

**HATE CRIMES TASK FORCE**  
**Of the Suffolk County Legislature**

**Public Hearing**

A Public Hearing of the Hate Crimes Task Force was held at the Culinary Arts and Hospitality Center, Suffolk County Community College, 20 East Main Street, Riverhead, New York, on September 22, 2009, at 5:30 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Legislator DuWayne Gregory, Chairman/Legislative District # 15  
Det. Sgt. Robert Reecks, Commanding Officer/Hate Crimes SCPD  
Roderick Pearson, President of the Islip Town NAACP  
Inspector Aristedes Mojica, Commanding Officer/5th Precinct, SCPD  
Reynolds Hawkins, Social Worker/Amityville High School  
Laura Ahearn, Executive Director/Crime Victims Center  
David Kilmnick, Chief Executive Officer/LI Gay & Lesbian Youth Center  
Reverend JoAnn Barrett, Co-Chair/Interfaith Anti-Bias Task Force of SC  
Renee Ortiz, Chief Deputy Clerk/SC Legislature; Co-Chair of the Latino Jewish Council  
Rabbi Stephen Moss, Chair of SC Human Rights Commission, Co-Chair of Anti-Bias Task Force of Suffolk County, Director of Stop Bias  
Alex Gutierrez, Chair of the Hispanic Advisory Board

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

Sarah Reynolds  
Arthur Bridenstine  
Sandra Dunn/Hagedorn Foundation  
Sister Margaret Smyth/North Fork Spanish Ministry  
Dr. Luis Valenzuela/LIIA  
Lucius Ware/Easter Long Island NAACP  
Minister Thomas Humphrey/Long Island Men's Center  
Patrick Young/CARECEN  
Charlene Obernauer/Jobs With Justice  
Francisco Hernandez  
Waldemar Candelario  
Dianne Rulnick  
Maria Williams  
Michele Lynch/1199 SEIU  
Gayle Sheridan/Suffolk Community College  
Anthony Durham  
Greg Fischer  
Katrina Kieltyka/Assemblyman Marc Alessi's Office  
Kirby Einhorn  
Judith Mitchell  
Jerlean Hopson  
Arlean Vanslyke  
Holly North  
Jill Porter  
Maryann Slutsky  
Ed Stateman

Gwen Branch  
James Branch  
Leroy Briscoe  
Louise C. Wilkinson  
Monique Gordon  
Sonia Spar/Anti-Defamation League  
Ann Rodriguez/LCSW/Eastern Suffolk Boces/Youth Family Counseling Svcs.  
Karen L. Fellows  
Denis Yuen  
Diane Gordon  
Layna Ware/NAACP  
Leisha Ware/NAACP  
Bridget Fleming  
Sylvia Baruch  
Tsong-Lun Chu  
Reverend Charles A. Coverdale  
Polly Henry  
Paulette Bartunek/Executive Director/Suffolk Human Rights Commission  
Jack King  
Deborah Valenzuela  
All Other Interested Parties

**VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT BY:**

Lucia Braaten, Court Stenographer

***[THE HEARING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 5:54 P.M.]***

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Good evening, everyone.

***["Good Evening" said in Unison by Audience]***

Thank you for coming out tonight. My name is Legislator DuWayne Gregory. I'm the Chair of the Suffolk County Hate Crimes Task Force. This is our third public hearing, and we're glad to be here, and thank you for coming out and giving us some of your time.

First, I would be remiss if I didn't thank David Bergen of Suffolk Community College for hosting today's public hearing at the Culinary Arts and Hospitality Center. So I think we should recognize him and give him a round of applause.

***(\*Applause\*)***

We also have a member from -- an Aide from the local Assemblyman, Assemblyman -- I was going to say my Assemblyman's name -- Assemblyman Marc Alessi's Office. Alicia (sic), she's here. She was here. She's --

**MS. KIELTYKA:**

I'm right here.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Oh, there she is, okay. So I want to thank the Assemblyman's Office for being here. I'll thank Lucius Ware from Eastern Long Island NAACP, Reverend Coverdale from the First Baptist Church in Riverhead, Sister Margaret Smyth from the North Fork Spanish Ministry. And we also have Paulette Bartunek from the Suffolk County Human Rights Commission. Thank you all for coming here tonight. This is an important, important issue that we have here in Suffolk County, and we're here to seek your input. We've been in Wyandanch, which is in my neck of the woods, we've been in Patchogue, and we felt that it was very important to come out here to the East End to hear your input.

And, at this point, I'm going to announce -- state the members, my fellow members of the Task Force. On the far end, we have Renee Ortiz, we have Detective Sergeant, and we have to say Detective Sergeant or he'll be mad at you, Detective Sergeant Reecks. We have Alex Gutierrez, Rabbi Moss, Inspector Mojica, there's Laura Ahearn to my left, we have Reynolds, Reynolds Hawkins, then Dr. David Kilmnick, and Reverend Roderick Pearson. They've all decided to go on this journey with me to tackle this important issue. And so we -- we're here to listen to you, and that's our main task, and so glad that you came out in full force tonight. I'm going to read a quick statement so that we can kind of get the ground rules out of the way.

Today's hearing is an important day for Suffolk County. Today we take an important step forward in improving the relations with our various communities and start to address horrific acts of hate crimes here in Suffolk County. The rest of New York State, the country, and even the world will know that Suffolk County is serious about addressing hate crimes. Myself and the members of the Task Force understand that this is an emotional issue for many people and we ask that you believe in us when we say we are here to help you and listen to your concerns. We just ask that in order to have a respectful and orderly hearing, that respect goes both ways and that we ask you to show the same respect that you ask us to show you.

Many of us have dealt with hate crimes in the work that we do as an advocate, or in law enforcement, or from knowing someone who has been a victim or, like myself, being a hate crime victim. But in order to address this issue, we have to, we have to ensure we receive input from the community as we gather input -- as we gather information for our report. Thank you for coming out

tonight and being part of the process.

