Racial Tensions in Tennessee

Tennessee Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

June 1996

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Letter of Transmittal

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Attached is a summary report on a series of three briefing meetings held by the Tennessee Advisory Committee in Nashville, March 19, 1992; Memphis, June 26, 1992; and Knoxville, September 23, 1992, on racial tensions in the State. The Advisory Committee, by a vote of 10–0–2, approved submission of this report to the Commissioners.

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, nevertheless, they remain severely problematic.

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,

Jocelyn Wurzburg, *Chairperson*
Tennessee Advisory Committee

Tennessee Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

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* No longer a member of the Committee.
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Background Information

For Tennessee as a whole, blacks were 16 percent of the population in 1990, a rise of 7.2 percent from 1980. Whites, who were 83 percent of the population in 1990, increased by 5.5 percent over the decade. Other minority groups constitute very small proportions of the population in Tennessee.[1]

In economic terms, unemployment in Tennessee in 1992 was 10.8 percent for blacks and 5.6 percent for whites. Nationally, the rates were 12.7 percent and 6.5 percent, respectively, for blacks and whites.[2] Of the 744,941 persons in Tennessee with incomes below the poverty level in 1989, 32.5 percent were black. Median household income in Tennessee in 1989 was $24,807; median white household income was $26,435, and for blacks, $16,724.[3]

In 1990, 59.4 percent of blacks age 25 and over were high school graduates as were 68.2 percent of whites. National proportions of high school graduates were 63.1 percent for blacks and 77.9 percent for whites. College graduation rates for the same age group in Tennessee were 10.2 percent for blacks and 16.7 percent for whites. The national college graduation rates were 11.4 and 21.5 percent for blacks and whites, respectively.[4]

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1   See appendix, table 1.

2   See appendix, table 7.

3   See appendix, table 2.

4   See appendix, table 8.

Introduction

In 1991, the United States Commission on Civil Rights outlined a multiyear plan to review the status of racial and ethnic tensions around the United States. The Commission identified six urban areas—Washington, D.C., Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Miami, and Mississippi—in which to hold hearings. The Commission encouraged its State Advisory Committees (SACs) to consider similar projects in their States.

The Tennessee SAC elected to piggyback the Commission's initiative and adopted the project "Racial Tensions in Tennessee." The SAC, together with the Southern Regional Office (SRO) staff, decided to conduct and schedule a series of community briefing meetings in the major urban areas of the State to assess racial tensions.

Public officials, representatives from a variety of civic organizations, and community leaders and civil rights activists were invited to provide informal presentations of their impressions of racial tensions in their respective communities. They also responded to questions from the SAC members.

Community forums were held in March 1992 in Nashville, June 1992 in Memphis, and September 1992 in Knoxville. The meetings basically followed the same format, with the SAC attempting to assess the level of racial tensions in these communities based on the presentations, with recommendations and suggestions to alleviate and eventually eliminate any tensions.

This report is based on the transcripts of the briefing meetings,[1] and it focuses on the presentations by panelists who appeared before the SAC at these meetings, along with other submitted documentation related to the topic.

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1 Copies of the following transcripts are on file at the Southern Regional Office of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights: Transcript of the proceedings of the Tennessee Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights briefing meeting held in Nashville, TN, Mar. 17, 1992 (hereafter cited as *Nashville Transcript*); Transcript of the proceedings of the Tennessee Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights briefing meeting held in Memphis, TN, June 26, 1992 (hereafter cited as *Memphis Transcript*); Transcript of the proceedings of the Tennessee Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights briefing meeting held in Knoxville, TN, Sept. 23, 1992 (hereafter cited as *Knoxville Transcript*).

Nashville Meeting, March 17, 1992

In 1990 Nashville's population was 488,374, 24.3 percent black. Located in the center of Tennessee, Nashville's median household income was above the State median in 1989: $27,821 versus $24,807. In 1990 the black unemployment rate in Nashville was 9.4 percent; the white rate was 3.9 percent. The black proportion of the Nashville population in 1990 was 24.3 percent. In 1989, 49.9 percent of the 62,497 persons living below the poverty level were black.[1]

At the initial community meeting in Nashville on March 17, 1992, the following persons were invited and participated as panelists: Reverend Bill Barnes, Edgehill United Methodist Church; Irene Boyd, Catholic Diocese of Nashville; Katherine Linebaugh, National Conference of Christians and Jews; Dr. Warren Moore, Tennessee Human Rights Commission; and Ruth Tanner, Jewish Federation. The panelists were asked to discuss their personal views on the status of racial tensions in the Nashville community.

Reverend Bill Barnes, Pastor
Edgehill United Methodist Church

Reverend Barnes, pastor of Edgehill United Methodist Church in south Nashville for almost 26 years, began his statement by sharing his impressions of race relations in Nashville from a personal point of view:

I understand things [racial tensions] to be in the city, in the neighborhood where I work and live, and on its periphery. I understand things [racial tensions] to be really qualitatively worse than they were 20 or 25 years ago.... I think [racial tensions] are really in the central city and amongst low-income folks, and especially black neighborhoods, low-income black neighborhoods. I think they [racial tensions] are significantly worse....[2]

Reverend Barnes commented on public housing, noting that "because of the safety factor... meetings and gatherings that once were held in public housing at night can no longer be. Drugs, violence, and other crimes have made many Nashville neighborhoods unsafe."[3] Reverend Barnes stated that in the 1930s, as an answer to the country's unemployment problems in the housing industry, building of public housing was started. He would like to see those units demolished and replaced with a program that works better, including scattered housing and duplexes.

Reverend Barnes is personally involved with some of the city's homeless population. His congregation of over 240 people feeds more than 100 homeless people, the majority from downtown, 2 nights a week. He indicated that the homeless problem has avalanched since the late 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. He noted that "there is no question that homelessness disproportionately affects the black community more so than other communities and that because of the daily frustration and anger the homeless feel, it is a potential source of violence."[4]

Reverend Barnes discussed economic, as well as racial issues, indicating he feels that "the relationship between poverty and race is a disproportionate kind of penalty on African Americans."[5]

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1   See appendix, table 3.

2   *Nashville Transcript*, p. 6.

3   Ibid., p. 7.

4   Ibid., p. 9.

5   Ibid., p. 10.

He talked about the movement of jobs out of the city, the shift of jobs from production jobs . . . to service jobs with all the implications for wages and unemployment, and the shrinkage of the "MMM"—marriageable male market—in low-income black neighborhoods, as factors contributing to unemployment and underemployment. Reverend Barnes stated that "affirmative action has taken a funny twist in the central city in that it has creamed the African American inner-city neighborhood of role models for family life and the strong male image."[6]

The Committee asked Reverend Barnes how he would address the problems outlined in his presentation if he had a magic wand. He responded with "additional resources for community development and specialists and trained people who can help communities develop their own capacities, neighborhood initiatives and additional pride in neighborhoods. . . . it is suicide to continue to tolerate the degree of unemployment and hopelessness that's found in communities—especially African Americans. Jobs have simply got to be created."[7]

When questioned whether drugs are the cause or the result of tensions and problems in the communities, Reverend Barnes responded that "people resort to drugs out of hopelessness and anomaly. People seem to drift to hopelessness because they're using [drugs] and don't have anything else much to do with their lives. I think its very hard to say whether it's cause or result—it seems to be both."[8]

Irene Boyd, Catholic Diocese of Nashville

Ms. Boyd spoke in terms of the reality of racism in Nashville and race relations and tensions. She acknowledged that she did not have a real clear picture of what race relations are like in Nashville other than personal impressions. Her impressions, coupled with dialogue with others on the subject, resulted in the following perceptions:

There have been significant changes that have taken place in the last 25–30 years, changes in laws concerning voting rights. People who were denied access 25–30 years ago, the system has improved, but there is a long way to go.

There is greater access to positions of power and influence for minority people in the community, but certainly not enough in terms of the proportionality of blacks and other minorities.

There are probably better opportunities in the business and job market but, again, not nearly enough, and there is integration in some of the neighborhoods, churches, and workplaces more than 25–30 years ago, but, again, the question still is: How much of a change is more external appearance than fundamental change?[9]

Ms. Boyd noted that there is still a disproportionate population of racial minorities among the poor, among those who are unemployed, and among those who are in prison, and they all suffer the consequences of poverty, which translates into poor access to health care, fewer opportunities for quality education and job training, and unequal availability of legal services. They are victims of crime. They are subject to discriminatory treatment by law enforcement officials, and subject to the deterioration of the inner city; they lack adequate transportation that affects job opportunities; they are subject to much of the scapegoating that happens when the economy is suffering. There is a recognition that as the economy gets worse, there is a tendency to blame racial and ethnic minorities.[10]

Ms. Boyd also noted that there was a general awareness of a fair amount of Japanese bashing going on in terms of the economy. There are

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6   Ibid., p. 12.

7   Ibid., p. 16.

8   Ibid., pp. 17–18.

9   Ibid., p. 25.

10   Ibid., p. 26.

comments, slurs, and discrimination against many Arabs in the Nashville community concerning the Persian Gulf situation. Many Jewish people are subject to derogatory remarks over the Israeli-Palestinian issue.[11] She continued by saying that many people she knows realize that racism is enculturated in our society and in our experiences. They believe that racism is much more subtle than overt today, and that in many circles it is in bad form to be overtly racist, but that it is there.

