is in fair housing, employment, education, or whatever; people assume that because there are laws existing that discrimination does not exist. And I'm here to tell you that it not only exists in Greenville County, it exists throughout this nation. It is so blatant. Quite often it is subtle until the victim does not even realize that they have been discriminated against in any of these areas. Sometimes these ugly manifestations raise [their] ugly heads in some of the areas that Rev. Cureton and Ms. Gibson—rather than talk about those issues that they have talked about, because it would be repetitive, but they're real.

We also looked at lending practices, and I think this is information that you should receive under the Civil Rights Commission, that there are sometimes discriminatory practices with lending institutions, and housing in particular. Redlining does exist. I think sometimes that people assume because we have fair housing laws that it does not exist.

There are other things that we've become concerned about as a commission and as a community [such as] when HUD [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development] has put such explicit language into their new housing legisla[ti]on that says that they will not subsidize housing where there is drug activity. While we do not condone this, we see children in Greenville County who are not allowed to go back into their own neighborhoods. We're talking about minors, who are not allowed to go back into their own particular neighborhoods because they have been involved in drug activity. We see families that are being exploited because of this. Because this language does exist, and it's a Federal law, and we've talked about law as it relates to the poor housing and education. These laws exist, but quite often they cause problems for us who are in the enforcement agencies, such as the human affairs commission, EEOC,

HUD, and some of the other agencies. And we appeal to you, the Civil Rights Commission, to document some of these issues that we're talking about today because they are for real, and they create tensions for minorities and other ethnic groups throughout this nation, State, and Greenville.

### **Larry Byrd, Representative National Economic Education**

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present [my] . . . concerns for racial tension. . . With regard to racial tension in the State of South Carolina, my focus has to be primarily that of the judicial system. It has become obvious, both statistically and humanly, as reported by the media, as reported by agencies, both State and Federal, that the discrepancy in sentencing of African Americans is no longer a myth. . . . The dangers with regard to racial tension is it is a continuously eroding process that has been developed over the years. . . . The judges, the prosecutors, the sheriffs, the police chiefs, and with all [due] respect, the Daryl Gates mentality is not limited to California. . . . If the concept of law enforcement is relegated to that of simply them against us, it will increase and enhance racial tensions and is probably the foremost damaging circumstance that I can see because it occurs every day. . . .

In conclusion one, my recommendation is [that] communications be required at the administrative levels, particularly in the judicial system between the top individuals and the communities they impact; two, a continued independent monitoring by agencies, such as the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, of racial activities across this country and particularly in this State; and three, the maintenance of economic rules and regulations requiring banks, lending institutions, and private sector corporations utilizing Federal funds to allow full participation of all Americans.

### **Fletcher Smith, Member Greenville County Council**

. . . I'm delighted to appear before you today and express my concerns about what I think the agenda for the nineties is going to be. As we are aware, the black community is facing a major health problem in terms of AIDS. And none of the major medical health care providers are addressing that issue here in Greenville County. We know

that there are certain segments in the population that are going to suffer to a substantial percent from this dangerous disease.

The other aspect is that county government is basically structurally racially discriminatory. We've had to fight to get a second black majority district here in Greenville County. And if it had not been for the strong efforts of some strong black females who got behind me in Greenville County, we would not be at the table now where we are going to get a 60 percent majority black district in District 25, which I anticipate we'll get next Tuesday. Greenville County only has one black female who is in a position of authority in terms of being a department head, and that person is primarily a puppet. She can hire nobody. She can only send the applications to the other department heads for them to make the determination as to whether or not the person will be hired. . . . I find it somewhat absurd that a black female who is working in Greenville County at the present time in the Intergovernmental Relations Department is being denied the opportunity to participate in a full-fledged level in all of the governmental business that that particular job requires. And I find it rather strange why this same black female is not given the opportunity to have a secretary. . . . I will say this: That if we're really serious about cutting down on the amount of racial tensions in our society, we need to give human relations commissions, like Ms. Julia Adams is a part of, enforcement power. We need to give the . . . EEOC enforcement power in the same sense that the Securities and Exchange Commission [SEC] has enforcement power. And if a company or government discriminates on the basis of race in employment, then that enforcement agency, such as EEOC, ought to have the power to shut it down in

the same sense that the [SEC] has the power to shut down any business that violates the securities regulations in our country. That's what we need. The whole process of conciliation does not do anything for black people but place us in a position of always negotiating from a position of weakness rather than from the position of strength. So, in the future, I think that what we need to do in our efforts is to make sure that those agencies that are supposed to protect our rights not only give us the facade of protecting our rights, but have enforcement powers to actually carry out that mission.

### **J.M. Fleming, Minister Concerned Citizens for Equal Justice**

Education is our main concern today, my main concern of topic, and that is that we must look at the way the educational system is structured . . . in the State of South Carolina, and that is that it is discriminating. Discrimination goes on from the superintendent's level all the way down. . . . I think we are under a blatant racist attack here in the State of South Carolina . . . when we start talking about the educative and educational system. . . . There's something wrong with those kinds of policies when an individual [has] the right to say that "We can enforce the law this way," and the law supports that kind of discrimination from [people] in authority. We have to do something. . . . Greenville is one of those few places that [has] not experienced an open riot where there's going to be bloodshed in the street. We are at that particular point now. This is the pivotal point. We must do something about it now or some folk are going to get hurt in the street, lives are going to be lost in the street again in the 1990s. Those are the concerns that we have at this particular point here in Greenville County.

## Charleston Meeting June 19, 1992

### Herbert Fielding, Member, South Carolina Senate

. . . I just would like to [expound] for a few minutes on what my feelings are and what I have observed over the past 20 or 21 or so years. I would like to begin with the year 1970 when the three of us, Attorney [Jim] Felder and Attorney [I.S. Leevy] Johnson and myself, entered the South Carolina Legislature. At that time we were the only three blacks who were in the legislature and we had become the first three blacks since Reconstruction. . . . We went into the legislature with all sorts of fears and a whole lot of questions and we soon found out that those fears and questions were to a great extent unfounded. . . . Our fears and questions were based on what we expected as far as race relations would be in the General Assembly. . . . I think we saw a decline in what we perceive to be race, anti-negative race relations in South Carolina and that went on until 1974. In 1974 there was an influx of 13 blacks elected to the legislature as a result of the imposition of single-member districts in the South Carolina House of Representatives. . . . I watched the situation as others of us did for a number of years after 1974 and . . . felt that race relations in South Carolina were definitely on an up [hill] climb until, I believe, around 1978 or 1980. [At that point] We began to see [the] beginning of a steady decline. In the interim . . . [t]he State Human Affairs Commission was created as a separate arm of government, as a separate agency, with a specific purpose to foster better race relations throughout South Carolina in governmental agencies and in business. But, in spite of th[is] human affairs commission and in spite of a steady increase in the number of blacks in State government on the legislative level, and . . . a number of blacks being elected because of implementation of single-member districts on the county levels as well as the State [and] municipal levels right here in the city of Charleston . . . we finally got an even number of city councilmen, six black and six

whites . . . in spite of that, I have witnessed . . . in the last 12 or 14 years, a steady decline in positive race relations in the [S]tate . . . [I]t has affected . . . our effectiveness and what we could do on the [S]tate level as far as passing legislation is concerned, as far as having input . . . as minorities on State governmental agencies. . . . boards . . . and commissions, to a very negative extent in the last few years . . . I . . . am not running again for election to the senate next year, and there are a number of legislators who are not running next year because of the decline in race relations and other relations on the State level. . . .