At this point, I'm going to ask -- we have a translator with us, Martha, who's going to translate my statement that I just read in Spanish for those who are not English-speaking.

***[STATEMENT WAS TRANSLATED INTO SPANISH]***

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay. Thank you. At this time, we will have Detective Sergeant Reecks give us a presentation on what the Hate Crimes Law is.

**DETECTIVE SERGEANT REECKS:**

Good evening. As Legislator Gregory said, I am Detective Sergeant Reecks. I'm the Commanding Officer of the Hate Crimes Unit, and we're going to do a very short presentation to give you an idea what a hate crime is, so it helps in the discussion as far as what we're here to listen to tonight. It's not my full presentation, it is a very quick presentation, giving guidelines as to what a hate crime is.

First of all, we need to define what a hate crime or how a hate crime comes about. Number one, we have to have a criminal offense, that's the first part of a hate crime. It's kind of like baking a cake. If I don't have a crime, I'm never going to have a hate crime, so we have to understand that. Name-calling is not a crime. So, if you get called a name and you call the Police Department, that is not a crime that can be investigated. Once we have a crime, like burglary, robbery, various attacks, murder, unfortunately, then we have the distinction out here in Suffolk County, and the investigation shows that it's bias-motivated, then we can call it or it can start forming itself up as being a hate crime. It does not become a hate crime based on Newsday, News 12, public opinion. I cannot put a case together based on what you think or what the papers think is a hate crime, or the headlines that come out at 6 o'clock in the morning. If I do not have both of those elements, that does not mean the Police Department, whether it's Suffolk County Police Department, the Riverhead Police Department, the Sheriff's Department, or any East End Police Department, it doesn't mean we're not going to investigate the incident as a crime, we're just not going to call it a hate crime.

There seems to be a lot of misunderstanding that a hate crime gets investigated and a crime does not get investigated. That is not true. The hate crime element really kicks in at the sentencing part of the process. The investigation is not done differently because it's a hate crime versus not a hate crime.

Sometimes you might here us say we have a hate -- we have a hate incident. I guess one of my examples would be the Mastic case we had right after Obama was elected, President Obama was elected. We had the Mastic case. We had a couple of cars that were tagged with all kinds of names, if some of you remember, and Secret Service was out here, everyone was screaming that it was a hate crime. Well, it was not a hate crime. Newsday showed the "N" word, but they didn't show you the grapes and the apricots and the girl's name who they were actually pranking, if there's another term for it. So the motivation wasn't hate, the motivation was they were mad at somebody who didn't come out to play with them that night.

So motivation is a huge factor in hate crime investigations. Most crimes are who, what, when, where, and the hate crime part is the why part. Why did that person do it? If I were to slap you because I don't like you, that's one degree of assault or harassment. If I slap you because you're going out with my girlfriend, that's another degree. And then, of course, if I hit you because of who you are or what you are, or what religion you're believing in, then that's a hate crime.

So who commits hate crimes? Well some people think only black or white people are committing hate crimes against black people. Some people don't think Hispanics can commit hate crimes against Hispanics. The law doesn't give me that distinction, but, clearly, these two individuals do not commit hate crimes; safe to assume. It's not in your DNA. You're not born with a hate element in your system, so it has to be what? It has to be taught, it has to be learned, and that's where we

as a society have to kick in and try to teach people the right way, but, clearly, it's not in your DNA.

So, from our perspective, a hate crime is -- the offenders are from all races, religions and ethnic backgrounds. Sixty-five percent of the offenders are between the ages of 13 and 19. That is true nationwide and, certainly, that is that's true here in Suffolk County. That's the group that's going out and doing the offenses. That's the group that you see in the papers, like the seven we had in Patchogue, that were so bold and so brazen that we were able to capture all of them within seven minutes of the crime. People are not remembering that part of it, seven minutes. CSI, the last time I checked, takes 40 minutes with commercials.

*(\*Laughter\*)*

But we got everybody in custody in seven minutes, and that is not being portrayed in the paper, that's not being portrayed by the activists. So, New York State definitively defines hate crimes as those violations of law committed against individuals and property based on belief and perception regarding, and we have categories, race, color, national origin, ancestry, gender, religion. We also have religious practice, age, disability, and sexual orientation. That's the New York State hate crime legislation that took effect in 2000. Suffolk County has been doing hate crimes since 1980. We were able to form a unit in 1980 and we have been doing it for almost 30 years now, so we are in front of the curve, we're not behind the curve. It didn't start November 8th.

Again, I explained at the beginning, the hate crime element really kicks in at the sentencing part. A misdemeanor becomes a felony, a small felony becomes a bigger felony. It's like robbery. If I snatch a chain off your neck, that's one degree of robbery. If I take my gun out and point it in your face and take that same chain off your neck, it's a higher degree of robbery. So that's how hate crimes kick in. It depends on what the motivation is. And how do we find out what the motivation is? We have to do an investigation.

The other part of hate crimes is New York State, while we have the hate crime legislation, some of the groups are here, I see some of the groups I talk to all the time, the hate crime legislation is very limited as to what can be called a hate crime. It is called specified offenses, and they are -- there's 23 of them, which, apparently, I left that slide out -- no. Specified offenses, there's 23 specified offenses that can be called a hate crime. One of the ones that I would like to see advocacies or advocates get on the law books is gang assault. If you notice, it's not listed. So if I lock somebody up for a gang assault, I cannot call it gang assault as a hate crime, does not fit. There are a lot of other categories in there, but that's the one that jumps out at me, that gang assault should be in there as a hate crime.