Ms. Boyd discussed questions about how to sort out what is a type of classism or hostility against poor people as opposed to what is racist. There seems to be a perception that there is a great deal of hostility against homeless people, against the poor, and that it's more in terms of this class of people that other people perceive as draining the economy. And although people will admit again that racial minorities are disproportionately represented among the poor, they perceive the issues sometimes to be more the issue of poverty.

Ms. Boyd stated that the many blacks who had talked with her about their experiences had the feeling of being looked upon with suspicion, particularly when they are shopping, etc. They also spoke of their concern about the images they think are often shaped by the media in terms of who is on welfare and who is committing crimes, and how those images take shape in people's minds and perceptions.

Ms. Boyd discussed dialogue she has had with members of the black community and from their perceptions and experiences, she noted, they felt the city was really not willing to invest in black businesses.[12] There seems to be no real comprehensive plan for putting in the right kind of infrastructure, a common vision, a vision of the total community.

There are jobs coming into the city, but what is the economic impact for blacks and how are they benefiting? Are they benefiting? Our tax money goes into matching Federal funds, but how much say do minorities actually have about where the monies will go? Who will be serviced by that money? Where are the blacks in influencing public policy? There is an importance and a real need for maximizing the potential of all segments in the community. There is a sense that that is not being done in the black community and in north Nashville.[13]

One of the things that is really needed for minorities, Ms. Boyd continued, is a sense of hope and a sense of opportunity that is not present in minority communities, particularly in lower income areas. She detects a sense that maybe the bigger problem is still institutional racism, economic racism as opposed to individual racism. The question of "what is progress" was raised, and it was determined that progress is really the uplifting of the black community, of minority communities as a whole, where there are jobs and where there is growth in business, where there is better housing, and safer neighborhoods in communities.[14]

Ms. Boyd cited a statement that was included in the U.S. Bishops Pastoral letter[15] on racism which came out in 1979: "Today, racism flourishes in the triumph of private concern over public responsibility, individual success over social commitment and personal fulfillment over authentic compassion."[16] She concluded that she thinks we live in a society today that is very much caught up in individual rights, in self-interest, and vested interest. She thinks we have lost sight of the common good and because of that she thinks the effort needed to make changes in race relations, in any area where there are problems, is lacking because we are very busy with our own concerns.

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11   Ibid., p. 27.

12   Ibid., p. 33.

13   Ibid., pp. 33–34.

14   Ibid., pp. 36–37.

15   U.S. Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter #22, *Brothers & Sisters to U.S.*, Nov. 14, 1979. Ibid.,

16   Pastoral Letter, p. 347.

As far as addressing what the Catholic Church or the diocese is doing towards racial relations, Ms. Boyd wishes they were doing more. She noted that, a couple of years ago, her parish sent out a packet on racism and suggestions about what could be done in the schools with the curriculum. There have been efforts in terms of educating people on what the church teaches as far as racism is concerned, for example, exposing them to the pastoral letter on racism. The pastoral letter acknowledges that there is racism in the church. Blacks have been active in the parishes and parish councils, she said, but at this time not in terms of the diocesesan leadership. She acknowledged that the dioceses could be doing more, particularly in the area of racism and that their efforts did not have a real focused energy on race relations.

Katherine Linebaugh, National Conference of Christians and Jews, Nashville Chapter

Ms. Linebaugh spoke of the founding of the NCCJ [National Conference of Christians and Jews] in 1927 as a nonsectarian human relations organization where distinguished Americans who were Protestants, Catholics, and Jews became committed to initiating an education program to combat the raging hatred that was being expressed and being tolerated and accepted in this nation by hatemongers against Catholics, Jews, blacks, and foreigners.

Ms. Linebaugh commented that "attitudes of racism have an impact on the quality of life in a community. It affects employment, health care, education . . . etc., to name a few things."[17] She noted that the Nashville and the middle Tennessee areas have grown, due to the 1980s influx of immigrants, from a place with few cultural differences to a more cosmopolitan area where there are new traditions, values, and customs. These new arrivals have impacted our neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces. The impact these

changes have made is immeasurable. She noted that human relations professionals point out that in poor economic times, tensions between groups increase, and the more different the immigrants and more economic competition for jobs in space and service, the greater the distrust will be by the natives.

Ms. Linebaugh said that, although it has only been recently that hate crimes have been recorded, it is known that there has been an increase of hate crimes across the country, as well as in middle Tennessee. The disturbing news about hate crimes is the youthfulness of those who are committing them. Two-thirds are young adults 19 years and younger who seem to be acting out shared feelings and attitudes of their family, their friends, and/or those they are associated with. They appear to have absorbed years of bigoted conversation and comments by those close to them.

Ms. Linebaugh stated that her office has noticed an increase in such white supremacist groups as the Aryan Nation and the Ku Klux Klan in the middle Tennessee area.[18] She stated that although the KKK's hatred of Jews and blacks has remained, it has added a great many other minorities as well as the Federal Government, taxes, immigration, and issues like AIDS to its litany, and these new issues draw more sympathizers to their cause.[19] Ms. Linebaugh noted that building a defense against white supremacist groups will be a challenge for the nineties. Demographic reports indicate the issues of racism will become even more critical in the future, she said, because the population of people of color will not only increase, but will be younger. This will be a significant factor in educational institutions and in economic institutions. She stated that "whites have a choice to continue the outmoded traditions which encourage racism or learn to accept cultural pluralism beyond the level of lip service. The increasing diversity of our population makes it even more imperative that our schools teach

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17   Ibid., p. 26.

18   Ibid., pp. 48–49.

19   Ibid., p. 49.

about our nation's diversity and what we as Americans have in common. . . ."[20]

Ms. Linebaugh also noted that teachers and administrators must be concerned about racism and the role they should play in "prejudice reduction" in the school environment. Attitudes of racism in a school environment divert minority students' attentions and interests from schoolwork, and because racism is a strongly negative emotional experience, schools must increase communications along racial lines.[21]

Ms. Linebaugh ended her statement noting that we can make our community's environment more accepting of diversity by:

Becoming more aware of others who are different from us—acknowledging that ignorance and fear are two motivating factors of racism; having educational organizations promote an appreciation for diversity. This should be encouraged and supported. Insist that law enforcement personnel be trained to identify bias crimes and recognize cultural differences and to react appropriately; and have leadership, both black and white, that understands the needs of all citizens, who have the ability to set aside prejudices based on color, creed, or ethnic cultures, and who can dialogue together with open hearts and open minds.[22]

Dr. Warren Moore, Director
Tennessee Human Rights Commission

Mr. Moore said that "what is happening in Tennessee in 1992 is [not] any different, except in, perhaps, form, than has been happening across the country, and indeed Western civilization for a number of years . . . the strong taking the dominant position over the weak." He spoke of categories of violence, for example, political violence, "where those who are in political office or have positions of leadership tend to make irresponsible statements or take postures over against others, groups, individuals, countries, etc, and I think this gets played out. It filters down to even children at play in the school yards in terms of how they handle their disagreements. . . ."[23]

Mr. Moore described social violence, in the sense that police departments and other organizations legally licensed to enforce or to curb certain groups of behavior, tried to exercise their authority according to their own private whims quite often. They tend to police certain parts of town more strictly than others, he said.[24]

Mr. Moore spoke of increased gang activity and hate groups such as skinheads, the KKK, and others that are developing in certain areas. He also spoke of unorganized violence, individuals attacking individuals, drive-by shootings—some drug related some not.

Mr. Moore noted that although violent incidents occur statewide, most of the reports his office receives come from the larger metropolitan areas such as Knoxville, Chattanooga, Nashville, and Memphis.[25]

Mr. Moore described public housing as a "concentration camp, an area that is out there by itself, but it is still patrolled sort of from the outside." In Nashville, he said, there are certain public housing units, namely, "Little Vietnam," where police say that they don't go in because they cannot match the firepower.[26] He feels that is a sad commentary for a police establishment to make.

Mr. Moore also noted that schools, halls, grounds, and the areas around the schools are the domain of drug dealers and pushers. He said his and other organizations have observed less vigorous policing of illegal drug activities by law

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20   Ibid., p. 49.

21   Ibid., p. 50.

22   Ibid., pp. 52–53.

23   Ibid., pp. 58–59.

24   Ibid., p.60.

25   Ibid., p. 64.

26   Ibid., p. 64.

enforcement than of other minor infractions of the law, e.g.; traffic violations. When asked his assessment of police-community relations, he said he felt that "the police department is in sort of disarray itself. It's sort of disputing back and forth as to their procedures, especially regarding promotions and so on. I think that sort of says to us in the community that they are not all together heading in the same direction. I think [the police] still have a way of getting around the law themselves when they are dealing with the black community and perhaps any other minority. I think they are not as overtly violent as they used to be. . . ."[27]

Mr. Moore spoke of organizations that offer some positive activity in dealing with community problems, such as the 100 Black Men of Middle Tennessee, the Men of Distinction, NCCJ, and so forth, but noted that there is not a proliferation of such activity.

