

# **Community Forum on Race Relations in Racine County, Wisconsin**

March 2001

A report of the Wisconsin Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights prepared for the information and consideration of the Commission. Statements in this report should not be attributed to the Commission, but only to participants at the community forum or to the Advisory Committee.

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

## **Community Forum on Race Relations in Racine County, Wisconsin**

## Letter of Transmittal

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

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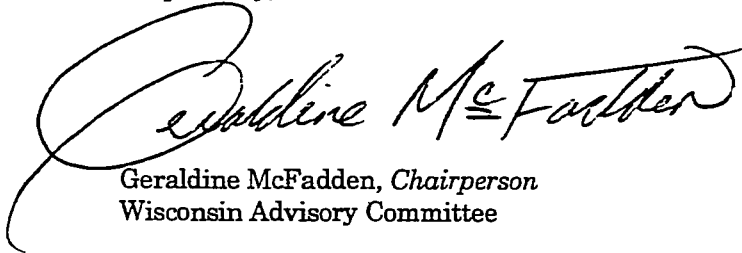
Les Jin, *Staff Director*

The Wisconsin Advisory Committee submits this report, *Community Forum on Race Relations in Racine County, Wisconsin*, as part of its responsibility to advise the Commission on civil rights issues within the state. The report was adopted by the Advisory Committee by a 7-0 vote, with one member abstaining.

This report contains information received by the Wisconsin Advisory Committee at a public fact-finding meeting held in Racine, Wisconsin, on September 21, 1999. The Advisory Committee is indebted to the individuals who testified at the public meeting for their time and expertise and to the staff of the Midwestern Regional Office, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, for the preparation of this report.

The Advisory Committee understands the Commission is charged to study and collect information relating to denials of the equal protection of the law and trusts the Commission and the public will find the material in this report informative.

Respectfully,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Geraldine McFadden". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Geraldine McFadden, *Chairperson*  
Wisconsin Advisory Committee

# Wisconsin Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

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# I. Introduction

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The purpose of this study is to examine the state of race and ethnic relations in the city of Racine and Racine County, Wisconsin. Testimony from organizations and individuals supported with demographic, employment, housing, and education data are presented regarding the presence of racial and ethnic tensions and the existence of covert and/or overt barriers in the city of Racine and in Racine County that may be precluding equal opportunity for minority residents.

In the 1940s and 1950s, obvious differences in opportunities among racial and ethnic groups existed in the community. This was a time in Racine when many of the most modest public accommodations were not available to people of color. Minorities could not access many of the finer hotels, restaurants, and public venues. Higher paying jobs in the community were overtly denied to people of color.

In the 1960s, open racial and ethnic tensions spewed across the community. In response, backed by the community's major employers, programs were implemented jointly with the city to resolve such issues. The major initiative was the Racine Environment Committee (REC). The REC was established in the fall of 1967 to study and recommend action on race-related problems that affected the industrial, economic, and social climate of the Racine metropolitan area. It was formed as an outgrowth of the Hill-Kidd Committee, which had been appointed by the mayor of Racine in August 1966 to investigate and recommend action in areas where racial and ethnic discrimination existed. More than a benevolent enterprise, industry leaders had come to understand that if they could not produce a good living environment it would negate their opportunity to attract the type of work force they wanted.

Since the REC, other public and private efforts to examine and resolve race-related issues have been implemented, and today instances of people of color being openly denied access to housing, employment, and public venues are increasingly rare. Still, since the REC there has been no similar, broad-based community initiative in the area of civil rights. To this end, a public community forum was held on September 21, 1999, by the Wisconsin Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, to determine the current state of race and ethnic relations and to again draw the community's attention to such issues.

At the community forum, the Advisory Committee solicited testimony from individuals and organizations in two sessions. During the day session, invited public, civic, and community leaders addressed the Advisory Committee at the Radisson Inn Harbourwalk. In the evening, members of the public were afforded the opportunity to address the Committee at an open session held at the John Bryant Community Center, 601 21st Street in Racine.

Those invited to testify before the Committee during the day session were (in order of appearance): James H. Smith, mayor, city of Racine; Chief of Police James Polzin, Assistant Chief Allen Baker, and Lieutenant Steve Hurley (Racine Police Department); Mattie Booker (Racine Unified School District); Dave Mauer (Racine Area United Way); Mary Day (Racine Educational Council); Morris Reece (Racine chapter NAACP); Julian Thomas (Urban League); Rev. Jimmie Lockridge (Civil Rights Committee); Rev. Lawrence Kirby (St. Paul Church); Sonya Telez (Hispanic Business and Professional Association); Ken Lumpkin (*The Insider News* and *Hispanic News*); Rev. George Ramsey (Shiloh Stronghold Church of God in Christ); and Neal Kueny (Family Service Center of Racine).

Individuals speaking at the public session were (in order of appearance): Dianna Garcia, Alphonso Goron, Paula Castile, James Gordon, Hugh Souter, Chester Todd, Judith Koenig, Rev. Shaw Parsons, Wally Rendon, Theresa Gordon, David Guran, Corrine Owens, and Gilbert Delgado.

This report presents its examination of race relations in Racine County and the city of Racine in four sections: (1) income and employment, (2) education, (3) policing, and (4) housing and public accommodation. Each section opens with background information followed by two sets of commentary, one from the invited public leaders and organization representatives and a second set of commentary received from the public at the open session. In a separate chapter, the Committee offers its comments and observations.



## II. Statement of James H. Smith, Mayor, City of Racine

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"I believe we have made great strides in our civil rights efforts here in the city of Racine. . . . In 1970, the city of Racine contained 53 percent of the county's white population and 92 percent of its nonwhite population. In 1990, the city of Racine contained 42 percent of the county's white population and 86.8 percent of its nonwhite population. Excluding the city's population, the balance of the county is 96.7 percent white, 1.6 percent African American, and 1.7 percent of other races. The city's minority population has increased from 18 percent in 1989 to 23.6 percent in 1990. The city's population, based on the 1990 census, is 76.4 percent white, 18.4 percent African American, and 5.2 percent other races. In 1990, the city contained 75.9 percent of the county's population of Spanish origin.

"As far as employment, in 1972 the city of Racine had a population of approximately 95,000 and a minority population of 15 to 20 percent. At that time the city of Racine's work force was only 2.6 percent African American and 0.5 percent Hispanic. As of November 1997, the last time a diversity count was conducted, the city's work force had increased to 11.2 percent African American and 6.4 percent Hispanic for a city with a population of approximately 85,000, of which 18.4 percent was African American and 5 percent was Hispanic. I think the city has made great strides in its commitment to diversity, but in actuality we also put that commitment into practice.

"As mayor, I want to emphasize that I will continue my commitment to diversity despite the de-emphasis on affirmative action posited from some quarters. I feel strongly about this and believe . . . we have made great strides among our diverse populations to bring this community together. When I ran for office in 1995 I made that commitment, to bring this community together, and I believe we are working towards that. I certainly do not take credit for all of our progress because we have wonderful, caring people in this community. What makes any community is the people that reside in it. I am proud to call many minority people in this community my friends, people with whom I meet on a regular basis to talk about issues in this community, and will continue to do so.

"When I ran for office in 1995, I worked hard in the central city. Generally the central city is an area with traditional low voter turnout. Coming home after campaigning I told my wife, 'Whether I am elected or not, I will never forget this experience because many of our residents in the central city feel like they are forgotten, and that no one cares about them or the kind of homes they live in, or their standards of living or the conditions of their houses.'