Aggravated Harassment in the Second Degree, actually if you read -- or tomorrow's newspaper, we locked up somebody for calling 911 on random crimes the last couple of days, calling out all kinds of robberies and burglaries, and that's Aggravated Harassment in the Second Degree. But the one that we deal with a lot, and this is where the kids get involved, especially on the school buses -- as a matter of fact, one of my Detectives is handling a case now over in Longwood where the kids start pushing other people because of who they are. They heard it home. They're off their summer vacation now, schools in session. We're already dealing with hate crimes happening on the bus because somebody looks gay or is -- you know, they appear to be gay, so the guy attacks him on the bus. Push, shove, kick, because of any of those categories, that's my categories, is a hate crime.

Aggravated in the First Degree, that has been expanded in 2006 it was expanded to include the swastika. Prior to that, the swastika, was making graffiti. If I were to have a swastika put on my car and I went to the Riverhead P.D. and said, "Listen, there's a swastika on my car, I want it to be a hate crime," they would say, "Sorry, Bob, it's Criminal Mischief, it's not -- you're not Jewish." I would think it's justifiable homicide. It's just the way I am about my car.

*(\*Laughter\*)*

But the law says that it's Criminal Mischief. Now, New York State law says that if you damage a church worth \$50 or more, it's Aggravated Harassment in the First Degree, a felony. Reverend Coverdale, how easy is it to damage a church for \$50? Just look at Home Depot and it cost you \$50.

**REVEREND COVERDALE:**

That's right.

*(\*Laughter\*)*

**DETECTIVE SERGEANT REECKS:**

That law hasn't changed, so it's \$50. It's still \$50. It's been \$50 for years, which is good for us, bad for the bad guy. But they've expanded it now, they've included the swastika. In 2006, they included the swastika. However, if you notice, I have intent to harass, annoy or threaten. What does that mean? That means that if you drive down the street and you see a swastika on a stop sign, it is not necessarily a hate crime. I'm sorry, it's not. We have to do an investigation, we have to show the motivation. Why was that swastika put on a stop sign? It is in front of a temple. Would a lot of people who are Jewish possibly be offended by that? It involves an investigation.

So, in 2008, because we had the swastika on the law, and we had a couple of cases of the noose here in Suffolk County, we were able -- the groups were able to get the noose into the law. Now, look at this slide very closely, because there's only going to be one thing that changes from this slide to the next slide. What changed? The word "noose". Everything else is the same. Everybody was happy, we have the noose on the books as a hate crime, but we really don't. The law is very weak, because I still have to prove intent. I still have to prove you're targeting somebody because of that noose. A noose hanging in the woods out in Southampton in February on a Tuesday with snow mounted up around it is not a hate crime. You have to show me that people will be offended by that or it's being used by somebody. And we all know the noose is symbolic of the lynchings of African-Americans, so you would -- if you showed me that African-Americans used this path on a regular bases, they were being targeted because of that, yeah, then we can start looking into the noose as somebody did that intentionally to commit a hate crime. But that noose hanging in the woods with nothing else around it is not a hate crime.

I'm not making this up, this is the way the law reads, so please understand me when I tell you, I would love to charge everybody. Those -- who know me. I would lock up everybody --

*(\*Laughter\*)*

-- and throw the ones back that I don't need. Everybody goes, everyone on the bus, and we throw the ones back we don't need. So, please understand, it is not my law, it's New York State law.

That is my card. I told you it was short. Anyone that has any questions, you can see me afterwards. I'll be more than happy to answer questions. If you have a group you want me to do a presentation for, I have a much larger presentation for that, it's not this short, but for tonight, this your night, not my night. Thank you.

*(\*Applause\*)*

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Thank you. All right. Thank you Detective Sergeant Reecks. I failed to mention that we have advocates here from the Crime Victims Bureau, they're in the back. Wave your hands. We have them here because some of our hearings we've had people that have come forward that have made complaints. So, if you're not comfortable coming and speaking before the group and you have an incident, that you have been a victim of a crime, we have the advocates in the back that work with you and they'll process your information, and we'll make sure that it gets to the proper authorities to be investigated. Okay? All right. So, at this point, we'll go to the public portion. Each person will

have five minutes.

**DR. KILMNICK:**

Legislator Gregory.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Yes.

**DR. KILMNICK:**

We had said at our last meeting that there was a lot of good information up on the Board, however, if you feel that something happened to you that doesn't fit the slide, please come up and share it, you will be heard.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Yes. We were here to -- as I'm messing with the clock. We're here to listen to everyone's concerns. Detective Sergeant Reecks, what he spoke about is the law, but we understand and we know that, you know, discrimination is, I won't say prevalent, but it's in our communities and it's a part of the problem that we're trying to address. But for those victims, we do have some people here that can process your complaints and make sure that they forward it to the proper authorities so that they can be investigated. So, with no further ado, I'm going to ask for a Sarah Reynolds.

**MS. REYNOLDS:**

Thank you. My name is Sarah Reynolds. As he said, I was an Investigator for -- an Independent Investigator for the Southern Poverty Law Center who recently did a report on hate crimes in Suffolk County. I spent approximately six months interviewing hundreds of community advocates and immigrants in an attempt to document hate crimes in this County. It was a difficult job because the closet in this community is deep and hard to get through. It took awhile to get to know people and to convince them to talk in confidence, as many of you may have seen. Not many people have come forward to the -- in these hearings.

The stories I heard were hard to hear. Many were from people that did not want to share their last names or phone numbers, or invite me into their homes because of the distrust that has grown here, not just between authorities and residents, but in between students in schools and neighbors in neighborhoods.

Latinos have become more and more isolated by the silence of their experiences with discrimination, so much so that their stories often stay within their community. Almost every person I interviewed had some experience with physical or verbal hatred against them for presumed nationality, race and immigration status. Almost every person I interviewed had been verbally harassed while waiting for work, or had dodged a bottle being hurled at them from a car passing while biking or walking. These people often said that what was happening to them wasn't so bad, at least they weren't getting beaten. Many victims did not want to report crimes to the police for fear -- excuse me -- for fear of not being taken seriously, that the police might not believe them, or that they were putting themselves at risk for possible deportation. Most just didn't want to cause any trouble, they would say. And if these fears are only rumors, then where do they begin.