Mr. Moore was questioned whether he could draw any direct correlation between the posture of national, State, or city leaders as they relate to fear, prejudices, and racism. He responded that he felt the past two or three administrations "have [been] sort of backing away from affirmative action. . . . We have had an abandonment of the civil rights agenda and this has filtered down. I do think that persons who have the highest level of visibility and acceptance in the community carry the responsibility and the ability to affect the attitudes and behavior of the masses."[28]

Mr. Moore also was asked what role he felt the Federal Government should play in addressing the issue of racial tensions in America. His response: "The President should be first in displaying the fact that this should be a unified country. . . . The Congress, as the next level down, should say that there is enough of this divisiveness. . . . We need to get rid of racism. . . ."[29]

Mr. Moore's response to what he thought was the proper role of the police in the community was that he felt they should "provide protection for the community, no matter whether the community is affluent or poverty stricken."[30]

Ruth Tanner, Director
Jewish Federation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee

Reflecting on the remarks of other presenters, Ms. Tanner observed that there are some common problems and also some differences in perception of some of those problems. She said that the Jewish community of Nashville and middle Tennessee is troubled by the increase in white supremacists' activities and anti-Semitic violence that is clearly growing in our region. She noted the Anti-Defamation League's annual audit of anti-Semitic incidents, which reported 1,879 occurrences in 1991, the highest number in the 13-year history of the survey. Seven of these incidents were in Tennessee, one in Nashville.[31]

Ms. Tanner felt that the element in this upward trend that is most troubling to her is the relationship that seems to be maturing between what she called the doctrine of white supremacy, emanating from groups such as the Aryan Nation, and the carrying out of antisocial acts by persons influenced by this doctrine, particularly the Klu Klux Klan and Skin Heads. This relationship was evidenced in 1990 at a meeting in Smyrna, when Richard Butler, the leader of the Aryan Nation, spoke to a number of small splinter groups who came together under the umbrella of the Christian Identity Doctrine. Butler told those assembled to "violate the rights of minority citizens because they are not really citizens." Within hours, the entrance way of the West End Synagogue in Nashville was sprayed with bullets from an automatic weapon. In January 1992, two

27   Ibid., p. 69.

28   Ibid., pp. 67–70.

29   Ibid., p. 73.

30   Ibid., p. 73.

31   Ibid., pp. 77–79.

local Ku Klux Klan members were charged by a U.S. grand jury for this crime, she reported. The previous year, the same synagogue was spray-painted with swastikas and anti-Semitic graffiti the night preceding Jewish New Year. Within weeks, a group of Aryan skinheads was arrested and charged with the desecration.[32]

Although these fringe elements do not represent mainstream middle Tennesseans, nonetheless, they continue to thrive, Ms. Tanner noted. She said that the Idaho-based Aryan Nation is planning to build a compound, Aryan Nation South, on a private farm just outside of Murfreesboro. This new base of operations for perhaps the best organized white supremacy organization in the United States should be a concern to Tennesseans.

Ms. Tanner acknowledged that Tennessee is fortunate to have a relatively strong hate crimes statute and the cooperation of dedicated law enforcement agencies who bring hate crime perpetrators to justice. What is needed from all, she said, is vigilance and the courage to act together on one another's behalf should the need arise.[33]

On March 26, 1992, Nashville's Jewish community and the NAACP of Nashville cosponsored a hate crime forum, where the director of The Klan Watch Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center of Alabama, spoke. It marked the beginning of a new definition of what Ms. Tanner sees as community building from the Jewish community's point of view.[34]

32 Ibid., p. 80.

33 Ibid., p. 83.

34 Ibid., p. 84.

Memphis Briefing Meeting, June 26, 1992

In 1990 Memphis had a population of 610,337, of whom 54.8 percent were black. Memphis is in the far southwest corner of the State on the Mississippi River. The median household income was below the State average in 1989: $22,674 versus $24,807. Blacks were unemployed in Memphis at a rate of 13.8 percent in 1990, compared to a 3.8 percent white rate. The black proportion of the 136,123 persons living below the poverty level in 1989 was 83.3 percent.[35]

The Memphis briefing meeting was held on June 26, 1992, and was sponsored jointly by the Tennessee Human Rights Commission. The meeting was held at the city council chambers and the purpose, as stated by Leo Gray, Chairperson of the Tennessee Human Rights Commission, was to hear personal and organizational experiences that reveal the tenor of racial relations in terms of negligence in this metropolitan area.

A number of participants from the Memphis area provided input regarding racial tensions in the city. They spoke of a variety of concerns, including inadequate and poorly maintained public housing, poor police-community relations, inequities in the educational systems, lack of economic development and opportunities for minorities—just to name a few. Most participants expressed anger and frustration with the "system" and some predicted dire consequences if something is not done to change the direction of deteriorating race relations in Memphis.

Noticeably absent from the hearing were representatives from the local political arena, such as the mayor, chief of police, city and county commissioners, all of whom were invited to express their views and perceptions regarding race relations in Memphis.

Some citizens, unable to vent their frustrations before the panel became extremely angry and complained that not enough time and consideration was given to Memphis citizens to express their views. Anger and frustration seemed to reflect the general mood of the attendants of this briefing meeting. One direction of this hostility was toward agencies in the community designed to hear, investigate, and provide relief from discrimination in the areas of housing, employment, and the sharing of the economic pie of the community. When asked whether they took their complaints to the appropriate agencies, many citizens said that the agencies were ineffective and lacked the manpower, commitment, and resources needed to handle the complaints and problems of the community.

Dr. Harry E. Moore, Jr., Director, National Conference of Christians and Jews
Author of "Profiles—Essays in Black and White"

Dr. Moore briefly outlined a historical account of racism from the early 19th century to the present time. His summation concluded "Racism has fashioned and shaped Memphis' history at every step it has taken and every stage it has reached in the past. It promises to continue to do so in the present, on into the future unless significant changes in attitude and behavior are made."[36]

Susan Cossar, Concerned Citizen of Memphis

Mrs. Cossar was concerned about the rights of handicapped children and believed that schools in the Memphis area did not properly protect handicapped children in accordance with section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.[37]

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35   See appendix, table 4.

36   *Memphis Transcript*, p. 17.

Verlene Mayo, Public Housing Resident

Ms. Mayo, a public housing resident, spoke about the 30,000 "oppressed" residents in public housing that lack empowerment; residents plagued with drugs, violence, and other social ills associated with life in public housing. Mrs. Mayo responded to questions concerning tenants' associations and organizations in Memphis. She indicated that ineffective associations and a "nonfunctioning" citywide resident council prevents tenants from coming together on substantive matters.[38]

Dr. Karim-Talib Muhammad, Editor of a Local Paper, *Independent News,* and a Local Radio Host

Dr. Muhammad said that what exists in Memphis is institutionalized racism, and "unless the present trend of racism is curtailed, this city is headed for something that none of us want to live to see. . . ." Dr. Muhammad believed that the city was a "powder keg," and, contrary to what some city leaders might say, things are not getting better for blacks even though the city has a black mayor and police director.[39] He criticized local civil rights groups and others who, in his judgment, were not involved enough in solving the problems affecting blacks and other minorities in the city.

Dr. Muhammad responded to a comment by a committee member concerning religious prejudices that exist in Memphis. He responded:

It is religion in this city that is creating a division, and therefore many of the problems . . . each little group and pocket of persons and people have their little tribal things going on and that is why we can't come together . . . . So religion, in my opinion, and politics are the biggest dividers in this city. If we don't talk about

unifying the city, you can keep on talking about human rights and civil rights and nothing is going to happen."[40]

Reverend Samuel Billy Kyles of Operation P.U.S.H. of Memphis and Former Chairperson of the Tennessee State Advisory Committee

Reverend Kyles spoke about a SAC report in the late seventies or early eighties regarding police and community relations in Memphis.[41] He indicated that the report was recently referred to in regard to a recent shooting in the Dixie Homes area and noted that it is so strange that the report is [still] applicable to what's happening today.

Reverend Kyles spoke of the progress that has been made in black-white relations but noted that, ". . . there have been decisions made over the last 12 years that have really set us back. . . . It's just so strange to me that we have to go over the same ground again . . . ."[42]

Referring to the sharing of power, Reverend Kyles noted that, right now, with Memphis being majority African American, the city council still did not want to be divided correctly. He indicated that 20 years ago there were 13 council persons— 3 blacks and 10 whites. Now with blacks in the majority, we still cannot decide how to divide the council so that it reflects the population without having to go through the courts. He chided the council and the leadership of the city to "do what is fair and what is right."

In conclusion, Reverend Kyles stated that although we have made some progress, there is a lot of unrest.

You can't have a number of people out of work, young men standing around. Even though we have jobs, we make 57 percent less than the white males. . . . The

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37   29 U.S.C. §794 (1988 & Supp. V 1993)

38   Ibid., p. 47.

39   Ibid., pp. 56–57.

40   Ibid., p. 64.

41   U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Hearing Before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, May 9, 1997.