"We have turned that around in many of our areas. We have made a commitment. West Sixth Street area is a good example where we have targeted the neighborhood with millions of dollars in order to make homeownership a reality for those who thought that was just a dream in the past. We have forged strong neighborhood coalitions that are working with our police department, our housing department, and our sanitation department to make the conditions much better than they were in the past, and we will continue to do so.

"Do we have racism in Racine? We do have racism in Racine. I get calls on occasion from people, and am just appalled at the conversation. Often I have [followed up on those calls] and offered an invitation to these callers, saying: 'Why don't you take a walk with me through the neighborhoods of this city and meet the folks who live there, who have the same hopes and dreams you and I have for our city, dreams of a good job, a community in which their children can grow up where there are no gunshots, a place where their children can get a good education.'

"I believe that overall we have made a lot of strides in our community to improve opportunities for all our citizens, and I have made a commitment to continue to do so. I, like many others, think of the diversity in the city of Racine as a strength. I truly believe we must understand that because the

minority population is growing much faster than the white population, we must commit to make sure those children grow up to be the leaders of tomorrow. And there is a lot of effort going on in this community to make that happen.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Testimony of James H. Smith before the Wisconsin Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, community forum, Racine, WI, Sept. 21, 1999, transcript, pp. 7–15.

### III. Race Relations and Equal Opportunity in Racine County, Wisconsin

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#### INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT

##### Background

The population of the city of Racine was reported to be 84,298 in the 1990 census, and Racine County 174,898. Half the population of Racine County resides in the city of Racine, and 90 percent of the county population resides in the eastern half of the county. The city of Racine, which contains more than 90 percent of minorities living in the county, had a stable population during the 1990s. Updated estimates of the population by the Census Bureau show a population growth of only 1.3 percent between 1990 and 1996, while the county population is estimated to have increased by 5.6 percent.

Minorities are a significant and growing proportion of the population, making up almost 25 percent of the city's residents. The 1990 census counted 15,503 (18.5 percent) African Americans; 2,952 (4.5 percent) Latinos; 494 (0.6 percent) Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders; and 288 (0.3 percent) American Indians. Moreover, census forecasts show the minority population, both in numbers and in percentages, increasing through the 1990s in the city of Racine and the county.

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**Table 1**

*Population, City of Racine*

	Number	Percent
White (non-Hispanic)	64,061	76.2
African American	15,503	18.4
Latino	3,952	4.5
Asian	494	0.6
American Indian	288	0.3
Total	84,298	100.0

SOURCE: U.S. census.

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Historically, the city of Racine and Racine County have been home to a number of large manufacturing operations. Today, the major private employers are Danfoss Fluid Power, Case Corporation, Foster Forbes Glass, Textron, Johnson & Johnson, Nestle Foods, Putzmeister, Racine Steel Castings, and Western Publishing. The employment outlook has been good for area residents. Most recent data show the unemployment rate for Racine County to be 4 percent, down from 6.2 percent in 1991. There are 90,300 individuals in the county labor force. Of these, 24,000 are manufacturing employees, 17,010 are service employees, 16,400 are trade employees, and 17,500 are in other types of employment.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Bureau of Workforce Information, Local Area Statistics program.

In addition to manufacturing companies, there are 37 financial institutions in the Racine area, including nine banks, 17 credit unions, and 11 savings associations. Three major hospitals and three clinics provide health care services. Employment opportunities have improved in Racine County during the 1990s. Between 1991 and 1996, both the labor force<sup>2</sup> and the participation rate in Racine County steadily increased, while the unemployment rate has decreased.

In 1991, the Racine County labor force was 89,200; by 1996 it had increased to 94,100.<sup>3</sup> In 1996, the labor force participation rate<sup>4</sup> in Racine County was 69.3 percent, slightly lower than the statewide rate of 74.7 percent but still higher than the national rate of 66.8 percent.<sup>5</sup> In 1991, the unemployment rate<sup>6</sup> in Racine County was 6.7 percent. By 1996, it had decreased to 4.2 percent.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the economic boom of the 1990s, people of color are still not employed in the higher paying occupations in proportion to their representation in the general population. Informal visits to current employment sites and other areas of development confirm that people of color are not participating in the higher paying occupations proportionate to their population, and formal examination of job data shows minorities clustered in the lower paying jobs.

An examination of EEO-1 data for the Racine-Kenosha Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area in the private sector shows minorities disproportionately clustered in the lower tier occupations. Whites in the Racine-Kenosha area are fairly uniformly distributed among the nine major occupational classifications: officials & managers, professionals, technicians, sales workers, office & clerical, skilled craft workers, operatives, laborers, and service workers. Among white workers, 8.8 percent and 15.5 percent are in the two highest occupational tiers, officials & managers and professionals, in terms of wages and administrative responsibility. In the two lowest tiers in terms of wages and administrative responsibility, 6.9 percent of white workers are laborers and 10.1 percent hold service jobs.

In contrast, minority workers are clustered in the lower tier occupations. Just 2.6 percent of minorities work as officials & managers and just 7.4 percent are in professional occupations. However, 44.9 percent of all minority workers are in service jobs and laborer positions. The data are set out in table 3.

Minorities are beginning to obtain public employment with the city of Racine in proportion to their population in the city. Currently, 11.2 percent of all city employees are African American, who are 18.4 percent of the city's residents. Hispanics, who are estimated to be 5 percent of the city's residents, hold 6.4 percent of the city's jobs.

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**Table 2**

***Labor Force Participation Rate and  
Unemployment Rate, Racine County, 1996***

Labor force	94,100
Participation rate	69.3%
Unemployment rate	4.2%

SOURCE: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development,  
Bureau of Workforce Information.

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<sup>2</sup> The labor force is the sum of employed and unemployed persons who are 16 years of age or over. The unemployed only include those individuals actively seeking employment.

<sup>3</sup> Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Bureau of Workforce Information, Local Area Statistics program.

<sup>4</sup> The labor force participation rate is the ratio of individuals over the age of 16 in the labor force compared with the general population over the age of 16.

<sup>5</sup> Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Bureau of Workforce Information, Local Area Statistics program.

<sup>6</sup> The unemployment rate is the ratio of unemployed to the labor force.

<sup>7</sup> Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Bureau of Workforce Information, Local Area Statistics program.

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**Table 3*****Occupational Distribution by Race/Ethnicity in Private Industry Racine-Kenosha SMSA***

	White	Latino	American Indian	All minorities
Officials & managers	8.8%	2.6%	2.3%	2.6%
Professionals	15.5%	4.5%	7.0%	7.4%
Technicians	7.5%	6.0%	7.0%	4.5%
Sales workers	16.7%	11.6%	4.7%	7.2%
Office & clerical	17.6%	12.4%	14.8%	9.4%
Skilled craft	6.9%	8.6%	13.2%	7.3%
Operatives	10.1%	11.2%	11.7%	17.0%
Laborers	6.9%	22.8%	21.8%	27.5%
Service workers	10.1%	20.2%	17.5%	17.4%

SOURCE: EEO-1 reports in "Occupational Employment in Private Industry," 1997.

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**Table 4*****Employment, City of Racine***

	Employment percent	Population percent
White	82.4	77.2
Black	11.2	18.4
Latino	6.4	4.5

SOURCE: 1990 census.

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**Commentary from Invited Public Officials and Organization Leaders**

Mary Day, head of the Racine Education Council, testified about the Racine Environment Committee, a local initiative begun in the 1960s to advance equal employment opportunity for minorities. The committee ceased its employment programs in the mid-1980s, but the Racine Education Council is still in operation.