[R]ight here in Charleston . . . because of a positive administration in city government, I think that it has been just the opposite. Race relations have increased or have gotten better, far better over the last 12 or 14 years in the city of Charleston. . . . [Whereas] on the State level, it has declined and it continues to decline and it is my opinion, my firm opinion that this decline emanates greatly all the way from Washington down. There has been set a tone from the White House right on down to, as we say in politics, from the White House to the courthouse. . . . [This] tone . . . is absolutely conducive to a decline in race relations. I think that definitely something has to be done [about it] whether it's on a political . . . [or] social . . . or . . . religious level. [S]omething has to be done, because race relations in South Carolina [are] declining and [have] been declining for the last 10 to [12] years and continue to decline, and it's hurting a whole lot of people, not only black folks; it's hurting a whole lot of white folks as well.

### Patricia Fields Concerned Parent

. . . I am by no definition a community leader or activist, but what I am is a concerned parent, a parent who refuses to allow a blatant act of discrimination against my son. . . . On January 29, 1992, my son, Arrow Fields, was refused admittance to the Wal-Mart store at Cross Creek Shopping Center [in] Beaufort, South Carolina. . . .

[Reading from her son's statement] "As I walked through the doorway and into the front of the store I was immediately approached by a white female member of Wal-Mart's personnel who greeted customers at the door . . . [T]he employee stated a new rule that would not allow me to enter Wal-Mart without the presence of my parents. . . . As I began to question this new unposted rule, my questions were quickly [interrupted] by the attendant who informed me that the rule was not hers. My question could only be answered by a member of management." At the time I was shopping at a store in the same area . . . Arrow came . . . and informed me of the . . . events. We returned to Wal-Mart. The same employee who had previously turned my son away. . . . promptly described her actions, her previous actions, as a reinforcement of a rule that she was required to uphold. . . . As my son and I waited at the service desk for a manager, we watched in utter disbelief as white youths without parents entered Wal-Mart and were virtually ignored by the same employee who stopped Arrow. Simultaneously, we watched as black youths entered the store and were immediately sent out or questioned.

When a member of management finally arrived, I informed him of the previous events and I asked him why my son and other blacks were turned away while white youths were permitted in Wal-Mart. . . . He explained that what happened was not a result of his intent. He went on to say that the new rule was put into effect because of students from a nearby school entering Wal-Mart during and directly after school hours to shoplift, vandalize, and deal drugs. He also stated that the rule was not to be enforced as it [has] been in my son's and as it has been in the case of other black teenagers. . . . I was not satisfied with his explanation. . . . I felt that I had to speak out for my son's sake and for the sake of the other black youths that had been accosted . . . that the public needed to be aware of this incident. . . . I wrote letters to the . . . local newspaper . . . Wal-Mart's district office, and Wal-Mart's home office. The publication of my letter . . . touched off an avalanche of outcries from the public. Although Wal-Mart officials could not deny what had happened, they have done and are still doing everything to misrepresent . . . what really happened on that day.

## **Michael Rivers Beaufort NAACP Branch**

. . . [T]here are so many negative impressions of young African Americans, especially with males today, . . . but yet still the treatment that [Arrow Fields] got from Wal-Mart . . . shows that the racial tensions in South Carolina, in Charleston and Beaufort, [are] very much real. . . . I think the sad thing about race is that until you recognize that there is a problem, it's very hard for you to address that problem, and I think that is the situation that is not only in Beaufort, but in L.A., in the White House, and on down. A lot of people think that things are fine because it hasn't happened to them or they don't know anyone who has been abused. Abuse comes in so many ways, so a lot of people think it has to be physical, but a lot of times the mental abuse is much more devastating . . . because it's lasting. [Y]ou get bruises and stuff, but once that heals it's gone. . . . [W]hen it penetrates the mind and starts making you react differently and do things differently, I think it's very deadly.

. . . [A] lot of times when I speak to people, I say that if you got up a building and you start tearing [it] down at the bottom . . . the top is going to eventually crumble. And I think what you saw in L.A. is a good example of that. If you keep ignoring the problems at the bottom, eventually those at the top . . . [are] going to be affected, and usually in an adverse manner. . . . I think it's also a struggle for power. That is the main thing. Whoever is in control, which happens to be not African Americans, they tend to do whatever it takes to keep that control and that is one of the main things . . . as far as race relations and . . . the lack of understanding. [T]he most important thing right now is . . . the country is in economic turmoil . . . whenever things are going bad, people tend to pick out a particular area or a particular group of people who are causing the problem. . . . Now, in America, black[s] are [considered] the problem. They don't want to work. They want to have kids. They don't want to take care of the kids. . . . [U]ntil we realize that we are all in this thing together, it's going to always be some problems and that comes from the top . . . [T]hat is why it's important for black folks or people in general . . . to exercise those rights or those powers that they do have . . . There are so many scapegoats that we have to stop

making excuses and everybody has to come together and try to find a solution.

**Joyce Zimmerman  
Independent Charleston  
Businesswoman**

I'm . . . a Charleston resident, a transplant, and I do enjoy the city, it's a lovely city, but [Senator Fielding's] . . . perception that the climate in Charleston is up and running and [that] race relationships are doing all those good things . . . is a perception. In my opinion, I think our mayor does a very good job of good perceptions, but as far as dealing with the real problems with grass root[s] people, no. . . . I think that today, by . . . the mayor [not being here or] sending a representative . . . or anyone from the police department [not being] here, or any of the city council members in North Charleston, inner-city Charleston, and the surrounding areas that we have no political persons here, tells me that . . . something is very, very wrong, and we can sit here and go many ways with race relations and civil rights, but it's a very blatant thing in this country and particularly here. . . . [J]ust go everywhere [in Charleston] and you can feel [racism] and it's there and something has to be done at the top, but we have to address whether this is a society, locally or otherwise. . . . Unless we [African Americans] do very drastic things, we do not get any margin or reactions. L.A. is a very classic example of that and, unfortunately, I think it's going to happen all summer long, locally and otherwise. . . . I am not for violence, but I encourage it if it is going to be a change for my people.