42   *Memphis Transcript,* p. 69.

number of 20-25 year olds who are in jail or under probation or whatever. The volatility of Memphis is real; it could blow up. It really can, because of just the fact that racism is very much alive. . . . The neglect of the Reagan-Bush years will be with us another 100 years I'm afraid. But it's as real in Memphis as it is in other cities—very real.[43]

Herman Ewing, President and Chief Operating Officer, Memphis Urban League

Mr. Ewing reported that the Memphis Urban League gathered information about public policy and public attitudes on the issues of housing, police and community relations, race relations, and homelessness in the Memphis area. He stated that the one issue in Memphis which exacerbates the above named issues is that of race, which includes racism, the behavior of racists, and a continuing lack of sensitivity to and respect for the ethnic differences which predominate in the community and have for more than 150 years.

Mr. Ewing cited the lack of equitable allocation of funds by governmental services for high economic impact programs that have the potential to make dependent people independently productive. He noted the lack of serious public discussion regarding some 5,000 to 7,500 requests on waiting lists for public housing, as opposed to serious public discussion about a new football stadium to pursue the quest for an NFL team. Mr. Ewing stated, ". . . this illustration is not a statement of opposition to the NFL coming to Memphis. . . . but a statement about priorities which have racial implications making last things first."[44]

Mr. Ewing cites recent U.S. census data that show that African Americans continue to reflect a household income of less than 55 percent of that of whites in the Memphis Metropolitan Statistical Area. He said that there seems to be no collective public policy or will to change this outcome. He concluded by noting the failure of governmental and legislative bodies to submit to long-term

funding and resources for closing the educational gap of African American children in the inner city.

When specifically asked, "Are racial tensions in the city of Memphis on the increase?" Mr. Ewing responded:

In my opinion, yes, tensions are very, very clearly polarized. The polarity is there. . . . What we have here, in Memphis, is a disregard and a disrespect for the positions advocated by black leadership. . . Yes, we have an African American mayor, and we have an almost majority African American city council. I say yes to you that we have substantial tensions.[45]

Joan Nelson, Part-Owner Heritage Tours, Inc.

Ms. Nelson began her presentation by providing a historical background of the city's development, pointing out the physical slavery of the early years and the psychological slavery that is present to this very day. She stated that "Memphis is the most racist city in the United States." She pointed out the many contributions and sufferings of African Americans. She cited "systemized and institutionalized racism and prejudice that exists in the city today. . . . There is no willingness on the part of the status quo to make a change . . . and unless and until this change happens, the community, like others, will self-destruct. . . ."

Ms. Nelson spoke about her experiences as a job counselor for the CETA (Comprehensive Employment Training Programs) program, noting that she began "Heritage Tours" after being laid-off from the city during the budget cuts for social programs during the Reagan years. She noted that looking at the conditions of people in Memphis, the necessary question that needs to be asked is, "Has it always been this way, and if not, what happened? If you are sick and cannot get well, you have to go back and see what some of the symptoms are . . . what caused it." She concluded

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43   Ibid., p. 71.

44   Ibid., p. 116.

45   Ibid., pp. 127–28.

that "Memphis... is very, very sick as far as black people are concerned."

Maxine Smith, President, Memphis Board of Education

Ms. Smith began her presentation by noting that of a 104,000 student body, over 60 percent are considered poor. Although race has little or nothing to do with learning economics, it certainly plays a great part, she said. She stated that the system has been neglected by the funding bodies and by the attitude of the community in general. She continued by speaking of the leadership in Memphis, noting the election of a black mayor (Herenton) and a majority black school board that is factionalized racially. She concluded by expressing her feelings that the problems facing the community will only be solved when the whole community, black and white, come together to make the system work for all of its citizens.

Knoxville Briefing Meeting, September 23, 1992

Knoxville, in eastern Tennessee, in 1990 had a population of 165,121, 15.8 percent black. In 1990 median household income was below the State average: $12,923 versus $24,807. Unemployment for blacks in Knoxville in 1990 was 13.8 percent; for whites, 6 percent. Blacks were 28.9 percent of the 32,189 persons with incomes below the poverty level in 1989.[46]

At the opening of the meeting, Dennie Littlejohn, a personnel department representative from the University of Tennessee, introduced two Knoxville citizens, Clifford Bishop and Trina Wynn, who made statements to the panel regarding an incident in which they alleged that Ms. Wynn was falsely arrested by police officers for driving under the influence (DUI) after leaving a University of Tennessee football game. Mr. Bishop stated that he and Trina Wynn were stopped by the University of Tennessee police officers and held for 15 minutes. He reported that five officers asked him to get out of his car and held him against his will. An officer allegedly beat him while handcuffed and told him to perform certain acts that he thought were insulting. He said that he did not know the reason for his arrest. He had sustained injuries from the handcuffs being placed tightly around his wrists. As a result of this incident, he has filed an official complaint with the University of Tennessee. Mr. Bishop said that the police charged him with resisting official detention and assaulting a police officer. However, he stated it would have been virtually impossible for him to flee from the police officer since he was already handcuffed. He also said that the police officers indicated in their report that the injuries he sustained were the result of falling down.

Ms. Wynn reported that she was *falsely* arrested for DUI on September 19, 1992. She stated that she was also asked to vacate the car and was charged by a police officer for driving under the influence. Similar to Mr. Bishop's charge, Ms. Wynn stated that she was also arrested and not given a valid reason for her arrest. When the police officer indicated that she was arrested for DUI, Ms. Wynn asked to take an alcohol test to prove that she wasn't drunk. She said that she was led to believe that a breathalyzer test would be administered to her upon arriving at the Knox County Police Station. She indicated that these officers arrested her on an erroneous charge of refusing to take a breathalyzer test. She has also filed a complaint with the University of Tennessee as a result of this incident.

A.D. Baxter, Coordinator
Minority Student Affairs, University of Tennessee

Mr. Baxter acknowledged that he was not speaking as a representative of the university, but as a concerned citizen, to provide concerns and observations made since he came to Knoxville in 1983.

Mr. Baxter's first concern was with the curriculum and the lack of exposure students receive from the school system. The curriculum lacks a positive role model or positive images of African Americans, women, Hispanics, and Native Americans. He spoke of the traditional images such as Martin Luther King, Jr., and Booker T. Washington, Black History Month, and so forth. He emphasized that there is a need to have an ongoing teaching process to integrate into the entire curriculum, healthy positive images and contributions throughout the year.[47]

His second concern related to the school desegregation plan in Knoxville. He commented that "in today's society, there should be a school

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46   See appendix, table 5.

47   *Knoxville Transcript,* p. 27.

system that would offer all students an equal education as opposed to having two separate and unequal systems." He added that there is an overwhelming concern within the community that many schools will close, and the concentration of funds within Knox County will not be proportionately divided among the school systems.[48]

Mr. Baxter's third concern related to the absence of African Americans and women in top administrative positions in law enforcement. He acknowledged that, in the past, there were "few African Americans, but as they retired, their positions have not been replaced with African Americans."

His final concern related to the variety of cultural events staged throughout the Knoxville community that do not reflect the African American community. He questioned why white and African American students rarely get opportunities to see a ballet company and/or a play that reflects the African American community.[49]

Answering a question from SAC panelist Jocelyn Wurzburg on racial tensions in Knoxville, race relations on the U.T. campus, and the status of blacks in Knoxville, Mr. Baxter pointed out that efforts are being made to eradicate the stereotypes and misconceptions of African Americans among University of Tennessee students. He named a few programs designed to increase the awareness and understanding of other diversity issues on campus. However, he indicated that more ongoing sensitivity training programs of this nature need to be integrated in the major employment institutions located in the Knoxville community. He noted that efforts to reduce racial tensions are considered a high priority only when there is an incident, and he believed that more proactive rather than reactive measures are needed.[50]

Panel members mentioned an article on Zionism and black-Jewish relationships on campus. Mr. Baxter stated that "black and Jewish relations on campus has resulted in unification and a more effective dialogue among individuals." However, he noted that once a program is developed where a dialogue among individuals addressing racial problems is achieved, not much is done to effectively market and disseminate information about these programs.[51]

Mr. Baxter indicated, overall, that he believes that it is important for all diverse and ethnic groups to work together. "Minority groups need to act collectively to condemn racial hatred, bigotry, and to develop racial awareness through education in the community and by establishing networks . . . Although it will take time, there needs to be a shared responsibility among minority groups."[52]

Phil Keith, Chief of Police
Knoxville Police Department

Chief Keith agreed that racial tensions exist in the Knoxville community. He stated that steps such as community-based policing, are now underway to try and eliminate some of the racial problems. He stressed that developing such a system cannot be accomplished overnight, "it requires long-term planning." Chief Keith cited a number of proactive strategies that can be used in reducing racial tensions within the community.[53]

Chief Keith's first strategy involves the integration of leadership development in all training and policy programs within community organizations. For example, he said that at the Knoxville Police Department, efforts are made to incorporate leadership development programs reflecting an awareness of cultural diversity differences into

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48   Ibid, p. 29.

49   Ibid., pp. 29–30.

50   Ibid., pp. 32–34.

51   Ibid., p. 37.

52   Ibid., pp. 38–44.

53   Ibid., p. 45.

the department's hiring, retraining, and promotional practices.