The Racine Education Council started as a race relation project in the 1960s. At that time there was an active civil rights movement in Racine, and a committee of business people was formed to [resolve] the race relations problems. As a result, the Racine Environment Committee and Racine Education Council were started.

Part of the effort of the Racine Environment Committee was a nonprofit business making loans to minorities to start their own businesses. There was also a summer employment program and another employment program under which young people could obtain jobs with local businesses . . .

The employment program of the Racine Environment Committee closed 15 years ago.<sup>8</sup>

Morris Reece, president of the Racine chapter of the NAACP, discussed with the Advisory Committee the current welfare program in the state of Wisconsin, the W-2 program.<sup>9</sup> Reece claimed the program was not sufficient to meet even the most basic needs of the poor and needed revision.

The W-2 program is lacking in meeting even the most basic needs of those who are victims of economic conditions. People bearing the brunt of economic hardship who are enrolled in the W-2 program do not get enough of the assistance and information that should be available to them. For instance, training at a higher level is often denied to these individuals. It is deplorable that we have dollars in [Racine] county that have come down from the state because there has been a savings from the welfare program, yet individuals in the W-2 program are not able to engage in the kind of training that will upgrade their skills, or just give them skills period, that they need to be able to access the kind of jobs and careers that ought to happen in the program.<sup>10</sup>

Julian Thomas, director of affirmative action for Gateway Technical College and chairman of the board for the Urban League of Racine and Kenosha, decried recent attacks on affirmative action and specifically attacked the notion that affirmative action was a quota program.

The recent attacks on affirmative action just defy logic. I am a product of affirmative action and a testament that if you give a person an opportunity he/she will produce. There is nothing in Executive Order 11246<sup>11</sup> that talks about quotas; that is an aberration. But the opponents of affirmative action make this claim and call [affirmative action] a form of [quotas] and reverse discrimination . . . I am familiar with today's [employment and equal opportunity] laws and have been doing [personnel work] for some 20-plus years, and I have not seen quotas anywhere.<sup>12</sup>

Rev. Lawrence Kirby, pastor of the St. Paul Church of Racine, one of the city's larger churches, said that an employment problem affecting minorities is that "so many African Americans and Hispanics are passed over for promotion. If you take a look at how many people are hired through the city or county and how slow they move up the ladder . . . I think you will notice a very serious problem."<sup>13</sup>

Ken Lumpkin is publisher of *The Insider News* and co-publisher of *Hispanic Chronicle*. *The Insider News*, which primarily serves the African American community in Racine, has been in existence for more than six years; the *Hispanic Chronicle* has operated for a year. Both newspapers routinely report on issues of race and ethnicity in the Racine community. Lumpkin gave the Committee an example of the sense of discouragement in the community when minorities are excluded from employment and business opportunities.

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<sup>8</sup> Testimony of Mary Day before the Wisconsin Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, community forum, Racine, WI, Sept. 21, 1999, transcript, pp. 82-99 (hereafter cited as Racine Transcript).

<sup>9</sup> Wisconsin Works, or W-2, is a work force development program by which recipients of public assistance are assigned to training or employment initiatives.

<sup>10</sup> Morris Reece, Racine Transcript, pp. 99-107.

<sup>11</sup> Executive Order 11246 is the presidential decree, first issued by President Lyndon Johnson in 1965, under which all contractors with the federal government take affirmative action to ensure nondiscriminatory treatment of employees and applicants for employment.

<sup>12</sup> Julian Thomas, Racine Transcript, p. 112.

<sup>13</sup> Rev. Lawrence Kirby, Racine Transcript, p. 136.

There is a [construction] project on Martin Luther King Drive building seven new houses. One black construction company, New Vision, came to me upset that the project that was supposed to be bid on was not open. The information or description [to bid] was not given to all the media so that it would be available for bidding. The project management had already chosen the firm that they wanted to do the construction prior to the bid going out.

When these types of things happen, it makes people feel like there is no reason to complain because they feel nothing is going to change. I think it is going to take an effort from the political top, from the mayor and the county executives down, to show that they are concerned and they want to make this a better place for everybody to live in before change will occur . . .

There are also similar situations [that discourage minorities] as far as when people of color apply for employment, and the types of background checks that are given to them in some instances are not given to nonminorities. Those are the kinds of things that we [at *The Insider News*] have noticed.<sup>14</sup>

### **Commentary from the Community**

Wally Rendon stated that obtaining meaningful employment in Racine is all about whom one knows, not qualifications, so minorities need to become actively engaged in the community to gain equal employment opportunity.

Regarding employment [opportunity in Racine], it depends on who you are and who you know as to whether you are going to wind up getting a job or not. But if we [Latinos] are not willing to stand up and take part in this, we are going to be disadvantaged here forever. So we, ourselves as a whole community, have to step up and be willing to change the situation here in Racine.<sup>15</sup>

Rev. Jimmie Lockridge, chairperson for the Civil Rights Committee for Region IV and for Case Company Local 180 and a local pastor in the city, testified about inequities in employment opportunity for people of color, particularly barriers facing young African American males. He derided the state's W-2 program as a modern-day version of sharecropping.

We have young men here [in Racine] that think they cannot do anything because they have been programmed to feel that they cannot do anything. Every time they go look for a job, if they are of color, employers don't have anything. If they do have something, it is just to start at \$4 an hour instead of \$6 or \$6.50, and that is not enough.

Not only can our young men not get jobs, but the system is turned around, as there is always a job for black women. But for black males the only thing they can do is stand on the corner and try to sell drugs, and they think that is a living. I go and talk to some of those young men, and those young men actually feel that is all they can do because they have been programmed by our society that way. . . .

The W-2 situation is another form of slavery. The reason I speak on it on those terms is when you are in servitude, you work literally for nothing. That is what W-2 has to offer because there are not enough funds to allow a person to live . . . The program is

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<sup>14</sup> Ken Lumpkin, Racine Transcript, p. 149.

<sup>15</sup> Wally Rendon, Racine Transcript, p. 210.

really a sharecropping situation. The clients are going to make enough money just to survive; they are given a job that just pays them enough to keep them working.<sup>16</sup>

Dianna Garcia, a resident of Racine whose parents came from San Antonio, Texas, and whose grandparents are from Mexico, spoke to the Committee as a single parent and mother of six children. She told the Committee of her opposition to the W-2 program and employment difficulties in the Racine area.

A couple of years ago I fought hard against W-2. I did that [because the program] is just another phase of oppression. I use the word oppression instead of slavery, but it's another word for oppression. I myself work 30 hours a week with no fringe benefits at \$12 an hour. As a general rule, I bring home \$320 a week to feed six children and to pay rent of \$500. You tell me racism isn't here in Racine.<sup>17</sup>

Gilbert Delgado told the Advisory Committee that racism exists in workplaces in Racine, with African Americans and Hispanics excluded from better paying employment opportunities.

Racism exists in the workplace [in Racine]. I'm retired from Case Company, but the 30 years that I worked there I twice had to file discrimination charges against the company. And the problems that exist in that plant [exist] in other plants here in the city. We have a lot of [race] problems in Racine.

There have even been marches here [at this community center] when they were building this place because the construction workers were all white. We forced them to stop the construction of this building because they were not hiring minorities. They excluded Hispanics and they excluded the blacks. And all the time that [these things have been happening to minorities] the city leaders have kept saying, "Yeah, Racine is a good place."<sup>18</sup>

Alphonso Gardner said the economic wealth coming into the city needs to be shared among all the citizens.