**Edward Johnson, Owner  
WZGI Radio, A Black-Owned Gospel  
Station**

. . . [W]hat is really happening here in the city of Charleston is pretty much a facade. I think that we must get back to the basic root of the problem. . . . [I]f we're going to see a basic fundamental change take place in this city and in any city and across this country, number one, white America has to be willing to admit and repent of the sins of their forefathers. . . . [T]he problem that we are facing . . . is not a black and white problem. The problem is really a good versus evil problem. . . . So if you are going to fix something, you are going

to have to go back to the root. . . . [T]he root problem is we all have strayed away from our foundation, and that is God, and the basis of what this country was found[ed] on. . . . [U]nless we go back to God . . . there is no way you're going to get a group of white men to address and turn their power over to us when we are destroying ourselves more than "anybody" else is right now, so we are going to have to find our places back as black America. The black leaders, particularly the religious leaders, are going to have to go back and reexamine their agendas. . . . [I]f we do get back to those basic roots, . . . I think there will be some real changes taking place in this country, but only until we are willing to admit the facts, [to] get back to the root [of the] causes. Racism is really just a tool that the devil uses to carry out his program. . . . It's really not a color problem. The enemy uses color to confuse us. . . . In closing, I would like to say this, the greatest misconception that we have in government today is the separation of church and state. There's really no such thing as separation of church and state. That article in the [C]onstitution that addresses church and state was not designed to keep church out of government. It was designed to keep government out of the churches. . . . Thank you.

**Thomas Johnson,  
Legislative Chairman  
Charleston Branch NAACP**

. . . I am glad to be here and get this opportunity to maybe give some insight or shed some light on some of the things that we feel are wrong in the community of Charleston. . . . Is there an increase in racial tension in Charleston? Our response to that is racial tension in Charleston is growing. The problem is how do you measure this increase in racial tension, what is causing this growing racial tension, and what do you do to resolve it? The growing racial tensions as we see it are a result of many problems . . . exist[ing] in our community, as it does across this nation. Again, the main contributing factor to this increase in racial tension is the age-old problem of racism. Racism is a part of our government, our living institutions, our private industries, our judicial systems, and our community as a whole. Blacks can still, in many cases, expect to be the last hired or hired in the lowest paying jobs, the last to be

promoted, more apt to receive no justice from our justice system, and blacks are still, in this county, underrepresented in the political community, especially in Charleston County Council Government.

. . . January 1992 to June 1992 the Charleston branch NAACP Housing Committee . . . received numerous complaints from various housing tenants concerning racial harassments, plus the denial of sale of property to a couple due to interracial marriage. The housing discrimination practice is more pervasive than we would like to consider; however, the housing committee is not able to address all of the complaints due to lack of manpower to support such a clearinghouse mechanism. So discrimination in the housing area is still there and in some respect it's getting worse. . . . [T]he feeling of unfair treatment to the black community has been demonstrated in a recent march by the local NAACP's and black citizens['] voices in the displeasure with their feelings of injustice in this community through meetings, and editorials in the local newspaper. . . . This increase in racial tension is no more than a fallout of all the problems that I have mentioned, resulting in the black community, in many cases, feeling helpless, there is no hope. [T]hey're expecting a fair shake when it comes to black concerns.

So we have a segment of our society that [is] being disenfranchised from all major aspects of our society that will have an impact in determining their quality of life. I say if we continue down this path, then we can eventually expect the same type of riots that occurred in L.A. or some type of disturbance. But again, this type of rioting as we [saw] in L.A., that type of rioting is no more of an outcry that something is wrong. That's what the people were doing then, crying that something is wrong in our society as it pertains to a treatment of a group of people. In fact, it is a weaker call for us to address the problem before it becomes more than a riot. It is a weaker call for Charleston as well. How do we resolve the racial tension problem or at least minimize the things that are causing this increase in racial tensions?. . . [It] would be simple[r] if we just stopped practicing racial activities that cause increases in racial tensions. But I think we all realize that that is too simple and if we did that we wouldn't be sitting here. . . .

The major role of resolving racism and racial tension rests with the perpetrator. Who are the

perpetrators? The government, industries, judicial systems, and people in general who are in control of these institutions. Quite clearly, the dominant segment of this community is in control and it's simple. They are the white folk[s] of this community. So that means that the major role in resolving a racial tension problem is the white community's responsibility. This does not exempt the black community from its responsibilities of ensuring the problems that are resulting in the increase of racial tensions are addressed. . . . It is difficult for one to resolve the problem. . . . So what I am saying again, and just to reemphasize, I see in this room the panel, myself, [and] 99.9 percent of the people in this room are black. We can't solve this problem. People that need to be addressing or at least to be participating in the solution of the problem are those that are in control. Those are the individuals [who] can solve the problem. You institute the problem, you want it solved, stop it. You have the power to stop it.

This community has the opportunity and responsibility to seize upon this time to resolve these problems that are contributing to racial tension. It is our responsibility to ensure that the laws on the books that address racial discrimination are enforced, even though it has been weakened in some [areas], . . . All of us must bring to the attention of those in charge when discriminatory acts are being carried out, and if we are serious about the increase in racial tension, then we as a community, white and black, whites playing the role that they should, will resolve it. If we are not, then we can expect, eventually . . . the same type of activity that occurred in L.A., not only to occur in this community, but to occur in other communities. . . . [W]e all must play a part in resolving this problem of racial tension and prevent it from getting worse, but the white community is going to have to get involved because they are the ones, simple as that, in control; they are the ones instituting the problem. Otherwise, 10 years from now, you're doing the same thing, 20 years, same thing.

**William "Bill" Saunders,  
Executive Director  
COBRA (Committee on Better Racial  
Assurance)**

. . . I see racial hatred today different from things [t]hat I saw back in the 1950s and 1960s. I



see pure hate between both groups at this particular time. . . . [I]n our community, a lot of people would see it differently because I think that Charleston has always been sophisticated as it relates to racism. . . . [T]here [are] a lot of things that go on here that [people] have a problem with. . . . [B]lack kids are getting killed over and over and over and over again and the black kids, all of them, have guns . . . [T]he question that comes to mind with us, [W]here are they getting the guns? . . . They don't have the guns that we used to talk about . . . [the] .22s. . . . They have the real deal. And somebody is selling them those guns and [its]the same people that's selling them the drugs. . . . [T]hen [white people] come to me and say, "Well, why are [black kids] doing those things?" . . . [T]o me, that is the kind of thing that I see . . . [as] racism . . . [W]hite people have allowed themselves, . . . [and] have done a good job [at it, to be seen] as . . . individuals. Black people are all of one . . . [R]ight now, if you go out that door and do something wrong every black man in here is in trouble. . . .