Some people I spoke with did find the courage to file a police report and many have not received followup. There was actually a young man who was not able to come tonight who was beaten up by his boss. He arrived to work 30 minutes late and was met with his boss' fists. He was beaten, his nose was broken, and he spent time in the hospital and spent a lot of money on hospital bills. And while this was happening, of course, this boss was yelling racial epithets, threatening that he would be deported if he went to the police about this problem. And so even when these crimes are reported, if the -- if the ambience exists that people feel like they cannot come forward, it's still a serious problem.

Some people -- okay. There was another man that was beaten, while I was investigating, and I

went to see him in the hospital. When I visited him there, his face was swollen he couldn't speak clearly enough to tell me what had happened. This happened in February of this year. A few weeks later I saw him at his home and I didn't recognize him when he walked into the room. His face had been so bad he had to have cheek reconstructed.

And it doesn't take much to keep people quiet when something like this goes unanswered, and we know that, obviously, from what happened with Mr. Marcello Lucero. The reality is that if these acts are -- if these perpetrators are tolerated by any of us, they are empowered to continue to do more and to do worse. We have seen proof of this in the case of Lucero, and in the decades of hate crimes in our national history books where we even named it so. But if perpetrators are held accountable by the authorities in the community, victims may come forward -- may come forward -- excuse me -- and maybe this ambience of hate can change. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Thank you. Sorry if I missed it. Also, with our advocates and the Crime Victims Bureau, there are support services that are available. So if you're a victim of a crime, there are services that you can apply for, so keep in mind of that. Okay. Arthur Bridenstine. Did I get that correct?

**MR. BRIDENSTINE:**

Yes. Hi. I'm Arthur Bridenstine from Riverhead and I'm here as a -- just as a private citizen. Let me just say that when I interact with people and my neighbors and people in the community, I'm just shocked by the -- the kind of discourse I hear, the hostile language, the language, the critical language about Latinos, I'm shocked. And I think that that tone that we're hearing is just set by, I hate to say it, but it's -- we can't have this meeting without saying that the tone that's set by -- set by Steve Levy himself.

*(\*Applause\*)*

I'm glad the Officer helped us define what a hate crime is from a legal point of view, and I'm interested that he pointed out that mostly these incidents are with kids between 13 and 19 who clearly get that kind of motivation from their parents. But, as I said, I'm just surprised that how openly people in this County can criticize undocumented workers, the language I hear just from people I would never expect to hear that from is amazing. And I think the officers are doing a great job in trying to deal with this problem and you all should be applauded for what you're doing, but when the tone comes from the very top -- the representative from the Southern Poverty Law Center mentioned here before, it clearly said the tone from public officials in Suffolk County create the climate that let's this kind of attitude happen. So I don't know -- I don't know what the answer is. We can't change Mr. Levy's thinking, but until there's a change in attitude from the very top that sets the example as to what's acceptable behavior, we're going to have a real problem. So thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Thank you. Sandra Dunn.

**MS. DUNN:**

Good evening. My name is Sandra Dunn. I'm the Immigration Program Officer at the Hagedorn Foundation, and I appreciate the opportunity to be here tonight. And I appreciate the Hate Crimes Task Force. I believe you when you say you're here to help, and that's why I'm here speaking to you.

I want to also speak about the *Climate of Fear: Latinos in Suffolk County, New York*, the report released by the Southern Poverty Law Center. And it was not planned that -- I didn't know Sarah Reynolds was going to be here tonight, actually, so this is just something I've been wanting to say. And I come to you because I consider you not just the Hate Crimes Task Force, but also a liaison between the community and authorities, whether those authorities are the Executive Branch, the Legislative branch or the Police Department.

So I just want to say that I have had the opportunity to have private conversations and to be in meetings with community leaders, and, of course, to read the reports in Newsday and the Times, as well as to see the television, and I've been really struck by the reactions of some public officials at different levels, whether they be officials in the Legislature or in the -- the County Executive himself, or members of the Police Department or community leaders. I've been struck by their reaction to the report, because I am amazed at the defensiveness that I'm hearing in -- at all levels. And I understand that some individuals are lamenting what they perceive to be errors in the report, whether those are factual errors or errors of omission, or just an imbalance in the report, that the report is focusing on what is wrong in Suffolk County, what -- the hate crimes that are occurring in Suffolk County, and not on what is right in Suffolk County and what is being done to combat those hate crimes, and to create a climate of unity rather than a climate of fear. I understand, as a person, as a human being, those reactions, but I think that those reactions are not productive, and they are not what this report is trying to cull out in people.

The report -- the purpose of the report was not to present the good work that is being done in Suffolk County, the purpose of the report was to show that there is a climate of fear that is felt by so many residents working and living productive lives and contributing productively to this County, and that that climate of fear is perpetuated, as others have said, from the top down. And, also, that there's a connection between words and actions. Words at the top encourage or allow a climate to be created where actions, violent actions and actions of hate can happen on the ground. This is not news to anybody here, I know that, but I'm here tonight just to call upon you, as members of the Hate Crimes Task Force, to please let Suffolk officials know in the Police Department, in the County Executive's Office, and in the Legislature, and let community leaders know that you have -- the communities leaders that you have contact with and that you may have some influence with, that this is the time to stop focusing on how bruised or how stung or how wounded some might be feeling about this report and to start focusing on not what the report has neglected to mention, but start focusing on the stories that we have read in the report and that leave some of us feeling completely clobbered every time we read it. I think that is the appropriate reaction. And that we need to start focusing in a systematic and effective way on fixing what might not be working in our systems that allow the atrocities that were reported in *Climate of Fear* to occur and continue. Defensiveness will get us nowhere. Let's all use *Climate of Fear* as a call to action to work harder, more proactively, and more openly and honestly with one another towards a better, stronger and safer Suffolk, and I mean better, stronger, and safer for everybody in Suffolk, regardless of skin color, of national origin, or of immigration status. Please let the defensiveness stop, and please let's start to have conversations that are productive and that matter. Thank you.