We need to share into all this economic wealth that is coming into this city; \$500 million power plants coming out here. We need to see black folks and Hispanics working on that project. That's \$500 million. The city is doing a \$55 million project downtown. We need to see black folks and Hispanics working. Johnson Wax doing a \$15 million building downtown, we need to see black and Hispanic folks working on that because we like to share in the economic boon that's going on just like anybody else.<sup>19</sup>

Paula Castille told the Committee that bilingual minorities are not fairly compensated by employers.

I and some other Hispanics are bilingual and have the ability to speak another language. Yet this skill is not taken into consideration in the places of employment, and yet while we are there we are asked to translate and interpret. All the jobs that I have had have included extra jobs to speak, read, and write Spanish. And other employees, ones that cannot do this and are performing the same positions that I am

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<sup>16</sup> Rev. Jimmie Lockridge, Racine Transcript, pp. 122, 124.

<sup>17</sup> Dianna Garcia, Racine Transcript, p. 139.

<sup>18</sup> Gilbert Delgado, Racine Transcript, pp. 227-28.

<sup>19</sup> Alphonso Gardner, Racine Transcript, p. 181.



performing, are getting the same amount of pay as the bilingual person. I am not saying that we should be paid for two people, but at least for one and a fourth.<sup>20</sup>

Hugh Souter told the Advisory Committee he wants to finally see a real difference in equal opportunity. People have talked about the issue for years, but people of color continue to be left behind when it comes to equal opportunity.

I want to see a difference. My son finished college and got his degree, but could he get a professional job? No. Why should we pay all that money for four or five years and still be unable to get a good decent job in what you studied? The people in the government of the United States, our government, know the burden we [people of color] bear. We don't have to tell them; nobody needs to fill out some [new] paperwork and send it to Washington. We all know, today the same game and rules are still being played. So they say you need an education. But what do you need an education for if somebody is standing at the door and when you come and after a certain number come in they lock the door and send you away?<sup>21</sup>

Chester Todd testified about black-on-black discrimination, and asserted that most of those blacks who turn their backs on the black community are tied to the white power structure.

There are black people in this community that could have given me a job once I got out of prison and once I went to treatment for my drug addiction and once I got my diploma. There were black people in this community with the power to give me a job, but I had to go to Milwaukee to get a job. So discrimination isn't always black to white; sometimes it's black middle class to black working poor and poor people and the under class—the cliques. And when we find those black cliques, we usually find that there is a connection with the hierarchy of the white middle class and above in this community. We as black people, we know, what white people are going to do to us, but it is hell when our neighbor stabs us in the back.<sup>22</sup>

Rev. Shaw Parsons, a resident of Racine for 40 years, stated that racism is still alive and well in Racine, just better hidden today than in the past. Employment opportunities are still being denied to people of color.

I've been here for over 40 years and raised four children. My daughter is a lawyer and she went to school. But when she came back here to try to get a job she was "overqualified." Today I still don't understand what that means—"overqualified." Racine County or the city of Racine is a white city. The only difference from the Ku Klux Klan then and now is that they took off their sheets and put on neckties.<sup>23</sup>

Theresa Gordon testified that education by itself does not guarantee employment in Racine if one is a person of color.

People keep talking about education, but it is a trick because you get the education and you end up right back where you started. They told us to go get our education, and even our moms and dads told us that we had to get an education to get a good job. Well, we did that . . . and yet with [that] and all kinds of experience I still could

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<sup>20</sup> Paula Castille, Racine Transcript, p. 185.

<sup>21</sup> Hugh Souter, Racine Transcript, pp. 191–93.

<sup>22</sup> Chester Todd, Racine Transcript, pp. 196–98.

<sup>23</sup> Rev. Shaw Parsons, Racine Transcript, p. 204.

only get a minimum wage job, and it puts my family and my kids in a really bad position economically.<sup>24</sup>

## EDUCATION

### Background

The Racine Unified School District encompasses 100 square miles within seven municipalities, including the city of Racine, as well as the towns of Caledonia, Mount Pleasant, Elmwood Park, North Bay, Sturtevant, and Wind Point. Student enrollment at the 23 elementary schools, seven middle schools, and four high schools is 21,344. The racial and ethnic composition of the student body is as follows: white, 63.5 percent; African American, 24.2 percent; Latino, 11.1 percent; and "other," 1.3 percent. The high school graduation rate for the Racine Unified School District is 84.6 percent. This is lower than the statewide high school graduation rate of 90.1 percent.

The district scores well in tests used for college admissions. The American College Test (ACT) exams are designed to provide students and colleges with an assessment of students' aptitude for college work. The average comprehensive composite score for the Racine school district of 22.2 is comparable to the state average of 22.3, and the average score for Wisconsin is the highest in the nation.<sup>25</sup>

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR), U.S. Department of Education, identified several problem areas that needed to be addressed by the Racine school district to ensure equal educational opportunity for all students. One identified problem is the lack of minority students in the school district's gifted and talented program.<sup>26</sup>

Students were being placed in the gifted and talented program simply on the basis of test scores. To increase the number of minorities in the program, the district employed a gifted and talented program coordinator. One of her tasks is to evaluate the intelligence of children on bases other than strict academics, i.e., linguistic, logical, mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily and kinetics, emotional, and/or personal intelligence. The coordinator is visiting with parents about the new approach and has published a book in both English and Spanish explaining the gifted and talented program.<sup>27</sup>

A second area of concern identified by OCR was the high percentage of minority children placed in special education. To address this issue, the school district has organized a school support team to give additional assistance to a child before he or she is placed in a special education program. The district hopes this effort will reduce the number of minority children being placed in special education classes.<sup>28</sup>

In the 1998–99 school year, there were 162 expulsions: 55 expulsions from the four high schools; four expulsions from the achievement center; 90 expulsions from the seven middle schools; and 13 expulsions from elementary schools. Minority students were disproportionately expelled. In the high schools, 29 of the 55 students (52.8 percent) expelled were minorities; in the middle schools, 62 of the 90 (68.9 percent) expulsions were minority students; and 22 of the 23 (95.7 percent) students expelled from elementary schools were minority children.

State law permits expulsion, or a denial of a student's right to attend school for an extended period of time, if the student continually violates rules and regulations of the school or if the student's conduct presents a danger to the health and safety of other students and school staff. An expulsion is a suspension longer than three days, or longer than 10 days if a notice of an expulsion hearing has been sent. The expulsion rate is the number of days of school missed by students who have been expelled divided by possible days of instruction of all students in a particular school or district. The

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<sup>24</sup> Theresa Gordon, Racine Transcript, pp. 214–15.

<sup>25</sup> Racine Unified School District, District Performance Report, 1998.

<sup>26</sup> See Mattie Booker, Racine Transcript, pp. 52–58.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

Racine Unified School District's expulsion rate is 0.15 percent, significantly higher than the state rate of 0.05 percent.<sup>29</sup>

Regarding diversity, 40 percent of the district's student body is minority, but the percentage of minority teachers in the district is much lower; fewer than 100 of the of nearly 1,600 teachers are minority. The district is attempting to attract more minority teachers. The district is also committed to integrating its schools, and has a policy that the percentage of minority students in a school cannot exceed the percentage of minorities in the community's population. So, any time a particular school exceeds that ratio, school districts are redrawn.<sup>30</sup>

**Table 5**

***Student Expulsions, Racine Unified School District, 1998-99 School Year***

	White	Black	Latino
High school	26 (47.2%)	24 (43.6%)	5 (9.2%)
Middle school	28 (31.1%)	47 (52.2%)	15 (16.7%)
Elementary school	1 (4.4%)	11 (47.8%)	11 (47.8%)
Achievement center	1 (25.0%)	3 (75.0%)	0 (0.0%)

SOURCE: Racine Unified School District. Figures in parenthesis are percentages of students of that race/ethnicity receiving expulsions.