We have a lot of subtle things that are irritating the younger black community and they are giving [black leaders] credit for having no power . . . [nor] the ability to deal with power . . . [W]e, as the so called leaders, don't go to the kids and say we don't have any power, that we are incapable of doing some of the things that they think that we should have the power to do. So I think that racial hatred, its a growing thing . . . It's going to have to be looked at very seriously [or else] a lot of people are going to perish. . . . I have gone back to what I do best. I'm helping people pay light bills and the kids that need some help at school and those kind of things. I am good in those areas. I can't solve these problems that you are dealing with. I can't deal with the racial problem anymore . . . I'm going back to what we did in the 1960s. . . . Nobody is saying to this whole group that we are all in this boat together and if you guys don't begin to deal with this problem, we're all going to go down the drain if no longer you're not able to control me without hurting yourself. . . . [W]e have a lot of problems that a lot of people have to address. . . . I don't think I'm capable of doing any of those things.

. . . I'm not good at helping solve these kind of problems because the people like our mayor, we got a new mayor in North Charleston. And they

used to call the old one bad. . . . This guy [the new mayor] is going to buy property [for various projects], paying a quarter of a million dollars for the property around it and got the housing where people are living and [told] the people, you got to get out. They're not going to pay them a nickel to move or find a place for them to live, just get on. . . . [He's] a young white lawyer that everybody think[s is] a good guy. He's a lot worse than the old fellow that was there before and he's smarter.

### **Arleen B.C. Reid, Editor The Coastal Times**

I have been asked to come here today to discuss whether or not racial tension and racial prejudice exists in the city of Charleston. [Most] definitely. However, it's clearly disguised and surfaces with blatant instances of racism. The city of Charleston, as we know in South Carolina, is nationally acclaimed as the city of culture, Spoleto, magnificent gardens and homes, and the historic cradle of the south and it's a touris[t] attraction to the world. Although I applaud Mayor Riley and the tremendous asset he has become to Charleston, I look around and see no viable advancements made . . . in the African American population.

With the construction of the municipal auditorium, hundreds of African Americans were displaced through eminent domain. With the construction of I-26, [the] cross-town connector . . . African Americans [were] displaced and remaining streets turned into dead ends. With the construction of the Omni Place Hotel, there were scores of new business [spaces] with rents priced way above the budgets of small black businesses. Jobs were available as promised, but only as domestic positions for blacks, and those were greatly reduced by the number of white college students who were hired. Many renovation projects have been undertaken in the Charleston east and west sides; however, bank loans with high interest rates have either been denied or priced out of the range of African Americans, and the white flight from the city has been reversed with more young, [white] homeowners in the once black predominately populated neighborhoods.

City and county employers have increased the numbers of African Americans they have employed, but have consistently kept them in the low managerial positions. *The News and Courier* recently did a poll. That poll stated that the city of

Charleston had 1,177 employees. [Of] those being paid \$40,000 or more, there were 37; only 7 were black. [Of] those being paid between \$30,000 and \$40,000, there were 60; only 14 were black. The county of Charleston, [employs] 1,440 people. [Of] those being paid over \$40,000, there were 51; only 1 was black. [Of] those being paid between \$30,000 and \$40,000 for the county, there were 75; only 7 were black. In the city of North Charleston they employ 625 [people]. Thirteen of them are paid . . . more than \$40,000; only 1 [is] black. Thirty of them were paid between \$30,000 and \$40,000; only 7 were black. . . . In the city of Charleston we're 42 percent black. In the county of Charleston, we're 35 percent black. The results of this invisible ceiling fills the requirement for minority hiring while it provides a plantation-style system [with] a white-male-dominated control. This results in lower income, forces African Americans to live in substandard housing that breeds drug-related activities, poor living conditions, and crime. . . .

The resulting fact of these deplorable living conditions [has] ended up in crime rates that have skyrocketed, which has brought on many more confrontations with the [local] police officers. . . . For black people, police officers have not been our friends. . . . There have been just incidents upon incidents where black males have been accosted for no particular reason. They have been handcuffed [and] thrown in the back of cars, they have been beaten, and they have [almost] never been charged with anything. . . . Going back to the incident in L.A., with . . . Rodney King . . . if you talk to many black men in Charleston, and I'm . . . talking about every black man, you know, professional, brothers, whoever, their perception now is if . . . the police [are] trailing me and he's throwing on his lights, I'm going to keep on driving until I get to the nearest lighted area or the nearest populated area where there are people who can see what is going to happen to me. There is a total loss of trust with the police department in the city of Charleston.

Other signs of racism in the city of Charleston [are on] the political front. The black population in Charleston is heavily involved in the Democratic party, heavily involved, and being so you would think that we [would] have black candidates who are running for office that they would receive full support of the Democratic party. That

is not the case. . . . [P]eople have said we're fortunate that six black people are on the city council when we really only [have] Councilmember Robert Ford, [who has voiced the concerns of both African Americans and whites in the Charleston community]. It doesn't matter how many numbers you have there if those people are not working in your best interest. . . .

In conclusion, there is definitely racial tension and racism in Charleston. It is brought on by racial disparity in hiring, promotion, and 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 and with only outbreaks of blatant acts and it is compounded by the polite southern manners that leaves it unspoken and unfronted until an explosion, until the next Los Angeles or the next Rodney King. When I watched L.A. engulfed in a living hell, I saw Charleston under the same set of circumstances as did many other African Americans in many other urban cities.

### **Jim French, Publisher and Editor The Charleston Chronicle**

. . . As a newspaper publisher, I get around this town pretty much and so after about 21 years, I fairly well know the people, those up here and those down here. That's my lifestyle. . . . [T]his is probably the most racist city in terms of image. Internationally, Charleston's a great city; that's the image. But [mayor] Joe Riley is the most professional PR man you would ever run into. He has painted this nice picture of Charleston, South Carolina, as being a paradise. It's probably the biggest plantation in South Carolina in terms of dealing with people. I'm talking about people now. . . . [W]e're always pointing to the fact that we have a black police chief, you got a black city administrator, we have blacks who are in charge of the auditorium, and so on and so on. . . . [W]e got blacks in key positions, but it doesn't fall down to the grass root[s] people, those who have, what I call the come here's and the been here's. The "been here's" are those who are born and raised in Charleston and the "come here's" are people like myself, and there is a difference between the two.