His second strategy related to the use of force in upholding the law and using the appropriate measures to put a stop to the rampant, violent crimes and the city's drug epidemic. Chief Keith added that a proactive approach in handling hate crime investigations has to be done best over a long and not short period of time. For example, he reported that various hate groups such as the National Defense Front (NDF) tried to move their national headquarters from New York to Knoxville. After numerous attempts by the community to send a clear message to this group, namely, that biased hate groups will not be tolerated in the community, NDF decided that Knoxville would not be their new home. Chief Keith also acknowledged that efforts were made by the department's intelligence officers to collaborate with the Jewish community to communicate planned actions to be performed by these hate groups against them. He stressed that, in order to celebrate a community that reflects diversity, the community as a whole needs to unite by working together to mandate a level of professionalism within which law enforcement can respond accordingly.[54]

The Knoxville Police Department has been criticized for the underrepresentation of African Americans in administrative positions. Chief Keith indicated that currently the police department consists of 11 percent minorities with less than 5 percent representing certified or sworn officers. (Chief Keith, in a subsequent communication, has indicated that these figures should be 17 and 6.4 percent, respectively.) He admitted that the leadership development of the police department does not adequately reflect the black population of the community. He attributed this underrepresentation of African Americans to the organization's "high employee turnover rate" and the "difficulties of replacing these positions with

qualified police officers." However, he reassured everyone that the department, for the last 4 years, has embarked on an intensive recruiting program to hire more minority police officers.[55]

When asked to comment on the alleged false arrest of the two Knoxville citizens mentioned at the beginning of the briefing meeting, Chief Keith indicated that, because of pending litigation and charges, he could not comment on the case. He contended that if a Knoxville police officer saw an incident such as the one described, the officer has the authority to investigate such incidents and to ensure that inappropriate misconduct of police officers is not carried out. He stated that if any of the officers within his department had witnessed excessive force being administered to a civilian, he is confident that they would stop it.

Chief Keith indicated that hate crimes such as those performed by white supremacist groups, the National Defense Front (NDF) and the Ku Klux Klan, are handled through the police department's criminal intelligence unit, and/or a Federal agency.[56]

Chief Keith also stated that an organization has been developed known as the Knoxville Community Development Corporation (KCDC), where police officers have established a working relationship with residents within public housing areas. These officers serve as advocates for the residents in an effort to assist them in reclaiming their neighborhoods from drug dealers who sometimes victimize residents into leaving.[57]

Responding to questions regarding complaints, Chief Keith pointed out that Knoxville Police Department complaints increased over the last 4 years. Police responses, the number of citations issued and custody arrests, have increased approximately 100 percent, 50 percent, and 40 percent respectively. The use of force complaints were also up, consisting of the use of alcohol, drugs and violence, family violence, assaults, and alcohol involving DUI, with a third of these

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54 Ibid., pp. 46–50.

55 Ibid., p. 51.

56 Ibid., pp. 57–60.

57 Ibid., p. 61.

activities resulting in arrests.[58] The nature of other complaints received by his department includes improper completion of an investigative report, concerns relating to traffic accidents, and other complaints relating to sensitive investigations, such as robbery, rape, homicide, and so forth. With reference to the percentage of officer misconduct complaints, Chief Keith indicated that those complaints are usually given a psychological profile, and if a behavioral pattern of incidents such as verbal abuse continues to occur, then the officer is sent for counseling (also referred to as constructive separation). Within this process, the police officer is counseled about his chosen career and alternative employment options, and an assessment of his behavior is determined.[59]

Chief Keith pointed out that the total number of complaints regarding misconduct by fellow officers is less than 10 percent. (Chief Keith, in a subsequent communication, noted that officers of his department annually have in excess of 700,000 contacts with the public and the total percentage of complaints is less than 1 percent.) He also noted that of the total number of complaints received in the internal affairs department, 42 percent are racial in nature and that that is commensurate with the arrest demographics. He also pointed out that, currently, there isn't an appointed citizen's advisory committee that gives citizens direct access and involvement in the direction of the Knoxville Police Department. However, he indicated that there are nine channels citizens can use if they are dissatisfied with the manner in which their complaints are managed. These include, the internal affairs office, the Knox County attorney general's office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Department of Justice, the Tennessee Human Rights Commission, the court system, the city council, Mayor Victor Ashe, and the chief of police. He added that there are programs that have been

developed to allow law enforcement to meet with the community on a regular basis to receive their input pertaining to the future direction of the Knoxville Police Department. These programs include: the Mayor's Night In and Out, 147 neighborhood watch programs, and the city's school PTA and PTO meetings. In addition, the University of Tennessee, in collaboration with the Knoxville Police Department, has created programs to educate students about campus crime.

In response to a question concerning his assessment of relations between the Knoxville Police Department and the minority community, Chief Keith indicated that more progress needs to be made in an effort to remove the barriers that hinder more effective communication. He believed that it will take some time, but he is committed to ensuring that efforts are being made to improve this relationship.[60]

Dr. Dhyana Ziegler, Associate Professor, Department of Broadcasting, University of Tennessee

Dr. Ziegler began her statement to the panel by indicating that the racial issues and concerns voiced by earlier speakers mirror the same problems that many cities are facing across the United States. She indicated that these tensions are the result of underlying problems created by the country's educational systems and economic, political, and social conditions. She acknowledged that, as a faculty member in the college of communications at UT, discussion of hate speech has been an ongoing dialogue since 1987, when two students who were walking across fraternity row were hit with racial epitaphs. As a result of that incident, Chancellor Jack Reese established a task force on race relations. Dr. Ziegler is a member of the task force. For 9 months, she recalled, members of the task force met and continued to discuss racial epitaphs and the state of race relations on the UT campus.[61]

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58   Ibid., pp. 62–64.

59   Ibid., pp. 65–66.

60   Ibid., pp. 69–70.

61   Ibid., pp. 71–72.

In addition, Dr. Ziegler pointed out that continued efforts are currently being addressed at UT with regard to hate speech. She noted that these problems cannot be resolved overnight, and that efforts to resolve racial issues should start in the homes, as well as within the primary and secondary educational school systems.

Dr. Ziegler spoke in reference to the *Daily Beacon*, the school newspaper. She noted that it is often difficult to address the first amendment issue because the school newspaper has a certain amount of autonomy. She indicated that one cannot dictate what will be written in the school newspaper, but felt that internal education is the only effective method where those ethical issues can be dealt with. She indicated that this is still an ongoing issue that is being discussed on campus.

Dr. Ziegler further noted that certain actions are being taken to reduce racial tensions at UT. For example, there are round table discussions, the International House is addressing the issue of celebrating differences, and, as chairperson of the Chancellor's Commission for Blacks, she has worked with deans, department heads, and administrators in an effort to bring light to these issues. She indicated that with the new leadership at UT, namely, the chancellor, efforts are being made to address diversity on campus.[62]

Dr. Ziegler commented on the high turnover of professionals, not only at UT, but in the community, who leave after serving a year or two, because of the alleged racial climate of Knoxville. The feedback she has received indicates that the major contributing factor to the high turnover rate seems to be unfair treatment associated with renting properties to minorities. As an example, she described an incident in which a person answered an advertisement about an apartment in Chilhowee Park, and, upon receiving directions for the location of the apartment, was told not to take Magnolia Avenue because there were blacks residing in that area. She noted other incidents

related to rental problems, including statements made to African American applicants such as "we don't mind colored people living in our houses," but whenever the person arrives to look at the property, the landowners would change their minds about renting it to them, stating that they are "not renting at this point in time," or that they are only "renting to couples," and so forth. Other incidents having heightened racial tensions in the community include the burning of a cross on the lawn of a black couple's house in west Knoxville and the discrepancy of banking institutions within the community who realized that their lending policies reflected disparities in loans being awarded to whites compared to blacks.[63]

Dr. Ziegler spoke of other reports of unfair treatment including the lack of equity in State contracts for minority businesses and vendors, as well as other economic opportunities in the community for minorities. She recalled a personal racial experience when a group of white males rode within 5 to 6 inches of the bumper of her car for at least 2 to 3 miles on her return from a trip with a colleague from Georgia.

Another issue that has exacerbated race relations in the Knoxville community is the school desegregation plan. Dr. Ziegler believed that unless the issue of having an equal educational system that includes the equalization of curriculum and facilities accessible to all African American children is not resolved, then racial tensions in the Knoxville community will continue to mount.[64]

Dr. Ziegler commented that, as a result of feedback received from students on campus, African American students feel that they are treated differently by the UT police. For example, she cited that if a group of fraternity members were performing their steps (routine of dancing and fraternity chanting) in front of their dormitories, the UT police would be called and students would be told that their conduct was too rowdy. In contrast, if that same incident had involved white frater-

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62   Ibid., p. 73.