**Commentary from Invited Public Officials and Organization Leaders**

Mattie Booker, cultural diversity coordinator for the Racine Unified School District, acknowledged there was a gap in academic performance between minority students and nonminority students. She stressed, however, that the district has implemented programs specifically designed to reduce the disparity.

The district knows that there is a gap [in testing results] between minority students and majority students, and at this time . . . efforts are being placed towards closing that gap. One particular area the district is addressing is minority students [not being placed] in the higher track courses, which results in them not being exposed to information majority students have. A second effort by the district is a four-year-old program designed to expand the vocabulary of minority children in the hopes that this will give them an additional tool necessary to both be more successful in school and to get into college.<sup>31</sup>

Mary Day told the Committee about how the Racine Educational Council evolved out of the Racine Environment Committee, and its work today to provide postsecondary educational opportunities for minority students.

The [Racine Educational Council] still exists today. We changed our name in 1992 to become the Racine Educational Council [from the Racine Environment Committee], which addresses what we do.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Mattie Booker, Racine Transcript, p. 44.

We help [minority] students find money to go to college. We assist these students in finding the colleges that they want to attend. We assist them in college survival techniques . . .

We teach students about college strategies; how to survive on a college campus. One of the major things we address is racism. What do you do if you're finding that you are not being treated right or you're being overlooked in your class.<sup>32</sup>

Morris Reece brought attention to both the expulsion rate and the high dropout rate among minorities, and suggested that there is not enough collective concern in the community to address this issue.

There is a high expulsion rate among African American students in our unified school districts, coupled with the fact a high percentage of African Americans drop out of high school altogether. There are some efforts underway to address this fact. However, the deplorable situation continues to concern and alarm the African American community and other people of good will. But it just does not seem that there are enough people who are concerned, because if there were this would not continue to happen.<sup>33</sup>

Rev. Lawrence Kirby testified that he believes expulsion and suspension rates for children of color are much higher than that of white students. He further asserted that children of color are much more likely to be labeled at an early age as learning disabled. Both practices are institutionally racist and impede equal educational opportunity for minority children.

I believe that if we would look at the record of those students who have been suspended or expelled from school, those who are people of color are expelled or suspended probably 80 to 90 percent more than white students. I refuse to believe children of color are so much worse than anybody else, and I think there is a deliberate attempt to suspend and expel them from the educational system with a view in mind that they don't want to learn, which is not necessarily the case.

Another problem we have with our educational system in Racine is that they seem to target and tag [minority] children at an earlier age as having learning disabilities, emotional problems, et cetera.<sup>34</sup>

Julian Thomas said, regarding the school situation, a tragic mistake was made in Racine when the community did not integrate the schools because the white community was not willing to act in a socially responsible manner.

The [Racine community] desegregated, and it was by the numbers. It was the right thing to do because the broader community was not then willing to do the right thing. But I submit, it is my opinion, that the broader community in Racine is still not prepared to do the right thing. And that includes everyone as part of this society.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Mary Day, Racine Transcript, p. 85.

<sup>33</sup> Morris Reece, Racine Transcript, p. 107.

<sup>34</sup> Rev. Lawrence Kirby, Racine Transcript, pp. 135–36.

<sup>35</sup> Julian Thomas, Racine Transcript, p. 114.

## Commentary from the Community

Dianna Garcia took exception to the school district's efforts to keep neighborhood schools racially and ethnically balanced. She argued that the policy was difficult on minority children who often spent long hours simply getting to and from their schools.

When you bus kids [to integrate the schools], sometimes the children have to wake up at 5 o'clock in the morning. These are 7- and 8-year-old children, going from the north side to the south side to get to their school. The majority of the students at Jane School are Hispanics, but the district has put us all over the place in little groups to keep us separate. That's segregation . . . Then the education program has been cut so much in Racine that it does not have what it needs to provide for the children. And when you cut education from people, you foster oppression and racism.<sup>36</sup>

Wally Rendon claimed that the Hispanic community is ignored by the educational establishment when it comes to discussing educational issues.

But as far as the education goes what has happened in the past is continuing to happen and that is that the majority of children that are having trouble in school will always have trouble in school because the [schools] are not going to take the time to address their academic and social needs. That needs to stop.

In the last few weeks conferences have been held within this city addressing education. The white community is represented, the black community is represented, but I did not see one Hispanic name, and that's not because the organizers do not know who to contact. That is one of the issues that I have, and it is the same way with many other programs here. For some reason or another the Hispanic community in Racine seems to be left out of the picture.<sup>37</sup>

Paula Castille told the Advisory Committee that she had concerns over the implementation of the recommendations made by the U.S. Department of Education to the Racine Unified School District, and the lack of Spanish-speaking school personnel.

One of my concerns is regarding the action plan that was submitted to the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, which was a result of our proactive initiative started in the fall of 1995. . . . I know plans take time to be accomplished, but my concern is that these meetings are held only three or four times a year. Sometimes the only people that are attending generally are people that are employed by Unified. I have attended a lot of these last meetings. I have suggested that Unified send out an agenda so maybe it will generate more interest and people will come to continue to monitor this plan.

In the 1998–1999 school year there were 2,447 Hispanic students in the Racine Unified School District, 11.5 percent of the total. In one of the high schools, there is no person that a person can call to speak Spanish to report absences or other concerns of their children. That worries me.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Dianna Garcia, Racine Transcript, p. 145.

<sup>37</sup> Wally Rendon, Racine Transcript, p. 212.

<sup>38</sup> Paula Castille, Racine Transcript, pp. 182–84.

James Gordon lamented the persistent racism in the community and stated that minorities must rely on themselves for advancement because the institutional leaders are not going to help them.

This may be southeastern Wisconsin, but it's the new South. I am a native son of this city. My children's future is going to be bright not because of the elected officials in this city, but because I worked hard. We got to stop this shuffling along and pretending that people are going to do us right. I had to take my child out to Case High School and make the principal put him in accelerated classes. Now my son is a Notre Dame graduate and now he is getting his law degree at the University of Kansas. I have another son at the University of Notre Dame. I have a daughter at the University of Wisconsin, Parkside. This community is [filled with] multifaceted racism and classism.<sup>39</sup>

## POLICING

### Background

In 1992 the Racine Police Department began to implement a community-policing program. The department began to work and develop partnerships with community members, churches, and organizations in order to understand and resolve problems in the various communities. Beat patrols, bicycle patrols, and staff beats were established whereby officers were required to meet with residents, and liaisons were forged with the different city agencies, including public works, the parks department, and building inspectors, to assist residents in solving daily life problems and changing the living environments in neighborhoods.<sup>40</sup>

Regarding crime reduction, under community policing a gang crime division task force was started, homes in the inner city have been built to house the community police offices with the intent of eventually selling these homes to low- and moderate-income residents, and officers have been assigned to neighborhood watch programs.<sup>41</sup>

In the city of Racine, there has been a sharp decrease during the past eight years in violent crimes. In 1991, there were 8,123 reported Part 1 crimes. In 1998, there were 5,820 reported Part 1 crimes—a 33 percent reduction.<sup>42</sup>

The department has significantly altered its hiring process—without lowering its standards—and this has helped the department achieve a greater diversity among its sworn officers. In 1992, 22 of the 205 sworn police officers, 10.7 percent, were minority. In 1999, 32 of the 205 sworn officers, 15.6 percent, were minority.<sup>43</sup>

Buttressing the increased diversity on the police force is an internal affairs program. Citizen complaints against police officers are investigated, and the complaining resident is contacted and given the results of the investigation of the complaint. A five-member public oversight board, the Police and Fire Commission, oversees the operation of the internal affairs program. Currently, the commission is composed of three females and two males; one member is African American and one member is Hispanic.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> James Gordon, Racine Transcript, pp. 184–86.