(\*Applause\*)

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Thank you. Sister Margaret Smyth.

**SISTER MARGARET SMYTH:**

One of the wonderful things about living on the East End is seeing the rhythm of the seasons when the seeds are planted, the harvest comes in and we reap what we sow, but there's also a human planting and a human reaping that is going on. And so when I talk to the communities and I ask them, "Tell me about your experience," they speak to me about the planting of the seeds of throwing stones at people as they walk by on the street, at spitting at them and calling them names. They tell me, "We don't complain because you have to get used to it." And how sad to live in a society that says we have to get used to it. No one should be ever getting used to having their dignity taken away from them. It escalates.

So we are currently involved in two cases that are falling under crime. The first one, landlord, very angry at the tenant. Comes into the house, breaks down the bedroom door, goes inside, pulls the two people out, husband and wife, and proceeds to fight with them. Takes their telephone and throws it, and when they went to go to get the phone in order to be able to call the police, the

woman was beaten very severely. I saw her right after it covered in bruises. The wonderful thing that's happening is that it has given her the strength to fight back, so he's going to court at the end of October. And we want to make sure that he hears well what should be happening to people and that's not what it is.

The other part scares me for what I heard yesterday. The young man came into my office, because although we say 13 to 19, we're dealing with people in their fifties and forties who also are not so nice. A young man came into my office, he was taking a car out. And while he was trying to move things, somebody jumped in his car; went to take the car. They hit a fence. So he did what you should do, he called the police, and the police showed up and called him every name under the book on him. He sat in my office and he said to me, "Sister Margaret, I cannot tell you what this man called me," after he told me a bit of it. He said, "I can't tell you the rest." This is the person who he called to help him who said, "You should be deported, you're the scum of the earth."

What do we do when we sit here as advocates, as concerned citizens and wonder why our people are not here to speak up for themselves when the people that they ask to help them join and say the things about them, reducing their own dignity, taking away from it? No wonder our people are not here. We have to be able to give people the courage to stand forth because of them knowing that we're creating in Suffolk County a society where human dignity is respected by all for all. Thank you.

*(\*Applause\*)*

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Thank you. Dr. Valenzuela.

**DR. VALENZUELA:**

Good evening. My name is Luis Valenzuela. I'm with the Long Island Immigrant Alliance. I just wanted to cite several observations and make this statement before you, and again, that's to point out the function or one of the functions of the Task Force, and that's to uncover the sources of racial tensions and the sources that give rise to this climate. And I think the two speakers just prior to myself have touched on this issue about youth, and so youth are 65%, or whatever, of the perpetrators of these hate crimes. But, in a sense, when we focus on that number, irrespective of the fact that you may be able to document it, you lose sight of the bigger picture that gives rise, that gives license to those youngsters to commit those atrocities. We can't let the adults off the hook just because young people cannot, cannot demonstrate their prejudice the same way or with the sophistication that adults can do it.

Gang assaults. Gang assaults is important, but I want to flip that around and show how police behavior contributes to people not wanting to come up and talk about what's happened to them. A couple of years ago the Police Department participated with ICE in raiding Latino communities across the Island. Anyone can look it up, it happened. People were terrorized. The police was there. Supposedly, ICE came to arrest gang members. Of the 200 persons that were taken, nine were gang members. Everyone else was charged as a gang associate. Does that send -- what message does that send? So gang assaults, in one instance, we want them to be seen as hate crimes, but again, there's a social context that we have to look at everything through.

We recognize the police are a paramilitary force that take orders from their bosses, so they're doing the job as they see it. And the impressions is that -- are brought to bear. Activists. I think that activists who are assaulted for participating in the protection of the rights of different groups, that that should be a hate crime.

If you remember, some of the freedom fighters who were assassinated --

*(\*Microphone Malfunction\*)*

No, no, this problem was happening before I got up here, but I have my notes on there. So we

know that they were assassinated, and what were they doing, right? Trying to get a segment of our population the right to vote. You know, the things about swastikas and nooses, we're glad that they're on the books, right? And Detective Sergeant Reecks always has the proper definition for hate crimes as is the law. I mean, no one can dispute that. But, again, there's a social context and you have to look beyond what's written. So the fact that you paint "Latinos go home or die", the fact that that may not be a hate crime, still informs young folks that it's okay to hunt Latinos, because, look, ICE comes and the police system and they take away 200 persons and charge them as being gang associates.

And the last thing that I want to say, last week Nadia Molena was speaking about how the acts of a couple of police officers, which may have been perceived as trying to get information to right a wrong was, nevertheless, probably seen as intimidation by other folks and not only the person that they were looking for. But to make the point, and this is something that you guys have to deal with, last week a young man testified here that he was intimidated or they tried to intimidate him and the -- then last Thursday, two of you guys, who were sitting at this table, go to the Legislature to contradict and dismiss that testimony. So, for whatever reason, you did it, fine, but the fact is that the message that you send is this is what happens when you testify.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Thank you, Dr. Valenzuela.

**(Applause)**

Lucius Ware.

**MR. WARE:**

Good evening, everyone. We want to welcome you to the salty East End. Okay? This is very, very serious business to us. Everything that has been said here tonight is more serious to me than has been said. For instance, in every sense of the word, we, on November the 8th, had a lynching, every sense of the word. Okay? For some reason, it may not seem to be called that, but in every definition that you can find, you will find that is exactly what it was. Okay? So this is very serious business to us.

I welcome you here to the East End, the capital of nooses and tasers. Okay? Very serious business to us. As President of the Eastern Long Island NAACP, the civil rights organization founded, to a great extent, because of the fact of those horrible lynchings that were taking place and the riots in Springfield, Illinois in 2008 -- or, excuse me, in 1908 and throughout the country. Now, are we going to sit down and let this -- these things happen?