63   Ibid., pp. 74–75.

64   Ibid., p. 76.

nity members, the UT police would not be called. She added that there is a general perception that whenever there is a crowd of black men in any given situation, it is perceived to mean danger. This perception, she noted, is attributed to the promotion of negative images of black males by the media and the lack of education and communication to dispel the myths about African Americans, and that these are issues that need to be addressed by educational and business institutions.[65]

Mark Brown, President and Chief Executive Officer
Knoxville Area Urban League

Mr. Brown agreed with earlier speakers that racial tensions are increasing in Knoxville, and that society as a whole needs to realize that the existence of racism and any other forms of discrimination are costly problems for the Nation. He referred to a quote that appeared in *Money Magazine,* in an article on race and money in which it said, "while blacks bear the brunt of racism, resulting inequities cost all Americans enormously." He cited from the Urban Leagues' national research department that personal income loss for African Americans in 1989 was as high as $187 billion, which will increase to $1.5 trillion over a 10-year period. He noted that "these figures represent the difference between total income of African Americans and what the total would be if parity were the order of the day."[66]

Mr. Brown stated that for the past 3 years, over 200 employment and 112 discrimination cases have been received at the Knoxville Urban League. He indicated that these discrimination cases include hiring, promotion, and firing issues; block-busting, racial epitaphs, refusing to rent, and failure to provide housing amenities to members of a minority group. He added that the lack of economic and community development, lack of jobs, and lack of access to equal education, feeds the frustration that exists in the black community. "Discrimination is one of the fuels of racial tension."[67]

Mr. Brown believed that it is necessary for the community to work together to resolve the disparities that exist, especially in the local educational system, because this will deprive the community's greatest human resource, the children, of quality education.

He noted that although significant strides have been made in establishing a working relationship among the races, racial problems still exist, as evidenced by the number of complaints filed at the Knoxville Urban League. To address these problems, Mr. Brown recommended the integration of State, local, and Federal policies and legislation to help close the gaps between the haves and the have nots. He added that there needs to be a collaboration of public and private partnerships to create the atmosphere that equality needs to exist, thus "enabling the disenfranchised to become active participants . . . ."[68]

In conclusion, Mr. Brown stated that Americans must unite to reduce the costs of racism and added that the situation regarding racial tensions in Knoxville is of grave concern, and if something isn't done to address the disparities in education and employment, as well as to curb the crime rate, then racial tensions will become more rampant.

Sarah Moore-Greene, Member
NAACP National Board

Ms. Moore-Greene began her presentation by agreeing that racism is alive and thriving in Knoxville. She expressed her disappointment with issues that she worked on for the last 40 years that she once thought were resolved, only to discover that the same issues have resurfaced.[69]

Ms. Moore-Green cited eight reasons that have contributed to the rising racial tensions in Knoxville. These include: 1) the continuing struggle for

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65   Ibid., pp. 80–84.

66   Ibid., pp. 85–86.

67   Ibid., p. 87.

68   Ibid., pp. 88–90.

the desegregation of community schools, where parents and teachers have complained (in writing to the Office for Civil Rights, Department of Education in Atlanta) about the treatment their children and students are receiving while attending predominately white schools; 2) the failure of the educational system to provide equal educational opportunities for all students. Ms. Moore-Greene indicated that blacks are bearing the brunt of the new desegregation plan and believes that results can only be achieved through court litigation; 3) the continuing disproportionate unemployment rate among minorities; 4) the lack of a major radio or newspaper that addresses minority interests; 5) the underutilization of minorities in managerial positions and clerical positions at the Federal, State, and local levels of government. "One example is the FBI's new building here. . . .You go through there, and it is lily white. You don't see a black anyplace;" 6) the continuing segregation of social programs in churches; 7) locating minority businesses in areas that are inaccessible to minorities; and, 8) general neglect of areas heavily populated by minorities.

In closing, Ms. Moore-Green stated that an overwhelming majority of blacks are fed up with the treatment that they are receiving and are ready to implement some action.[70]

Dewey Roberts, President
Knoxville Branch of NAACP

Mr. Roberts began by stating that the racial tensions occurring in Knoxville are symptomatic of the rising problems that exist in today's society and the lack of continued commitment to civil rights programs. He reported that the Knoxville chapter of the NAACP had received an average of 15 to 20 complaint calls per day with 80 percent and 20 percent respectively representing employ-

ment and police brutality.[71] He pointed out that the Knoxville branch of the NAACP has asked the city of Knoxville to establish a civilian review board. He indicated that he has made this presentation to the city council probably two or three times, highlighting how intense the racial tension is in Knoxville, in the inner city, especially in the public housing areas. . . . "The tension is so high, it would not take but one or two police brutality or police overuse of force to have a major civil disturbance here."[72] Mr. Roberts stated that ". . . the bottom line is if the citizens do not feel that they have input into what goes on in terms of police brutality and police excessive force, then they feel no more comfortable going to the FBI than they do the police internal affair division . . . to file a complaint. . . ." He further added, ". . . I think that most of the people feel like we are going to end up having to go back to the streets like we did in the 1960s. Now, that is a sad commentary for 1992. . ."[73]

C. Delores Mitchell, Regional Director Knoxville Office, Tennessee Human Rights Commission

Ms. Mitchell stated that racism can be traced back to the landing of the pilgrims at Plymouth Rock, where they were introduced to people who had a different appearance, stature, color, speech, worship, and culture. She commented that, in the past, owning slaves meant that the master could exploit them, and this exploitation is still evident within colleges, where blacks excel in athletics instead of academics, where, generally, children perceive blacks to be only dancers and rappers instead of academicians.[74] Ms. Mitchell pointed out that, in Knoxville, more blacks are detained, arrested, convicted, and given longer jail sentences and inadequate counsel. She believed that

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69   Ibid., p. 97.

70   Ibid., pp. 99–102.

71   Ibid., p. 103.

72   Ibid., p. 104.

73   Ibid., pp. 105–06.

74   Ibid., p. 110.

these negative stereotypes should be addressed by the judiciary system, and noted that "justice is for those who can afford it." She added that the media provides sensationalism by showing graphic images of a murder in the black community, black males as pimps, and welfare mothers instead of congresswomen, church members feeding the homeless, and successful minority business owners.[75]

Ms. Mitchell stated that people of color represent a big economic advantage for many businesses. For example, businesses need black as well as white customers in order to operate at a profit. As a result, hiring both blacks and whites would be a good investment. She concluded by saying, "Racism in Knoxville is rampant. . . . Can we continue to afford it . . . ?"[76]

Reverend Gloria Moore
Knoxville Interdenominational
Christian Ministerial Alliance

Reverend Moore stated that although Chief Keith has a good heart when it comes to the development of good race relations between the Knoxville Police Department and the minority community, generally, . . . the police department is viewed as being insensitive to the needs of the minority community.[77] Reverend Moore recalled an incident that involved her son; he was presumed by some police officers to be a dope dealer because he was driving a nice car and had $750 in cash with him. She indicated that she is concerned about the racial climate in Knoxville, where even working minority professionals are not exempt from unfair treatment from Knoxville police officers.[78]

Kelsey Finch, EEO Director
City of Knoxville

Mr. Finch reported that significant studies have been made to increase the minority employment in the city of Knoxville from 6.3 percent to 9.3 percent [from the current level] over a 9-year period. He added that the total number of city employees as of July 1992 was 418, including 131 blacks (100 males, 31 females). Mr. Finch continued, stating that in the police department, 14 black males have made the pool of 30 that are expected to be hired as police officers.[79] He commented that the police force should more closely reflect the composition of the community and that efforts are being made to expand law enforcement opportunities for minorities and females.

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75 Ibid., p. 112.

76 Ibid., pp. 114–15.

77 Ibid., pp. 115–16.

78 Ibid., pp. 116–17.

79 Ibid., pp. 126–28.

Common Observations Noted in All Three Briefing Meetings

1. Racial tensions/relations seem to be worse in all communities examined than was the case 20–25 years ago.
2. Although there are more minorities in positions of power and influence in the communities, this is not reflected proportionately, in the socioeconomic conditions of blacks and other minorities in poorer communities.
3. There are very little dialogue, communication, and effective programs that positively deal with race relations and tensions in these communities.
4. Emerging problems of increased drug use, increased violence and gun usage, increased homelessness, and in most cases a decrease in the budgets of social programs designed to cope with such problems.
5. Declining economic conditions in most communities resulting in abandoned and neglected minority communities lacking in employment and decent, affordable housing for the residents.
6. There appears to be a great degree of fear and distrust of local political and civic leaders by members of the minority and lower socioeconomic communities. Political leaders and community representatives differ widely in their assessment of the potential for racial conflicts in their respective communities. Most community representatives feel there is a clear and present danger of communities erupting, and political leaders often deny or minimize the potential for such problems.
7. There is generally a reluctance by political leaders, i.e., police chiefs and mayors, to participate in these briefing/informational meetings. Only in Knoxville, did the mayor and the police chief attend or provide a representative to articulate their views on the issue.
8. Hate crimes and bigotry-related violence is on the increase in Tennessee. Studies and monitoring efforts by groups such as Klan Watch, a part of the Southern Poverty Center in Alabama, the Center for Democratic Renewal, and the Anti-Defamation League, report increased incidents of hate crimes and violence against all minority groups.
9. Public housing appears to be a failure in most communities. Many appear to be breeding grounds for violence, drug abuse, and poverty, offering little or no hope or opportunity for the inhabitants.
10. Financial divestment by major economic institutions, white flight, black factionalism, media insensitivity, and so forth, are occurring in most minority communities, including the ones described in this summary report. Unemployment and underemployment still are disproportionately higher.
11. Overall, deteriorating economic conditions exacerbate race relation problems and results in "scapegoating" to find someone or some group upon which to place blame.