<sup>40</sup> See Richard Polzin, Racine Transcript, pp. 21–52.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. The term “minority” does not include females.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

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**Table 6**

*Racine Police Department, 1992 and 1999*

	Total	Minority	Percent minority
Sworn officers, 1992	205	22	10.7
Sworn officers, 1999	205	32	15.6

SOURCE: Racine Police Department.

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**Commentary from Invited Public Officials and Organization Leaders**

Police Chief Richard Polzin testified that recent efforts by the police department in terms of community policing and an attempt to be more open and accountable to the community have improved race relations in Racine.

I think there is more confidence in the police department because of our strong internal affairs program and its public oversight, and the public oversight [commission] reflects the diversity of the community. That and all the community-policing initiatives have gone a long way to help improve race relations in Racine.

In addition, the department has undertaken some management initiatives to improve race relations and increase the public confidence, including [opening] lines of communication with the minority community that did not exist 10 years ago in Racine.<sup>45</sup>

Sonya Telez, representing the Hispanic Business and Professional Association, testified about discrimination against minority youth in the court system.

I see problems of discrimination [against] young Latinos and African Americans by the court system. I know that there are a few [public defense] attorneys, [prosecuting] attorneys, and judges doing their best not to discriminate against these youth, but since most of the system is set up that way there is not really much that some of them can do trying to go against it. In general, many young Latinos and African Americans are right away linked to being gang members and involved in something . . . that they actually really did not know anything about and just heard about it second hand and were somewhere nearby.<sup>46</sup>

Julian Thomas remarked, "Any time you have a population that is 25 to 30 percent and they are 60 to 80 percent of the occupants of your penal system, there is something very wrong in the system."<sup>47</sup>

Rev. Lawrence Kirby applauded the hiring efforts of the police and sheriff's departments. However, he still testified that people of color are discriminatorily subjected to arrest, and that minority juveniles are discriminatorily waived to adult court.

From the outside Racine looks very good on paper in terms of what many of our leaders say that they are trying to do and what they have committed themselves to do. But, when it comes to actions, it does not look quite so good. I do, however, applaud

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<sup>45</sup> Richard Polzin, Racine Transcript, p. 50.

<sup>46</sup> Sonya Telez, Racine Transcript, p. 137.

<sup>47</sup> Julian Thomas, Racine Transcript, p. 111.

the efforts of some of our city officials and employees, the chief of police, and the sheriff's department in making some changes in their hiring practices. . . .

A problem we have in the minority community as it relates to law enforcement is that when a person of color or a minority person is stopped by a police officer, . . . particularly the white officers do almost anything and everything they can to provoke that person who is of minority culture to do something so that they can arrest them. Often people of color or minorities are stopped really for no reason other than you happen to be in a certain area, or one happens to look a certain way.

For instance, I work a lot in the community. One of the cars I own is a 1987 Cutlass Supreme and because I work with teenagers a lot, sometimes I just dress with a jogging suit on, cap on turned backwards, going down the street. Police officers see me going down the street and immediately assume that, you know, I might be up to something no good, pull me over, and tell me I am going 52 in a 30 mile speed zone . . .

Another way racism and discrimination plays a role is often when a person who is considered a minority is arrested, the arresting officer, in my opinion, tends to be much more strict in writing up the charge. There was a young man arrested the other day, a young man that has not had any trouble, goes to school everyday, and to my knowledge does not use any drugs. He was given three charges; one charge was disturbing the peace, a second charge was resisting arrest, and a third charge was trying to disarm a law enforcement officer. This young man is 5'3" and weighs 120 pounds with no previous experience with the law. How in the world could this kid do all that? And so here he is with a felony and a couple of misdemeanors and probably is going to have a felony on his record for the rest of his life because there seems to be a desire to harass, provoke people of color so that they can, in my opinion, get a charge.

Another problem we have here in Racine is that since the juvenile code has been revived, what is happening at an alarming rate is that the system is waiving many children of color, black and Hispanic, to adult court. So much so that we hardly have the resources to accommodate those children. And if you look at those who are waived to adult court, look at whether they're black, Hispanic, or white, you will probably find in the neighborhood of 75 percent to 85 percent of them are people of color.<sup>48</sup>

Ken Lumpkin related an investigative effort by *The Insider News* that revealed disparate traffic stops of people of color by the police.

One night I watched [a traffic spot] and noted 12 vehicles that were pulled over. Only one driver of the 12 was white, but the area where they were stopping the vehicles is a primarily black and Hispanic area, so automatically the percentage [of minorities being stopped for traffic violations] is going to be high. I think those type of planning concepts . . . creates a problem.<sup>49</sup>

Rev. George Ramsey, pastor of Shiloh Stronghold Church of God in Christ in Racine and pastor of Rose Sheridan Church of God in Christ in Milwaukee and a resident of Racine since 1955, spoke to the Committee about his personal experience with the Racine Police Department.

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<sup>48</sup> Rev. Lawrence Kirby, Racine Transcript, pp. 130, 133-38.

<sup>49</sup> Ken Lumpkin, Racine Transcript, p. 150.



One of my major concerns when it comes to discrimination and injustices is the police department. [Recently] not only was I stopped and handcuffed, . . . but I call it excessive force and brutality when folks are kicking you. It happened that a lady was there in her window right by the incident and she saw it all. She said to me, "I thought you had killed somebody when I saw all those cops the way they was handling you and I said, 'Oh, he done killed somebody or robbed something.'"<sup>50</sup>

### **Commentary from the Community**

Gale Dyess, a Racine County supervisor, testified about the difference in police service she received when she identified herself as an elected official.

I am serving a second term with the Racine County Board. I can truly say that while serving on this board I have experienced and seen racism. . . . Just this past weekend there was an incident in my area where the police were called. I thought I would not get a [prompt] response if I call and just say my name, but I did and I was out for about three hours waiting for the police. So I decided to see what would happen if I identify myself as a county supervisor. So I called the police department back and identified myself as a Racine County supervisor. The police were there in about five minutes. I hardly had time to get off the phone. I hear this all the time; [minorities] are treated like second-class citizens even though we pay our taxes just like anyone else.<sup>51</sup>

Alphonso Gardner questioned the equity in concentrating police stations in the African American community and noted the startling disproportionate number of minorities in prisons.

I feel that anybody who does the crime should do the time. But I do not see how 58 percent of the minorities could be in prison in Wisconsin when we only make up 10 percent of the population. And I don't see how Chief Polzin can say that the community policing is working when you go in the same neighborhood and the same stuff continues to go on. The police have beautiful station houses with cameras spying on the black community. But there are no station houses in the white community. If you're going to do community policing, police the whole community, just don't police the black area . . . Our police do a great job, but they got to spread it out and police the whole community, not just the black community and Hispanic community. They need to do community policing all around in this whole city and county.<sup>52</sup>

Rev. Shaw Parsons contended that the police department controls the African American community through overzealous surveillance.

Sure enough the [police] watch [the black man] like a hawk. If any black man robs a bank and gets away in a white car, every black man in Racine that drives a white car is going to get stopped. I know that for a fact. They hire those southern boys and bring them up here to police . . . Mayor Smith made a statement saying Racine is in good shape and everybody is working together here. We have this, we doing this. For who? Not for us. They watch us like a hawk.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Rev. George Ramsey, Racine Transcript, pp. 151-58.