The word "nooses" came up, out in the country, in the woods. Well, on further examination, you would find that that's on a well-traveled trail by young people, old people and children alike, located very near five of the most prestigious black settlements in the United States. Okay? It's no play thing. It's not a prank at all. We take it seriously.

The hate crimes legislation, like much other legislation, has come to us through advocacy. Some of you happen to be too young to know that the first hate crimes legislation in the State of New York took place and became law right here in Suffolk County. And some of some of us have been in those fights and will continue to be in those fights. Yes, we will go to make it stronger and to the proper sources, and we will be expecting the police jurisdictions and all of the elected officials to contribute to that if they have something to contribute, and also the Governor, who has some problems with that, but he signed that legislation. Okay? And the East End, in all of its uniquenesses, we are sitting on a powder keg or powder kegs. Okay? When people are allowed to speak out and call people names and say that they are less than people, less than others, then these things begin to happen and they eventually turn into violence. It's a story of history. Okay?

So one of the things in my short life on this planet I thought I would never have to do in 2009, two

of them, one of them being chasing nooses, and the other being a lynching in my own backyard. The effects are great, and the people who sit in front of us, we know that you take it serious, but we ask you to take it a bit more serious and in all cases.

I'd like to point out that the Southern Poverty Law Center has had so much to do with advancement in this country where lynchings and other acts of racial violence have taken place that we cannot doubt their voracity, but we should get behind it and say we're going to do all the things that they suggest and nobody can come in here and do it better. And their method has worked, and they have to be undercover talking to -- working to protect those people who have been the victims. And our police officials and our County Executive and others have not been the victims. They don't need to cry at this time. Thank you.

*(\*Applause\*)*

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Minister Thomas Humphrey.

**MINISTER HUMPHREY:**

I want to thank the Task Force for this meeting tonight. You're doing a wonderful job. You're getting some positive press out of what you're doing. And even in the neighborhood we're getting some positive responses for what you're doing up to this point.

Again, I want to piggyback on what the Southern Poverty Law Center wrote concerning the climate of fear. I'm going to read as much as I can with the five minutes I have so we can get this into the record.

I'm Tom Humphrey. I'm the Vice President of Long Island Men's Center. We meet in Huntington Station at 790 Park Avenue in Huntington.

Less than one year ago, on November the 8th, 2008, Marcello Lucero, an Ecuador immigrant, was murdered in the Town of Patchogue, New York. The killing, police says, was carried out by a gang of teenagers who called themselves Caucasian Crew and target Latino residents as part of a sport. They termed it "beaner-hopping". It highlighting a growing national problem, violent hatred directed at all suspected undocumented immigrants, Latinos in particular. Officials in Suffolk County, New York, where Patchogue is located, minimized the tragedy, with the County Executive, Steve Levy himself, then suggesting that it would have been a mere one-day story, if not earlier publicity about his and other residents' anti-immigration activism over the period of decades.

But the reality was that nativist intolerance and hate violence had been festering for years in Suffolk County, fostered by some of the same officials who were now wishing the story would go away. The situation in Suffolk County, in fact, is a, microcosm of the problem facing the entire United States, and FBI statistics suggest that 40% rise in anti-Latino hate crimes between 2003 and 2007, the latest numbers available. The number of hate groups in America has been rising, too, climbing more than 50% since 2000, mainly by exploiting of issues of undocumented non-white immigrants.

In the aftermath of the Lucero murder, Southern Poverty Law Center sent a Spanish-speaking researcher to Suffolk County to interview Latino residents, both documented and undocumented over a period of months. The Southern Law Center -- the Southern Law Center -- Poverty Law Center found was frightening. Lucero murder, while it was it was the worst violence so far, was hardly an isolated incident. Latino immigrants in Suffolk County are regularly harassed, taunted, pelted with objects hurled from cars, they are frequently run off the road when riding their bicycles, and many reported being beaten with baseball bats and other objects. Others have been shot with BB guns and pepper sprayed. Most will not walk alone at dark; parents often refuse to let their children play outside. A few have been the target of arson attacks and worse. Adding to immigration fear is the furious rhetoric of groups like the now-defunct Sachem Quality of Life, whose long-time spokesman regularly referred to immigrants as "terrorists." The leader of another nativist group, this one based in California, one of the many adding their vitriol, describing a "frightening"

visit to an area where Latinos were concentrated in Suffolk County, stating they think they urinate, they defecate, they have sex overtures around women, did he have indicate they have sexual overtones about women, which is -- which was unfounded.

Fueling the fire are many of the very people who are charged with protecting the residents of Suffolk County. Those that are charged with protecting the Latinos, these are the people we're talking about, local politicians, law enforcement officials. At one point, one County Legislator said that if he saw an influx of Latinos or day-laborers in his town, "We will be out with baseball bats," and so forth.

So I just wanted some of this in the record because at the Long Island Men's Center, we are fighting each and every day for our brothers and our comrades. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Thank you.

*(\*Applause\*)*

Patrick Young.

**MR. YOUNG:**

You know, it's been interesting. I've been meeting with a number of groups about the Southern Poverty Law Center report, and, of course, one of the first things people say is, "Gee, they usually study the Klan or the Neo-Nazi groups." They've been down in the southwest looking at the Minutemen this -- as you know, just this year, murdered two Latinos, including a 9-year-old girl. "Why are they in Suffolk County?" And, usually, when someone asks that, somebody else steps forward and says, "Because that's the most hateful county in New York State."

In March, I was up meeting with Governor Paterson on a different immigration-related matter and I mentioned Marcello Lucero's murder and he knew immediately what I was talking about. And he looked at me and he said, "I wonder what the family thought to hear from the top Executive in the County that this murder was a one-day story?"