If you were born here, that's a plus. If you come from somewhere else . . . we have an internal problem. It's not white folks so much that I'm concerned about; it's black people dealing with one another. . . . [It's the] crab in the barrel syndrome. . . In this town, we can't even get inside the barrel before we can drag other folks down. . . . Charleston is a city that's been painted as a paradise. I don't care whether you're talking about schools, the business[es], whatever sector we're speaking [about]. . . . I have found in my travels that we have forgotten the one element that causes rebellions like in L.A. We forget the young people and they're the ones. They're not from the old school. You could ask 10 blacks in this town, talking about senior citizens, or a college graduate that has been here for a long time, what do you think of Joe Riley? [They'll say] he's the new messiah. They'll tell you that. They love Joe Riley. Ask a young black professional and you get a totally different opinion. . . . You have no kind of program for the black entrepreneur in this town. Now, they have a minority vendor's office set up by city government on a \$25,000 grant. [It has been] totally ineffective for the past 4 years when it was created, put in place. We put some . . . heat on the place in the last year. [T]he guy resigned, left town, [b]ecause they weren't doing anything. We have a City of Charleston Housing Authority [with a] 99 percent black occupancy, but you [have] a white administrator and the people within the projects are not accorded the kind of respect or the services that the government brings in dollars to provide. . . . In the police department you got Chief [Reuben] Greenburg, a black police officer. He has a Jewish background, nothing wrong with that, but you got a different set of rules for whites and for blacks. About 3 years ago they passed a law against public drinking. Fine, no problem with that, but it's only enforced in the black community. . . . You go downtown and you see a black guy, ain't no black people . . . we colored people, but he's standing on the corner with a can of beer, you're going to jail . . . [F]our blocks away in the Market Place, you see the [whites] walking through the streets drinking that beer. [They see] cops, [they ask,] "How you doing?" . . . [W]e aren't supposed to understand that and the young folks are not going to tolerate that. . . . [T]hese kids don't care about no jail.

## **Robert Daily** **Concerned Citizen of Charleston**

I'm not surprised that there are [no] officials from the government [participating in the briefing meeting]. [J]ust say, I am not surprised at all. I'm appalled that they're not, but it doesn't surprise me because I don't really think they give a damn. . . . I know the focus here is to relieve racial tensions. The church is not the answer. Our morals are not. Hate [is not something we're born with.] The only thing we know is love. We learn hate. And our government . . . let's us get away with this hate, so it just grows. . . . There is no justice. Representative John Conyers, does anyone know him? [H]e used to be head of the Senate Investigating Committee on Police Brutality. . . . He promised all us victims of police brutality that he was going to do something about it. [H]e promised a departmental study to discern whether there's any pattern of misconduct [that is] apparent and determine the correlation, if any, between the incidents of police brutality and the presence or absence of departmental training. And it goes on and on. . . . The cops can come along, they can—black or white—knock out your teeth, they can separate your sternum, they can lie about you, they can throw you in the pokey, they can put the cuffs on so tight that you need medical attention, and you don't even find out that you were prescribed medical attention until you get out of jail, and they can get away with it. . . .

I agree that something needs to be done to [alleviate racial tension]. [I]f we don't get it together, we're in big trouble. . . . I agree that this area is a tinderbox . . . something's going to happen. . . . [Y]ou don't have a chance if you're arrested by the police; you don't have a chance. They can work you over, they can charge you with things you didn't do. . . . You go in front of a judge, the judge does not give you your rights as afforded by our Bill of Rights. . . . [N]obody gives a damn, right down to the [Attorney General] Thornberg . . . the legislators, the Senators. There is no justice. There is justice for none. . . . I think the whites do have the power, yes, and it's wrong, yes, and it's wrong. . . . Why doesn't anybody do something about it? Why doesn't somebody go to their Congressman or the President and say, "Look, you have a responsibility to protect my liberty. Do something about it."

## Columbia Meeting September 25, 1992

### Jesse Washington, Executive Director Greater Columbia Community Relations Council

**I**n Columbia and the Midlands, like a lot of cities in the South, all is not well. We are making a lot of progress in the South as a whole, but there is a lot of work to do. We all know that we've had incidents across the State over the past couple of years that we don't particularly like. We had the Conway situation, we had the Buffalo Room situation, we had the situation over next door with regard to the swimming pool with the church group. The blacks and whites, blacks were not allowed to swim. [W]e've had, more recently, racial incidents over at Coker College. We've had a more recent incident over in Marion County where some white students walked out of a black history celebration program, and the next day black students walked out in protest from that. So we've had little things to occur all around the Midlands and all over the State of South Carolina. That indicates to me . . . that we need to get back to some basics, that we need to try to improve our lot. The Community Relations Council, a couple of years ago established a biracial task force . . . composed of about 80 people and transcends racial and sexual lines. It transcends, more importantly, socioeconomic lines. We met as a result of those incidents that I mentioned earlier in the State of South Carolina. Things that were happening that we didn't particularly care for and wanted to meet to decide how to overcome those things in our area. We have conducted a series of town meetings. . . . We were going to do them in the fall, but as a result of the situation in California, the Rodney King situation, we decided to pick up the pace to be prepared for any rippling effect that might take place around the country. . . .

[W]e've learned a lot . . . [P]articipation has been fairly decent. At one town meeting, we had as many as 150 people, black and white. . . . You can't do race relations with just one race of people. It must be blacks and whites coming together or if

you are in a different part of the country, black and whites and Hispanics and whatever. . . . [T]he Community Relations Council and the biracial task force [believe] that we can make improvements and can attack this situation from three positions from education, from business, and through religion. And to improve race relations, in my view it must be an attitudinal change. . . . And so the approach that we will be using will be geared toward attitudinal changes. . . . [For example,] the newspaper carried a story that the city of Columbia is going to help with the erection of the memorial to Dr. King down at King's Park. I'm a part of that committee. It is my understanding that a lot of phone calls have come in saying, "Why would the city want to put money into a project like that? It's a bad use of taxpayers' money." To clear one thing up, the fact of the matter is that the city is not giving that committee the money. It is loaning the committee the money. The committee is going to pay the city back the money from ticket sales. But the important point is [that] citizens called to say, "Why do we have to do that?"