<sup>51</sup> Gale Dyess, Racine Transcript, pp. 173-76.

<sup>52</sup> Alphonso Gardner, Racine Transcript, pp. 177-81.

<sup>53</sup> Rev. Shaw Parsons, Racine Transcript, pp. 205-06.

## HOUSING AND PUBLIC ACCOMMODATION

### Background

When African Americans first began to migrate to Racine in the 1940s from the South in search of industrial jobs, the only housing available for these citizens were trailer camps on the north end and the south side of the city. It was the 1940s version of tenement housing, very stressful living environments with people stacked upon people.

Slowly areas of the city opened up where people of color could purchase housing, but unwritten laws existed as to where a person of color could buy a home. And this initial lack of access to equal housing for the citizens of color sowed a divisive housing pattern in the city, which escalated over the years.<sup>54</sup>

### Commentary from Invited Public Officials and Organization Leaders

Neal Kueny is a housing counselor with the Family Service Center of Racine. Kueny told the Committee about three problems restricting minorities' access to homeownership: the lack of role models, low incomes, and lending practices.

I work as a housing counselor and do not have a tremendous success rate with the minority community, especially the African American community. Part of that comes from a long history of racism. If your parents do not own a home, the odds of you owning a home are slim. You learn how to buy a home when your parents own. There's just not the examples that's positive; the role models just aren't there and that makes my job that much harder trying to convince someone that they can buy a house.

There also is the income issue. Minorities do not make as much as they could if they just had completed some additional schooling. But it is awfully difficult to go back to school when you've got two kids and you have a job and you have some debts.

Also, when you talk about the housing you need to look at lending institutions. It is ironic that minorities are bad credit risks when it comes to buying a home, but have excellent credit to buy a car that is going to be recycled in three or four years. I think all of these factors come into play.<sup>55</sup>

Morris Reece told the Committee that the housing market for low-income families in Racine is inadequate, and that minorities encounter discrimination when trying to buy a home.

The housing market in Racine is inadequate for renters and first-time low to moderate homebuyers. There have been questionable patterns of unfair treatment toward African Americans, Hispanics, and low-income whites from some sellers and Realtors. We need to address that issue, . . . but because people are strapped by their low-income wages they have no other choices. The Fair Housing Department of the city is attempting to address that issue, but it takes people of good will to make that happen as well.<sup>56</sup>

Dave Mauer, executive director of the Racine County United Way, testified that the race problem is more properly viewed as a class problem.

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<sup>54</sup> See Julian Thomas, Racine Transcript, p. 119.

<sup>55</sup> Neal Kueny, Racine Transcript, pp. 159-61.

<sup>56</sup> Morris Reece, Racine Transcript, p. 106.

I think race relations in Racine County are not unlike race relations in any urban area of the Midwest: at times strained and at times hopeful . . . I happen to think there is more mistrust and misunderstanding between people of economic classes than there is between people of races.

I do not think people who have had things and have always had them and who have had no exposure to doing without are particularly trusting or understanding of people who are poor and people who have done without. And in our country and our community a disproportionate number of those people who are without economic status in our country are people of color.

I think the most important thing we can do as a community is to get people to work together in a common interest . . . It is important to have programs, therefore, that bring people together of different cultures and different economic strata toward a common vision.<sup>57</sup>

Sonya Telez asserted that discrimination exists in housing, specifically that minorities are made to wait longer than nonminorities for low-income housing.

I see a lot of discrimination in the housing. I know and meet with a lot of people, and the [city's] housing department is very discriminating against Hispanics and the other minorities in our community. There are minorities who have been on a list waiting for low-income housing and some way or somehow their friend who is not a minority for some reason is able to get low-income housing before them when they just signed up a month or two ago. And these other minority women are waiting for two, three years, five years and they just don't know why they're not getting equal treatment. Well, they know why, but there's really nothing they can do because they cannot take on the entire housing system.<sup>58</sup>

Mary Day told the Committee about the Racine Environment Committee's local initiative to provide housing in the minority community.

The housing program [of the Racine Environment Committee] was essentially this: if you have a house and your house is dilapidated, come to the [committee] and it will assist you in repairing the house . . . [Similar to the employment program of the Racine Environment Committee], the housing program is closed.<sup>59</sup>

### **Commentary from the Community**

David Guran spoke about the need for white individuals to take a stand against racist comments and actions, particularly when such comments and actions occur in situations where there are only whites.

My point is that white people need to stand up if they see things that are wrong and act on it when they hear people berate people of color. At those times, they need to say something against it. I get into meetings and employment situations and social situations where there are only white people and—not always but sometimes—some people start putting down black people with racial jokes or whatever. [White] people

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<sup>57</sup> Dave Mauer, Racine Transcript, pp. 80–81.

<sup>58</sup> Sonya Telez, Racine Transcript, p. 138.

<sup>59</sup> Mary Day, Racine Transcript, p. 86.

have to stand up at those times and say that is wrong, especially in employment situations.<sup>60</sup>

Rev. Jimmie Lockridge told the Committee that there are funds allocated to the city for repairing houses, but such funds do not find their way to the city's minority communities.

There are funds allocated to this city to repair houses, [but] there are houses all over the city that are never getting repaired. I have a young lady that owns a house and when she went to inquire on how she could get some of these funds, nobody knew. If I ask you how could she get some of these funds, you could not tell me how to help her fix up her house. She's a minimum wage worker. She has like nine kids. How are nine kids going to eat on minimum wage?<sup>61</sup>

Rev. George Ramsey told the Committee that racism and discrimination pervade all aspects of the Racine community.

I could sit here and talk the rest of the afternoon about my experience of racism from the newspapers to you name it, and that's one area that needs to be looked at. As quick as something bad happens, it is placed all over the front page, but very seldom do you see anything written about the achievements and the good things that happen in the minority community. I don't feel that we in no way get any kind of justice when it comes to coverage, notoriety so far as publication and from—I'm not speaking about his paper, I want to make that clear. Somebody mentioned discrimination in housing and it is. There's discrimination in about any area of life. You name—foster parent care, you name it, it's going on.<sup>62</sup>

Judith Koenig told about racist graffiti at an area marina and said local authorities have not acted promptly to remove the graffiti.

I am a white woman and the real reason that I came to say something is that . . . under a bridge in Simmons Harbor is the graffiti, "Niggers die," along with various other things written there . . . This is at the mouth of the harbor. Boats go by and the light is just right so everyone can see this. That was back in April, and I went there yesterday and the graffiti is still there . . . The sheriff's department was called to give some attention to this, and several other people of importance were told about this. Children, people yachting, people walking see this. It has been months now, and the graffiti is still there.<sup>63</sup>

Rev. Shaw Parsons said the city of Racine was de facto segregated and told of his difficulty in obtaining a mortgage in Racine.

We as black people and Mexicans are in a corral. We are led to certain areas and every now and then one of those cattle will get out and run away, but when you come to Racine you're deemed corralled and you're being led to certain areas. There's two areas in this Racine that we are pinned in. One is here on the south side and the other over on the north side. . . .

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<sup>60</sup> David Guran, Racine Transcript, p. 222.

<sup>61</sup> Rev. Jimmie Lockridge, Racine Transcript, p. 126.

<sup>62</sup> Rev. George Ramsey, Racine Transcript, p. 150.

<sup>63</sup> Judith Koenig, Racine Transcript, pp. 200-03.