You know, sometimes when we're in Suffolk County we get a little bit of myopia, you know, we can see up until the Route 110 line. We don't always look beyond it, but this -- you know, when we're talking about the what's -- the Southern Poverty Law Center, was every story exactly correct? Well, you know what, similar stories were uncovered by the New York Times, similar stories were uncovered by Newsday, by WCBS Radio, by National Public Radio, when they came here. So, if you're still in doubt, if you still believe that there was one hate crime in Suffolk County against Latinos prior to November 8th, 2008, take a look at the indictments that Spota put forward. The people who were accused of killing Lucero committed other hate crimes that year; the DA has documented those.

Second concern is, at the last meeting of this Task Force, Francisco Hernandez said that there had been an effort to silence him. He's a hate crime victim. He said that there had been an effort to keep him from speaking here. Now, I don't know if there was or not, but you need to know. You need to determine whether there is an attempt to interfere with your collections of evidence, because if there was, you cannot get valid results with which to issue a report.

You know, at the first meeting of this Task Force, a number of people talked about the rhetoric that spurred the hatred. And to some extent, sometimes we roll our eyes a little bit, it sounds a little bit PC, you know. We know that many Suffolk politicians refer to immigrants, particularly undocumented immigrants, as, quote, illegals, unquote. And some of you may have seen a couple of Latinos who were here at the first meeting wore a tee shirt that said "No Human Being is Illegal" and you might of thought, well, that maybe that comes from The National Council of La Raza, which I guess some folks are now comparing with the Ku Klux Klan. It doesn't. It originates with Nobel

Peace Prize Winner and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel. And I was actually a part of a group that met with him that -- where he talked about why he came up with that slogan. He said he knew that once you describe someone as illegal, then you set them up as a proper target to be hunted down by thugs. As Wiesel said, "You must know that no human being is illegal. That is a contradiction in terms. Humans can be beautiful or more beautiful, they can be fat or skinny, they can be right or wrong, but illegal? How can a human being be illegal?"

Now, some people would say, "Well, illegal, it's sort of a shortening of illegal alien, it refers to people's immigration status, not meant as a hateful thing." But then why don't we look at another term that's used by many Suffolk politicians, which is the description of children born in the United States with brown skin as "anchor babies". There is no legal definition of an anchor baby, that's not a shortening. This does not refer to someone's legal status, because everyone born in the United States, with the exception of the children of diplomats, invading soldiers, and certain Native Americans up until recently, is a United States citizen. This is not based on a statute or custom, as it's often asserted, but it's based on the 14th Amendment, the 14th amendment which made non-whites in the United States United States citizens. The 14th Amendment was passed because some states tried to make US citizenship conditional on your family's legal status. They said we -- you cannot be a United States citizen if your father was a slave, using the decision Dred Scott. How could the children of slaves ever be United States citizens if this interpretation was allowed to persist? I'll be done in one second.

So Congress passed and the states ratified the 14th Amendment in 1868 and settled the question. When politicians refer to children born in the United States as anchor babies, they don't just attack immigrants, because these children are not immigrants, they stigmatize all Latinos, because even if a Latino can show a birth certificate saying they were born in this country, there'll always be a suspicion that he's an anchor baby, a second-class citizen, and we have are no second class of citizens in our Constitution. This Task Force must have the courage to speak the truth to power. Right now, we're talking about what makes our young native born people into hate criminals. We also need to consider how the next generation of young Latinos seeing their parents spat on by thugs and vilified by politicians are being molded for the future. Thank you.

**(Applause)**

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Charlene Obernauer.

**MS. OBERNAUER:**

It's Obernauer. Thank you. I'm Charlene Obernauer. I'm with Long Island Jobs with Justice. And, I mean, we've talked a lot today about what we do after a hate crime occurs and, you know, how the police should respond after something happens, but what we really need to talk about is the prevention of hate crimes and how we can create an environment where, if a hate crime does occur, the victim can feel free to report that hate crime without worrying about the safety of him or her, or the safety of his or her family.

And, as was mentioned earlier, many immigrants, particularly undocumented immigrants are often too afraid to report that harassment to the police. And we work with a lot of undocumented workers and we know that they're afraid to talk to the police because they've been consistently asked for their papers by the police. And, you know, I don't want to -- I don't want to say that this is necessarily the fault of the police, but we do have to do education to those officers, we do have to talk to them about not asking for a worker's papers if they report a hate crime, or any crime for that matter.

And I know, from working -- working with one worker in particular where he told me that he was actually hit and called a racist slur and he wouldn't -- he wouldn't tell anyone, because he was too afraid. And so when I experience this every day, and I know that, you know, most of the people in the audience here who are activists and who do work with workers, whether documented or

undocumented, we know that this is something that the Police Force does need to take on and does need to educate their members about.

So, you know, thank you, guys, for the commitment to working out -- working on the Hate Crimes Task Force. You know, I really appreciate all the effort. I know that, you know, we're all taking times out of our families right now to be here and to be doing this, and so it is really important. But, you know, again, we have to be talking about the prevention. And that's all I have to say.

*(\*Applause\*)*

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Francisco Hernandez.

**MR. HERNANDEZ:**

Good evening. My name is Francisco Hernandez. I was going to explain a little bit about -- before I give you guys ideas of what we should do. My name is Francisco, again. I'm the father of three kids, one in the high school in Pat-Med; the other kid, Elijah, is a student in River Elementary, he's light-skinned. The reason why I do this, the reason why I'm here, the reason why I fight for these rights is dark skin like me. I've got to live in this neighborhood and my kids got to grow up in it, and it's up to you guys up there to make change.

Unfortunately, as you can hear the news, there are people on the Board that are hand-picked by the County Executive. And my question to you, and it's something that you've got to look in the mirror and see in reality is, "What did I do at that time in history," because this will go down in history. When the racism was around in the days of Martin Luther King, there were people that were sitting up in a table like this perhaps, and many were paid by their bosses, political leaders. Many looked the other way and they thought about their jobs. But there were those that spoke out, and one man particularly that spoke out was killed. This is a serious issue.

From the report that I've read on the Southern Poverty report, since 1999, they just report from that time, there are issues that are growing and growing. Just in -- alone in 2008, there was already sixteen issues already, twelve before Marcello died.