. . . With regard to education, I believe and the council believes, that we need to do a couple of things. The first thing we need to do is integrate our curriculum. A lot of white citizens do not have an understanding of the black contributions to America and to Columbia. . . . We need to integrate the curriculum so that all of our citizens can know all the contributions that we all made, and we'll think differently about one another . . . I submit that that would help with the attitudinal change. The other part of it is that we have got to have town meetings and workshops. . . . We've discussed this with Barbara Neilson, who is our superintendent of education. . . . We have parents on both sides, blacks and whites, that are telling children things that we should not be telling them with regard to race relations. . . . We will have white teachers who will be uncomfortable in handling this material, and we've got to find a way to overcome that so it goes much smoother in the

classroom. I think that making changes in this regarding the field of education will help create a harmonious atmosphere for the youngsters coming along. . . .

We have in Columbia a black ministerial group and a white ministerial group. And there's nothing wrong with that. I suggest though that the two should meet sometime. . . . If we can begin to get them to do some exchanges, we can begin to change attitudes. There are some churches that are doing this. . . .

Another crucial part to this that I did not mention is law enforcement. . . . Next door in Springfield, the unfortunate shooting of a black citizen by the police chief, the unfortunate situation in California with Rodney King. . . . Well, in Columbia, we have a fine police chief who believes in community-based policing. And he's been very successful with that. We're also working with the sheriff [who] has made some improvement with regard to handling the sheriff's department and race relations. . . . [At the town meetings] [w]hat is becoming clear is the distance between the races. [A] lot of articulation that we're receiving is [about] jobs [n]ot being able to get jobs that they would qualify for. That's a major thing. Another thing that comes out a lot is that in stores, not just the Columbia Mall, but downtown, Dutch Square, [and] the various malls around Columbia . . . blacks are scrutinized and watched and followed more than whites are. [T]hey are watched closer which gives rise to an uncomfortable feeling with regard to shopping. Also that the races don't mix as adequately as they should. For example Autumnfest in Columbia and Mayfest are basically attended by white people. The NAACP has [an annual] dinner [that is] 98 percent black. The Urban League has an annual dinner. It is 95 to 96 percent black. The races don't come together to talk things through. And a lot of what's being said in town meetings is that whites don't understand blacks, are not sensitive to the needs and aspirations of blacks, and therefore it gives rise to uncomfortable feelings.

**David Dillard**  
**South Carolina Black Media Group**

I'm a former writer for the South Carolina Black Media Group, but they elected me to speak on their behalf, and I agreed to do that. . . . I would just like to speak about the black press in general

and the way it handles race relations. . . . The black press normally takes an issue and looks at it from the black perspective . . . [t]o give blacks a positive light, not necessarily to incite race relations or to project any race relations. But I would say over the years we have covered more issues dealing with what good blacks are doing instead of who went to jail today. . . .

[I] would say from a personal standpoint on racism . . . that normally when groups like this come together and meet . . . the wrong people [are] here. We have a majority of people here who are concerned about race relations and who are not really racist themselves. I think that the racist elements need to be here. The elements of concern need to be here . . . skinheads . . . Klan members . . . Nation of Islam . . . Black Panthers or anything like that, [a]nd they're not here. They are not represented. . . . [T]he ones who have these problems are not here to voice their opinion[s] so we can really deal with the issue. . . .

[Unemployment of minorities] has a serious impact [on racial tensions.] One of the [newspaper articles] that we have been working on, in terms of BMW coming to the State, is [that it's] real good, but why the upstate? The upstate is rich. Why didn't they come to Barnwell or some of the counties who have been at an 11 percent unemployment rate? . . . The unemployment rates [in the upstate] are always the lowest in this State. They don't need any more money up there. Why didn't they come to some of the black communities . . . [like the] low country . . . [We] need the money too. [T]hese are the biggest areas that are unemployed, and [BMW] go[es to] the places that really don't need it. . . . Overall I would say racial tensions throughout the State are pretty good. I don't think they are as serious as Los Angeles or any other cities. I don't think we have a major problem. And I don't think we have a serious problem in Columbia either. I think it has the potential to grow into one, but I don't think it will ever happen. I don't really think that the people in this community are going to get that far.

**Morris Blachmon, Associate Director**  
**Institute for International Studies,**  
**University of South Carolina**

. . . I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you. I'm particularly interested in the fact that

you are concerned enough about this issue to be investigating it. And I hope that this will continue. . . . I wish in some ways that instead of a one-person response, [t]hat there was really a discussion dialogue because ultimately I think that would be even more fruitful than this kind of dialogue which I think creates a slightly different set of responses. My own experience in looking in the community is that we can't obviously explain what happens here in Columbia, South Carolina, simply by what happens in the State or simply by what happens in the region. . . . I know you're all aware by what's happening nationally. In response to some of the questions that you raised with Jesse Washington, I was struck with the notion that it's pretty obvious to me that racial tensions have increased in this country at the same time that things are getting better. I think to be able to say that things are getting better and things are getting worse at the same time is not a contradiction. It's just that some things are getting better, and some things are getting worse.

If I look over the history of this country over the last 10 to 12 years, it seems to me that we have begun through the public sector in part to prize intolerance rather than tolerance. And [to] put it in a different form, we have learned to tolerate intolerance and to be intolerant of tolerance. And I think that's a great shame. I think that the underlying themes of division and divisiveness in the country have led us to culminate in the kinds of comments that came out in particular, and I'll put it in partisan terms. Not because I see it as a partisan issue, but because that's where it was raised. But as a cultural war. And in terms of the cultural war, I think it's fairly clear where people come down. To divide the whole idea of separating people, of making divisions in the country, of seeing different classes of citizenship, I think creates a climate in which it allows people to vent their prejudices, their biases and their lack of concern for one another. Jesse [Washington] spoke about racism as personal and institutional. And you [the panel. . . .] very appropriately reminded him in several places that even many of the personal things he talked about were really institutional.

I would like to add another split or way of looking at racism. It seems to me it's also important to understand the difference between racism by intent and racism by consequence. And while those are related to the notions of personal and

institutional, there are some differences. I think the ones where they deal with intent are far and away the easiest to deal with either because you know . . . who the people are and you just decide not to relate with them or you know how to deal with them. The biggest problem it seems to me, often comes from what I call racism by consequence. These are the folks that say, "No, not me. No, I don't feel that way. . . ." [Y]et so many of us grow up with biases . . . I look at the society I grew up in, in a segregated community, and I look at where we are today. I see enormous strides. On the other hand, I also see that there has been a tremendous amount of submerging or maybe repression of a lot of issues that, it seems to me, have got to be dealt with as well. I find myself very strongly in agreement with Jesse [Washington's] notion that we need to deal with attitudes. And I think that's absolutely crucial. . . . I had the opportunity to moderate the first [Greater Columbia Community Relations Council] town meeting session. . . . I remember some comments that some people made there that I found were very telling. And that is the importance of the [socioeconomic] conditions. Not just in the way of institutionalized racism, but in the form of social class distinctions we have in this country, and in the lack of support for social conditions which make it very difficult for people to rise out of their conditions. . . . [T]he issue of responsiveness is really crucial. . . . [I]t takes a crisis to act. . . we see that all the time. As soon as the crisis is gone, we pull back. I've seen that in my lifetime over and over again. . . . The Urban League and [a] local private business, a large corporation, were involved in the development of a Minority Professional Developmental Program. The purpose of that program was to take black managers who had potential and to work with them to help them to understand better how to deal with a corporate community that was not . . . [b]lack in style or in culture but was white—what to do with it and how to work in it. It received tremendous support from the business community for the first year. The second time around it received [some] support. I'm not sure what will happen in the third time around. . . . [T]here's no crisis to continue to generate [interest in] it.