Possible Solutions to Curb the Increased Racial Tensions in Communities

Although most of the presentations given concerning racial tensions in communities was long on anger, fear, and frustrations of strained race relations, there were not many suggestions of remedies or solutions to better race relations in their respective communities. The following represents some possible solutions presented:

- Establishing coalitions of political, business, and community representatives to develop plans to curtail the movement of jobs and businesses from the inner cities. This includes, but is not limited to, providing additional resources for community development and trained personnel who can help communities develop their own capacities and neighborhood initiatives.
- Implementation of meaningful plans for effective community policing and reforms in the criminal justice system. This should be a total community effort placing great emphasis on communicating the intent and the expected results.
- Design programs and plans that will insure the equitable allocation of governmental funds and other resources for direction to blighted communities, schools, and other facilities in these communities. Continued distribution of these monies should be based on need and circumstances.
- Reevaluate funding assistance to human relations and human rights commissions, and other effective community-based organizations designed to assist minorities and the less fortunate. Community leadership should encourage and reward efforts that work toward meaningful dialogue among its citizens and promotes cultural diversity and fairness of treatment for all of its citizens.

Conclusion

This report does not provide empirical data that pinpoints cause and effect of strained race relations in our communities. However, it does provide a snapshot of perceptions by many community leaders, that racial and ethnic tensions in most of our communities still exists to a great degree and in many cases seems to be on the increase.

Many believe that although small gains have been made in improving the racial climate in our communities, there are still systemic patterns of racism and discrimination that still exist and that there is very little positive movement directed towards improving race relations.

A number of participants expressed that their communities are "powder kegs," and that any "Rodney King type situation" could result in an explosive situation that no community is really prepared for.

Limited funds restricted the examination of these problems in rural sections of the State, but implied these same situations exist and probably to a greater degree than the few cities examined.

The SAC requests that State and local leaders and all of the citizens of Tennessee continue and broaden the effort of assessing race relations and tensions throughout the State, and provide the attention and resources to finding solutions to improve the racial climate.

Appendix

The following statistical data was obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources. The areas include statistics in housing, education, income, and employment. They tend to substantiate the wide disparity between the majority-minority communities in the cities we visited for this report.

TABLE 1
Population by Race, Tennessee

	Number of persons		Percent of total		Percent increase
	1980	1990	1980	1990	1980-90
White	3,835,452	4,048,068	83.5	83.0	5.5
Black	725,942	778,035	15.8	16.0	7.2
Amer. Ind., Eskimo, Aleut	5,104	10,039	0.1	0.2	96.7
Asian or Pacific Islander	13,963	31,839	0.3	0.7	128.0
Other race	10,659	9,204	0.2	0.2	-13.7
Total	4,591,120	4,877,185	100.0	100.0	6.2

Note: Percentage distribution may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 1980 and 1990.

TABLE 2
Economic Characteristics State of Tennessee, 1990

Characteristic	Total	White	Black	Black as a percent of total
Population	4,877,185	4,048,068	778,035	_16.0
Male	2,348,928	1,962,430	360,861	15.4
Female	2,528,257	2,085,638	417,174	16.5
Civilian labor force	2,405,077	2,041,337	339,042	14.1
Male	1,291,930	1,121,315	157,092	12.2
Female	1,113,147	920,022	181,950	16.3
Employed	2,250,842	1,930,624	297,296	13.2
Male	1,213,357	1,063,701	137,067	11.3
Female	1,037,485	866,923	160,229	15.4
Unemployed	154,235	110,713	41,746	27.1
Male	78,573	57,614	20,025	25.5
Female	75,662	53,099	21,721	28.7
Unemployed as a percent of civilian labor force	6.4	5.4	12.3	
Male	6.1	5.1	12.7	
Female	6.8	5.8	11.9	
Household income, 1989				
Less than $ 5,000	163,648	113,321	48,865	29.9
$ 5,000 to $ 9,999	207,221	165,452	40,094	19.3
$ 10,000 to $14,999	194,266	159,161	33,459	17.2
$ 15,000 to $24,999	367,768	311,330	53,518	14.6
$ 25,000 to $34,999	304,021	264,868	36,551	12.0
$ 35,000 to $49,999	300,979	268,898	29,738	9.9
$ 50,000 to $74,999	210,928	192,523	16,515	7.8
$ 75,000 to $99,999	56,341	52,535	3,250	5.8
$100,000 or more	48,343	46,483	1,295	2.7
Total	1,853,515	1,574,571	263,285	14.2
Median	$24,807	$26,435	$16,724	67.4
Income below poverty level, 1989 (Number of persons)	744,941	494,109	241,759	32.5
Per capita money income, 1989	$12,255	$13,201	$ 7,414	60.5

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 1990.

TABLE 3
Economic Characteristics Nashville, Tennessee, 1990

Characteristic	Total	White	Black	Black as a percent of total
Population	488,374	360,284	118,627	24.3
Male	231,709	172,246	54,623	23.6
Female	256,665	188,038	64,004	24.9
Civilian labor force	266,838	206,427	55,734	20.9
Male	136,839	108,172	26,111	19.1
Female	129,999	98,255	29,623	22.8
Employed	253,266	198,473	50,489	19.9
Male	129,709	103,998	23,389	18.0
Female	123,557	94,475	27,100	21.9
Unemployed	13,572	7,954	5,245	38.6
Male	7,130	4,174	2,722	38.2
Female	6,442	3,780.	2,523	39.2
Unemployed as a percent of civilian labor force	5.1	3.9	9.4	
Male	5.2	3.9	10.4	
Female	5.0	3.8	8.5	
Household income, 1989				
Less than $ 5,000	15,170	7,381	7,552	49.8
$ 5,000 to $ 9,999	16,407	11,020	5,131	31.3
$ 10,000 to $14,999	17,781	12,560	4,954	27.9
$ 15,000 to $24,999	38,899	29,731	8,626	22.2
$ 25,000 to $34,999	34,461	27,770	6,058	17.6
$ 35,000 to $49,999	35,551	29,869	5,189	14.6
$ 50,000 to $74,999	26,832	22,871	3,636	13.6
$ 75,000 to $99,999	7,398	6,495	825	11.2
$100,000 or more	6,144	5,802	281	4.6
Total	198,643	153,499	42,252	21.3
Median	$27,821	$30,782	$ 19,045	68.5
Income below poverty level, 1989 (Number of persons)	62,497	29,740	31,210	49.9
Per capita money income, 1989	$14,490	$16,502	$ 8,715	60.1

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 1990.

TABLE 4
Economic Characteristics, Memphis, Tennessee, 1990

Characteristic	Total	White	Black	Black as a percent of total
Population	610,337	268,600	334,737	54.8
Male	285,010	127,311	154,019	54.0
Female	325,327	141,289	180,718	55.5
Civilian labor force	292,819	143,904	145,332	49.6
Male	146,206	77,859	66,320	45.4
Female	146,613	66,045	79,012	53.9
Employed	267,179	138,461	125,347	46.9
Male	133,911	75,027	56,931	42.5
Female	133,268	63,434	68,416	51.3

TABLE 4 (continued)
Economic Characteristics, Memphis, Tennessee, 1990

Characteristic	Total	White	Black	Black as a percent of total
Unemployed	25,640	5,443	19,985	77.9
Male	12,295	2,832	9,389	76.4
Female	13,345	2,611	10,596	79.4
Unemployed as a percent of civilian labor force	8.8	3.8	13.8	
Male	8.4	3.6	14.2	
Female	9.1	4.0	13.4	
Household income, 1989				
Less than $ 5,000	26,847	6,171	20,476	76.3
$ 5,000 to $ 9,999	26,493	9,696	16,564	62.5
$ 10,000 to $14,999	24,670	10,314	14,036	56.9
$ 15,000 to $24,999	45,970	22,828	22,699	49.4
$ 25,000 to $34,999	36,184	20,398	15,473	42.8
$ 35,000 to $49,999	33,780	21,476	11,969	35.4
$ 50,000 to $74,999	22,939	16,013	6,707	29.2
$ 75,000 to $99,999	6,146	4,829	1,231	20.0
$100,000 or more	6,697	6,155	451	6.7
Total	229,726	117,880	109,606	47.7
Median	$22,674	$29,869	$16,642	73.4
Income below poverty level, 1989 (Number of persons)	136,123	21,202	113,351	83.3
Per capita money income, 1989	$11,682	$17,569	$ 6,982	59.8

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 1990.