One other thing, when I bought a house and I couldn't get a mortgage in Racine. I had to go to get a mortgage way out of town somewhere. I had to get a mortgage out of town; I couldn't get no money in Racine and that's a shame. Been here for over 40 years and couldn't get nothing.<sup>64</sup>

Corrine Owens has lived in Racine since 1946, retiring from the public school system in 1979. A longtime activist for civil rights in the community, she summed up the purpose of the Committee meeting and the hopeful outcome.

I hope that this meeting will bind us together to do something about race and ethnic relations in this city. We can get to the bottom of these problems, and we can understand each other, and we can do something about this race relations. . . . I've continued to work for better race relations since coming here in 1949 and I haven't stopped. The article in Sunday's paper said we have come a long ways but still have a long ways to go. Yes, we do. And so that's what we got. Let's do something about it. We can do that.

I was telling a little girl here about how we got this [Jonathan Bryant] center and how we got fair housing. I was one of those in the beginning back in 1956, and we kept working until we had a fair housing bill approved by a vote of 13 to 4. Most of you were not here then. But what we did to get it was to march. We marched and we got it. Do you know that after we had that big hearing down there, in three weeks we got fair housing, in three weeks? But we didn't get it until we got out there and started walking and when we started walking and something happened and we got it.

So I hope this meeting will bind us together to do something about our race and ethnic problems.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Rev. Shaw Parsons, Racine Transcript, pp. 205, 208.

<sup>65</sup> Corrine Owens, Racine Transcript, pp. 223-25.

## IV. Committee Observations

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency of the federal government charged with studying discrimination or denials of equal protection on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin. In each of the 50 states, an Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights has been established made up of responsible persons who serve without compensation to advise the Commission of relevant information concerning its respective state on matters within the jurisdiction of the Commission.

To ensure its independence and bipartisanship, the Wisconsin Advisory Committee is constituted to include individuals representing both major political parties, a broad spectrum of political philosophies, and different geographic regions of the state. Furthermore, the Committee is independent of any national, state, or local administration, political organization, philosophy, or advocacy group.

In the past eight years the Wisconsin Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights has undertaken a number of studies on race-related issues. These have included studies on affirmative action, police protection, civil rights of the Hmong, American Indian treaty rights, and equal educational opportunity.

The Wisconsin Advisory Committee comes to Racine, a diverse and relatively large metropolitan area, to examine race relations issues. In the experience of the Advisory Committee, race relations in Racine are unlikely to be much better or worse than most other cities of its size and diversity in the state. The particular degree and manifestation of racial and ethnic inequity in Racine might vary from that of other Wisconsin communities, but the essential issues concerning race in the city of Racine and the surrounding community are probably typical of other such communities in many respects.

Thirty years ago by accounts received at the public hearing, manifestations of racism and racial and ethnic discrimination in Racine and the surrounding community were overt and flagrant. Discriminatory practices and policies in employment and housing against African Americans and other minority groups generally received widespread toleration and acceptance from the white community. Hostility and oppressive acts along racial and ethnic lines were commonplace, and the deliberate alienation of minority communities was acceptable social policy.

Since that time there has been an improvement in race relations within and around the Racine community. Egregious racist language and behavior are no longer tolerated by the vast majority of people, white or people of color, living and working in the metropolitan Racine area.

In addition, efforts and programs have been implemented to effect positive change and provide equal opportunity. Legislation prohibiting discrimination has become public policy. Affirmative action programs in education and employment have been initiated. A climate of racial and ethnic tolerance has been fostered, and civic and community leaders unanimously disclaim bigotry and racial and ethnic intolerance.

These are positive developments and the Advisory Committee lauds these efforts. But such initiatives should not be interpreted to mean that racial and ethnic bigotry has dissipated or that acts of discrimination in employment, housing, and education are things of the past. After 30 years of efforts to ensure equal opportunity, significant disparities in employment, housing, income, and education along racial and ethnic lines persist in the Racine metropolitan area.

Minorities remain concentrated in the lowest paying and least desirable clerical and service sector jobs, while whites dominate the managerial and professional jobs (see table 3). African Americans

remain significantly underrepresented in the city's work force (see table 4). Minorities are disproportionately expelled from schools in the Racine Unified School District (see table 5).

In listening to the community testify on race relations and racial tensions, the Wisconsin Advisory Committee heard frustration and desperation among many people of color in the Racine community, particularly among those in the working class. Their message was clear: though most flagrant displays of egregious racist language and behavior and attitudes are no longer tolerated by the vast majority of people in the community, underlying barriers to real equal opportunity in employment, housing, and education appear to persist.

The evidence of such barriers comes from the observation of existing social conditions. If such barriers were not in place, clearly a more proportionate distribution of income, quality housing, and educational achievements would be observed across racial and ethnic lines. That such is not observed and that overt discrimination is no longer legal or an accepted social norm implies that barriers to equal opportunity must remain lodged in some place other than in the external policies and operations of government, businesses, employers, and schools.

The Wisconsin Advisory Committee offers that barriers to equal opportunity continue to exist in the Racine community, but are often invisible to direct observation and difficult to discern because these remaining underlying barriers to equal opportunity are for the most part internal. Specifically, sentiment seems to persist among many in the white community that people of racial and ethnic minorities, i.e., people of color, are inherently less valuable and less desirable as neighbors, workers, customers, and students. So even though external changes regarding race relations have occurred, they have not been accompanied by similar changes in deep-seated attitudes.

Moreover, the removal of the visible external and legal forms of discrimination in employment, housing, education, and public accommodation may even serve to perpetuate and reinforce these attitudinal barriers. For both the removal of external barriers to equal opportunity and the development of societal intolerance for overt expressions of bigotry served as evidence to many in the white community that racial and ethnic discrimination had ended and that equal opportunity was now a reality for everyone. Essentially, with the overt barriers to equal opportunity dismantled the white community could now believe itself exonerated from further responsibility in resolving racial and ethnic inequalities.

Now 30 years after the struggle to dismantle legalized forms of discrimination received public support, dialogue on race and ethnic relations has all but ended. The little discussion that is held occurs with minimal participation or attention from members of the white community. Without an honest and forthright discussion on race relations and civil rights issues, which includes all groups, lingering attitudes subconsciously affecting decisions on many levels persist. The result becomes noticeable in Racine, as well as in many other communities in Wisconsin. Minority and white communities exist as virtually separate communities, and people of color are relegated to the less desirable jobs, housing, and social status.

Though conscious of the disparities between the different racial and ethnic groups, many in the white community blithely continue in this separate existence reluctant to engage in an open, honest, and meaningful dialogue on the subject of race relations that would challenge the status quo. That is the real obstacle to ultimately resolving the race problem in Racine.

Healing racial divisions and confronting and addressing deep-seated racial and ethnic prejudice are difficult and discomfoting. As long as there is little introspection on these issues at a personal level, individuals are free to deny any culpability for the racial and ethnic disparities that exist. Political, corporate, educational, and religious institutions then follow suit, relegating these issues to the bottom of the social agenda.

In Racine, barriers to equal opportunity remain. Though hidden from view, unacknowledged prejudicial attitudes operate as very real barriers negatively affecting people of color. Citizens in the Racine metropolitan area, like the rest of Wisconsin and the rest of the United States, are not "color" blind and do not live in a "color" blind society. The people in the Racine metropolitan area, as those in the rest of Wisconsin and in the country, see color, and the color of a person's skin colors their perception of that person as a neighbor, a worker, a customer, a student.

As long as individuals are unwilling to acknowledge their role in racial and ethnic injustice and institutions are unwilling to make racial and ethnic justice a priority, there is little chance that the racial and ethnic problems will be resolved. Only when the white community and those in power start to acknowledge what they see, will equal opportunity have a chance to become a reality for people of color.



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