. . . I think that if we want to look at a lot of this, we have to begin with ourselves. [N]ot only on this issue but on many issues in our society to begin to ask the question, "How do we become proactive?"

What do we do to stimulate people to understand that you can, in fact, preempt crises. Because I think that's a serious issue in the State. [David Dillard] who spoke for the South Carolina black media said that he thought that things were not at a crisis point here in South Carolina, and I would agree with him at least from what little I know of it. . . . Here in Columbia, I think there is an incredible amount of goodwill among blacks, especially among very poor blacks, in the Midlands area, because I'm more familiar with that. [G]iven the conditions under which they live. It's absolutely extraordinary. . . . I want to suggest that I've seen in the Columbia community in the roughly 20 years now that I've been living here what I consider to be very good overall racial relations at the same time that I have seen very deep-seated racial tensions. . . . I think there are substantial racial tensions . . . in various neighborhoods. I think there are neighborhoods in the community where there is a feeling that nobody gives a dam[n], that the community isn't going to respond, and that it's a kind of tinderbox. It's not that anybody is sitting there saying, "Let's blow off whitey." I don't think it's quite at that point. But it certainly is at a point where some incident could spark, I think, that kind of response.

### **Harriet Gardin Fields, Member Richland County Council, District 3**

. . . I am a member of the Richland County Council, representing District 3. . . . My profession is that of an educator and a counselor, and a consultant. . . . First, racism and "isms" are well and prospering. It's my personal feeling that a great deal of racism and "isms" are caused at this time by political policy. But those of you who either lived in South Carolina most recently or lived here some time ago . . . [remember] Lee Atwater, a deceased South Carolinian who used racial polarization for political advantage. His use of racial polarization was successful in his quest of party politics and capturing the White House. However, Lee Atwater forgot how to develop a healing process and there are those who would say that he attempted to do that on his dying day. . . . It is my opinion, that a lot of the racial tensions that exist in this country today and in the world are based upon some of the tactics that were used by Lee Atwater. It is now fashionable to be racist and to exclude any who classically are not blonde [or]

blue-eyed. . . . Many European Americans and European South Carolinians are fully aware of what minority status means by virtue of the fact that they do everything they can to keep minorities as underclasses. . . . The rage still exists in the [black] community [referring to police actions], but the forum is not there in which to solve [it]. [It is] . . . very often that these things are not done because when questioned we are told that African American males were either perpetrators or unruly or had a gun. The guns may never appear in an inquest or an investigation. Many times there are no investigations, thus, no questions. The fact that these situations exist calls for increased racial tensions in the African American communities. Those persons who are 60 and above remember the lynch[ings]. Those in their forties remember those who lost their lives during the Freedom [Rides], the March from Selma, Montgomery, etc. Many of us in our forties remember the Pink Palace in downtown Orangeburg. . . . I think three of us know a lot about the Pink Palace. And some of the others of you may have just heard about it. . . . In case you don't know what we're referring to as the Pink Palace, it was the jail that housed many during the civil rights movement. . . . Those among us in their twenties and thirties have heard about the 1930s and 1960s. We are now in the 1990s, and there is a resurgence. [Many of] [t]hose European Americans in their twenties and thirties have heard of the 1930s and 1960s and feel it is time to resurrect the majority European place in this world. The aforementioned items are some of the causes of racial tensions in America and are stressed due to the economy. . . . The Greater Columbia Community Relations Council was cut in their appropriation by the Richland County. . . . We [the Richland County Council] didn't cut them all out, but we cut out 50 percent of the half we supported, [w]hich signifies that from one aspect in one area that there is no racial problem. But the other segment of the community feels that this indicates insensitivity to the fact that there are racial tensions in our community. The questions are very clear: Where do we go from here? How do we change the racial tensions?

### **William Griffin Columbia Business Owner**

. . . I'm in a small business in Columbia. I was sitting here listening to a lot of input that was put

in the situation about the racial problems in the U.S. and in South Carolina and in Columbia. . . . [O]ne of the major problems with racism in this country is basically based upon the economics and the finances of the white and the black. [R]acism is very critical in Columbia and a lot of other places in this State, basically because a lot of people are not coming forward and letting their anger out and what they have to live and work with every day. . . . Those people which are the poor, disadvantaged and economic[ally deprived] people out there who are in the work force, they have to work under a lot of racial conditions because they cannot come forward and are afraid to come forward because it may jeopardize their work, [and] where they work. . . . I have a business in a place that's owned by the State of South Carolina[, a]nd a lot of racism goes on at this place. . . . Everybody that has worked there takes whatever racism is put upon them and don't say nothing about it. And they just continue on year after year after year. . . . I would describe [racial tensions] . . . just like I said previously. It is very critical. Critical. More critical than you all realize that it is. Just because I simply say there's a lot of tension that's on a lot of people that they're just not letting it out. They're keeping it in.

**Joseph Darby, Pastor  
St. Phillip AME Church, Eastover**

I am pastor of St. Phillip AME Church in Eastover. I also wear a couple of other hats that would probably be [relevant]. One of those is as president of the Greater Columbiana Faith Clergy Association and as vice president of the South Carolina Christian Action Council which is our State's major ecumenical body. I [will] simply echo much of what has already been said. We need to explore the problem . . . of racial tension in our community and in our State. I think that, statewide, it might be a bit more severe than it is locally. It might be more pronounced than it is locally. I think that the causes for that problem are many. Some of that should be blamed on the politics of the last 12 years which I believe . . . systemic to the way that America operates. Some of it is because we do have legislation that addresses bias, but legislation cannot change attitudes at all times. . . . I believe that if there is to be an improvement in our racial climate, if economically there is to be more equity, if as people

we're able to deal more effectively with each other, then we have to go beyond the point of pre-conceived notions and make the extra effort. . . . There are efforts being made toward that end. The Christian Action Council along with the Palmetto Project is in the process of doing what I think Jesse [Washington] mentioned in his comments. Trying not only to get people of varying races to visit each other's churches but also to pair families together so that people will actually sit down, talk together, eat together, and know each other, and from that learn to appreciate each other more. To a great degree that's going to be preaching to the choir, because those who participate are those who are going to be willing to make the effort. But I believe if that kind of thing spreads enough that it becomes the rule rather than the exception, and then we will be better off.