TABLE 5
Economic Characteristics, Knoxville, Tennessee, 1990

Characteristic	Total	White	Black	Black as a percent of total
Population	165,121	136,604	26,053	15.8
Male	77,047	64,052	11,703	15.2
Female	88,074	72,552	14,350	16.3
Civilian labor force	81,096	68,728	10,820	13.3
Male	42,214	36,600	4,779	11.3
Female	38,882	32,128	6,041	15.5
Employed	75,323	64,578	9,325	12.4
Male	39,203	34,246	4,174	10.6
Female	36,120	30,332	5,151	14.3
Unemployed	5,773	4,150	1,495	25.9
Male	3,011	2,354	605	20.1
Female	2,762	1,796	890	32.2
Unemployed as a percent of civilian labor force	7.1	6.0	13.8	
Male	7.1	6.4	12.7	
Female	7.1	5.6	14.7	

(continued)

TABLE 5 (continued)
Economic Characteristics, Knoxville, Tennessee, 1990

Characteristic	Total	White	Black	Black as a percent of total
Household income, 1989				
Less than $ 5,000	8,209	5,623	2,454	29.9
$ 5,000 to $ 9,999	10,264	8,326	1,718	16.7
$ 10,000 to $14,999	8,987	7,523	1,320	14.7
$ 15,000 to $24,999	14,250	12,310	1,718	12.1
$ 25,000 to $34,999	10,530	9,348	1,003	9.5
$ 35,000 to $49,999	9,157	8,214	876	9.6
$ 50,000 to $74,999	5,592	5,191	354	6.3
$ 75,000 to $99,999	1,399	1,272	117	8.4
$100,000 or more	1,585	1,547	24	1.5
Total	69,973	59,354	9,584	13.7
Median	$19,923	$21,665	$12,348	62.0
Income below poverty level, 1989 (Number of persons)	32,189	22,270	9,295	28.9
Per capita money income, 1989	$12,108	$13,169	$6,838	56.5

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 1990.

TABLE 6
Householder by Race and Household Type, Tennessee, 1990

	Number		Percent	
	White	Black	White	Black
Married-couple family:				
With related children	444,975	52,007	28.2	19.8
No related children	517,433	36,194	32.8	13.8
Other family:				
Male householder, no wife present:				
With related children	20,943	6,879	1.3	2.6
No related children	21,261	6,022	1.3	2.3
Female householder, no husband present:				
With related children	84,802	65,247	5.4	24.9
No related children	60,414	20,790	3.8	7.9
Nonfamily households:				
Householder living alone	373,255	65,917	23.7	25.1
Householder not living alone	53,078	9,449	3.4	3.6
Total	1,576,161	262,505	100.0	100.0

Note: Percentage distribution may not add to 100.0 due to rounding.   Source: U.S. Census of Population, 1990.

TABLE 7
Unemployment Rates by Race, United States and Tennessee

	United States		Tennessee	
	White	Black and other	White	Black and other
1975	7.8	13.9	7.6	12.8
1976	7.0	13.1	4.7	13.6
1977	6.2	13.1	5.2	12.7
1978	5.2	11.9	4.8	11.5
1979	5.1	11.3	4.6	12.8
1980	6.3	13.1	5.7	15.8
1981	6.7	14.2	7.4	17.2
1982	8.6	17.3	9.3	24.1
1983	8.4	17.8	9.2	23.1
1984	6.5	14.4	6.6	21.0
1985	6.2	13.7	6.9	15.4
1986	6.0	13.1	7.0	13.7
1987	5.3	11.6	5.8	11.2
1988	4.7	10.4	4.9	10.6
1989	4.5	11.4	4.5	8.4
1990	4.7	10.1	4.5	9.4
1991	6.0	11.1	5.7	12.3
1992	6.5	12.7	5.6	10.8

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; Tennessee
Department of Employment Security.

TABLE 8
High School and College Graduates, Persons 25 Years and Over, Tennessee and United States

	1980		1990	
Tennessee	Black	White	Black	White
High school graduates				
Number	160,459	1,341,213	255,975	1,827,392
Percent of age group	44.7	57.9	59.4	68.2
College graduates				
Number	28,466	306,411	43,782	448,160
Percent of age group	7.9	13.2	10.2	16.7
United States				
High school graduates				
Number	6,751,943	78,606,129	10,573,382	102,861,486
Percent of age group	51.2	68.8	63.1	77.9
College graduates				
Number	1,104,062	19,558,028	1,905,378	28,445,456
Percent of age group	8.4	17.1	11.4	21.5

Note: Data on college not comparable between 1980 and 1990. For 1980, includes all with 4 or more years of college whether or not degree was received.
Source: U.S. Census of Population, 1980 and 1990.

TABLE 9
Employed Civilians by Occupation and Race, Tennessee, 1992

	White	Black
Managerial and professional specialty	22.9	13.1
Technical, sales, and administrative support	30.8	26.3
Service occupations	10.2	26.3
Precision production, craft, and repair	12.7	6.2
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	20.0	26.0
Farming, forestry, and fishing	3.3	2.0
	100.0	100.0

Note: May not add to 100.0 due to rounding.   Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

TABLE 10
Black-owned Businesses, Tennessee and United States, 1987

	Tennessee	United States
All firms		
Number of firms	10,423	424,165
Sales and receipts		
Total ($1,000)	$386,078	$19,762,876
Average per firm	$ 37,041	$ 46,592
Firms with paid employees		
Number of firms	1,929	70,815
Number of employees		
Total	4,902	220,467
Average per firm	2.5	3.1
Annual payroll		
Total ($1,000)	$ 50,139	$ 2,761,105
Average per employee	$ 10,228	$ 12,524
Sales and receipts		
Total ($1,000)	$260,582	$14,130,420
Average per firm	$135,087	$ 199,540

Note: Includes only corporations filing IRS form   Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.
1120S (Subchapter S corporations).

TABLE 11
Median Household Income by Race

	White	Black	Black as percent of white
Tennessee			
1979	15,011	9,355	62
1989	26,435	16,724	63
United States			
1979	17,680	10,943	62
1989	31,692	20,085	63

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 1980 and 1990.

TABLE 12
Persons Below Poverty Level

| | No. of persons | | Percent | |
	White	Black	White	Black
Tennessee				
1979	491,014	239,713	13.1	34.2
1989	494,109	241,759	12.5	32.4
United States				
1979	17,331,671	7,648,604	9.4	29.9
1989	19,025,235	8,441,429	9.8	29.5

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 1980 and 1990.

TABLE 13
Consumption Spending by Business Type, Black Residents of Tennessee, 1991*

	Spending in retail and service sectors	
Kind of business group	**Percent distribution**	**Thousands of dollars**
Total food	36.7	1,737,238
Food at home	31.2	1,476,888
Food away from home	5.5	260,350
Total housing	21.4	1,012,993
Shelter	15.2	719,509
House furnishing and operations	6.2	293,484
Transportation	13.6	643,771
Clothing	8.7	411,824
Personal care	3.2	151,474
Medical care	10.8	511,230
Other	5.6	265,083
Total	100.0	4,733,613

*Based on 1981 budget studies covering a four-person urban family at a lower level of living in Atlanta, Georgia.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Three Budgets for an Urban Family of Four Persons, Autumn, 1981*. Certain tabulations by the Tennessee Valley Authority, Community Partnerships.

TABLE 14
Consumption Spending by Business Type, Black Residents in Nashville, 1991*

	Spending in retail and service sectors	
Kind of business group	**Percent distribution**	**Thousands of dollars**
Total food	36.7	304,037
Food at home	31.2	258,473
Food away from home	5.5	45,564
Total housing	21.4	177,283
Shelter	15.2	125,921
House furnishing and operations	6.2	51,362
Transportation	13.5	112,667
Clothing	8.7	72,074
Personal care	3.2	26,510
Medical care	10.8	89,471
Other	5.6	46,392
Total	100.0	828,434

*Based on 1981 budget studies covering a four-person urban family at a lower level of living in Atlanta, Ga.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Three Budgets for an Urban Family of Four Persons, Autumn, 1981*. Certain tabulations by the Tennessee Valley Authority, Community Partnerships.

TABLE 15
Consumption Spending by Business Type for Black Residents in Memphis, 1991*

	Spending in retail and service sectors	
Kind of business group	**Percent distribution**	**Thousands of dollars**
Total food	36.7	785,830
Food at home	31.2	668,064
Food away from home	5.5	117,766
Total housing	21.4	458,220
Shelter	15.2	325,464
House furnishing and operations	6.2	132,756
Transportation	13.6	291,208
Clothing	8.7	186,286
Personal care	3.2	68,520
Medical care	10.8	231,252
Other	5.6	119,907
Total	100.0	2,141,223

*Based on 1981 budget studies covering a four-person urban family at a lower level of living in Atlanta, Georgia.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Three Budgets for an Urban Family of Four Persons, Autumn, 1981*. Certain tabulations by the Tennessee Valley Authority, Community Partnerships.

TABLE 16
Consumption Spending by Business Type for Black Residents in Knoxville, 1991*

	Spending in retail and service sectors	
Kind of business group	**Percent distribution**	**Thousands of dollars**
Total food	36.7	63,631
Food at home	31.2	54,095
Food away from home	5.5	9,536
Total housing	21.4	37,104
Shelter	15.2	26,355
House furnishing and operations	6.2	10,749
Transportation	13.6	23,581
Clothing	8.7	15,086
Personal care	3.2	5,548
Medical care	10.8	18,726
Other	5.6	9,709
Total	100.0	173,385

*Based on 1981 budget studies covering a four-person urban family at a lower level of living in Atlanta, Ga.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Three Budgets for an Urban Family of Four Persons, Autumn, 1981*. Certain tabulations by the Tennessee Valley Authority, Community Partnerships.