**Todd Ewing  
Diversity Training Consultant**

I can't keep my mouth shut. . . . I do training and consulting in this very issue of diversity. . . . I grew up in Minnesota. I'm not from the South . . . I moved here to South Carolina 7 years ago. I moved here from an experience of working at a university in Minnesota where my job was to sensitize the university and community to racial and cultural differences and how to bridge those differences. I spent about 8 years doing that. . . . When I moved to South Carolina, I was so frustrated after dealing with that experience for 8 years that I decided that I did not want to get back into this business of training and working with racial and cultural diversity again. However after about 3 years here, the way things went, I ended up back in the same business. So since 1987 I have been working with racial and cultural diversity issues all over the State of South Carolina. . . . I want to say this . . . [w]hen we do these training seminars, people have the opportunity to sit and really express their true feelings not just their superficial feelings. And when we have 2 or 3 days to do it, it's very interesting the kind of things that we find. But in terms of the question that keeps coming back, How are race relations in South Carolina? [W]hat are racial tensions like? I heard one gentleman say that he didn't feel like it was that bad, and I have to disagree. [A]nd I'll tell you why. I'm disagreeing from the standpoint of not what I said but what our participants have told



us. I want to just share one question that we ask our participants. When we have a 2- or 3-day session, we break the groups up for a period of time into a group of blacks and a group of whites. My business partner is white, and she goes with [the] white group, and I go with the black group. There [are] three questions we ask these groups to answer. We ask them how they see their own culture, because we want people to recognize that they have a culture and what that culture is and what are the kinds of ways that that culture manifests itself. So we ask them to answer the question how they see their own culture. The second question we ask them to answer is how they see the other culture. And the third question we ask them to answer, which is very enlightening for us, is how do they think that they [are] perceived by the other culture. Understand that you have a white group answering the questions by themselves and the black group answering the questions by themselves. And then they come back together, and they share the information. That way nobody is on the spot individually. But as a group they share what the answers are, [and what we've found. . . . We can't do it every seminar because it takes a day or two to get that comfortable where they will be honest. But we find that at least 95 percent of how each group sees or thinks that they are perceived by the other group is negative. And they're being very honest. . . . [W]hites perceive that blacks see them at least 95 percent negative and vice versa. And the truth of the matter is that in many cases it's not quite that bad, but it's at least about 85 percent negative that the one group sees the other group.

Now, when we asked the question, "How do you think you're perceived by the other culture," most groups list in rapid fire order all the negative things. And we have to literally pull teeth to get people to say, "Well, don't you think the other group sees you in any way positive?" Well they may sit there, and they say, "Well, maybe they see us as" [and whatever. . . . [T]he point I'm trying to make is in their mind, they think they're being perceived by the other group in primarily negative ways. Now to me that says that there's tension. If I think the other group perceives me in negative ways, and I'm constantly interacting with folks that I constantly believe see me in a negative light on both sides, nobody can tell me there's not racial tension. You can go back to the workplace and you

can go back to wherever you are and smile and be happy, but when push comes to shove, that's how you think you're being perceived. I say that's racial tension. And I say all it takes is a minor incident for people then to become upset.

### **Barbara Brown, County Agent Visions for Youth**

. . . I'm a county agent with a program called Visions for Youth in Sumter. And that's a collaborative program that's done jointly with both South Carolina State University and Clemson University. And our charge is to make things better for kids 5 to 10 years old. We have a community-based Visions for Youth Council that has developed a Visions statement and has identified about eight priority needs. One of those needs as an objective[—] . . . we want our children to value and understand the diversity of our multicultural community and how they fit into it . . . [T]his is a bit of a story . . . but it's true. It was a Tuesday morning in the summer of 1992. I sat on the grass with children all around me. Two precious little black girls sat on my lap. One was about 5 years old and the other 8. We were watching a video on my office's portable VCR. The long extension cord ran from the nearby low-income public housing apartment across the grass to the folding chair that was supporting the VCR. I was part of the summer Feed-A-Child Recreation and Experimental Learning Program. One day each week I came to the housing projects. The children and I were chatting. Every now and then when the opportunity presented itself, I interjected health and wellness messages into the conversation. The video played away sharing everything anyone would ever want to know about jumping rope. Then the little girl says . . . "Where did you get those earrings?" and not waiting for an answer—"I like your necklace," said the little 8-year-old occupying half of my lap. Then she gave me a comfortable hug. Her sweet face and big brown eyes looked up at me. And the young black child said, "You shouldn't be white." She giggled and wouldn't repeat the statement when I asked her what she said. The next Tuesday when I arrived for my Health and Wellness Program she greeted me at my car with a question. "Do you want to hear a song?" Of course I did. I was treated to six courses of the world is a rainbow, black, white, red, and yellow. You be me and I'll be me. Yes, young

children think about issues of racism and race relations. Fortunately the little girl in my real life story had learned a song to help her figure out the world and appreciate diversity. The opportunity to communicate with someone from a different race in a safe place provided the impetus for learning. Do not all our children deserve a similar opportunity? And an even more important question,

without such opportunities will our children grow up able to function adequately in our increasingly diverse world? There are barriers that limit minority children from reaching their full potential; whether these barriers are racial or something else that has not been adequately defined. But the reality is that changes must be made. There are barriers.

## Conclusion

**T**he South Carolina Advisory Committee, in three briefing meetings over a 1-year period, received critical information from over 25 participants in three major metropolitan areas of the State (Greenville, Charleston, and Columbia). Although many public officials, black and white, in all three areas declined the invitation to take part directly or indirectly in the meetings or to respond to subsequent requests to comment on excerpts of the draft report, the majority of the participants voiced perceptions that racial tensions not only remain problematic, but are dramatically on the increase.

The singular issue that has recently highlighted the severity of increased racial tensions is

the flying of the Confederate Flag at State facilities. This issue has pulled the covers off race relations that were already strained to a near breaking point. Many of the briefing meeting participants and South Carolinians, generally have raised serious questions about the absence of statesmanlike leadership at all levels, public and private, on the flag issue and the broader issue of race relations. The Advisory Committee hereby calls upon all South Carolinians, especially State and local officials, to refocus their attention and resources to finding solutions to what has become the State's most critical problem, namely, increased racial tensions.

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