We live in the day where accountability is at the most -- is the most important thing that corporate companies look for. As shareholders, right, for a corporate company, they demand things from the board. If things are not done right, they make their demands. We're making our demands as shareholders. The community is a shareholder to this right here and we're making our demands. And it's not the County Executive's problem or anybody here to worry about why did this report come out. What we should worry about is why are the numbers down, like shareholders. Let's bring the numbers up as shareholders. The shareholders are complaining about the stocks, you see, and your answer shouldn't be, oh, because the media's actually involved in this, the media is actually promoting this. No, corporate companies don't do that. When the media reports those things, the corporate company actually replaces those people that are in charge that are responsible for that accountability. I ask for the same thing, those that are held accountable for positions where they could have made changes, where they could have done something about all the racism that is going on, because it's a reality. And I don't know where you've been living, but where I'm from, there is racism and it's coming from both sides, it's coming from all sides. There is a lot of people in my community that have felt it.

Now, there have been people that have said that I am a liar. First of all, Sister Marguerita Smyth, I'm her UPS driver, okay, been her UP -- her UPS driver for four years, been a UPS driver for eleven years. This is actually my neighborhood. And I see what goes on with Sister Marguerita Smyth, she's a humble person, but the racism they stick right outside her doors. God bless her, because she keeps on going, she keeps looking forward, and she goes and helps these people out. And what she looks for when she helps these people out is not are they legal or not legal, it's, "I will be judged by God. I will be judged by God." I don't look at myself when I wake up in the morning and see do

I look fat. What I see in myself is what is God looking at me, how is God looking at me? What am I doing to change things around?

I was called a liar by people in the Task Force. As a victim, do you really believe that there are going to be victims coming in here when you're calling people liars? There are police reports. Mr. Reecks, he said he never met me before. This card with his cell number on it, September 3rd, where he met me and I spoke to him about the issues that happened to me. If this is the way the Anti-Bias Task Force or the head of the Crimes Unit is being defensive about victims -- I mean, on victim's reports, we're not going to get nothing solved here. Actually, what this is going to be about, it's the County Executive has handpicked people here and you're going to push it to the side.

DuWayne, I'm holding you accountable, because I know you're going to do the right thing. I'm holding you accountable, Mr. DuWayne. Mr. Reecks, I don't come to you as a person that hates you, I believe in you. Can you help us out? That's what we are asking here. The shareholder himself for the Advisory Board once said that Suffolk County has racism, didn't you?

**MR. GUTIERREZ:**

Uh-huh.

**MR. HERNANDEZ:**

We will be judged by God.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Your time is up.

**MR. HERNANDEZ;**

God bless you. And just remember, at the end of the day, you will be judged. Look in the mirrors, fellas, ladies. You will be judged. Do something about it. Thank you.

*(\*Applause\*)*

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Before I go any further, I just want to clarify something, two things. Mr. Hernandez, he did speak at our last meeting in Patchogue, and there were some allegations, and they are allegations. We don't pass judgment on whatever is said or whatever comes forward, but as a Task Force, we made a statement that we publicized. I don't have it here with me, I apologize, but it should be available. Kara, do you have that? It basically states that -- that we don't condone anyone being pressured to come forward and testify, as Mr. Young rightfully said, I think it was him. We're trying to collect information and evidence, and that goes counterproductive to what we're trying to do here. So the Task Force, we -- I think it was the day after, two days after the Governor's statement asking for an investigation into what happened. We support an investigation. Secondly, the Task Force, this Task Force was my creation.

*(\*Applause\*)*

I'm not happy to be here, that's not something that we should clap about, because we shouldn't have a Task Force, but nonetheless, I felt that it's an important discussion that we should have.

I was a victim of a hate crime myself when I was ten years old and I never told anyone until we entered this process, so I kind of understood where some people who may be foreign to this country, or adopted our country, I should say, as their new home, may be reluctant to come forward if they've been a victim. And I thought that, as a Task Force, having some issues with hate crimes in the past, the Lucero killing being the height of that controversy, if I could use that word, we now should have a discussion about hate crimes and this is the forum that we chose.

The County Executive has some appointments. There are -- there are community appointments,

and there are Legislative appointments. This is not a County Executive Steve Levy Task Force by any means, but I felt in order to have a full discussion, he has the right, just as the Legislature, to have some appointees on the Task Force, as well as fair representation from all respective communities. We have Dr. Kilmnick who's from the LGTB community. We have Reynolds Hawkins who's from the school districts, because, as you saw, 65% of the offenders are children, so we need to have that input. We have clergy here, that's why Reverend Pearson is here. We have Reverend -- Rabbi Moss who's here. So we tried to get all the stakeholders, if we'll -- understanding that we couldn't find everyone, and that's going to be at a later point during this process where we're going to have members or organizations such as the NAACP, Muslim and Asian organizations come forward, as well as others. We have the Anti-Defamation League. The Southern Poverty Law Center is going to be making a presentation to the Task Force. So everyone will have a fair opportunity to come forward. But I wanted you to just kind of get the background that, you know, this is not some made-up Task Force, that -- some concoction of Steve Levy to kind of whitewash the incidents that have happened in the past.

Being a victim, I take this seriously, as well as the members here, they take it seriously, and that's why we're here. We're trying to get your input. We understand your emotions, your passions. This is a difficult issue. And we understand that we're not going to have victims come forward right away. Yes, you know, we'll tell you their tale of woe, so we're appreciative of those that have come forward, because it's great, because that's something I never did, so I respect that. But we also understand that there are people that are hiding in the shadows, that are living in the shadows and they may never come out. We've had people that contacted the Task Force through other people, emissaries if you will, to voice their concerns, we're going to have that. This is a step and a small step in the right direction, but it is in the right direction, we hope. And we'll build more confidence in those that are watching, because I believe there are a lot of people watching just to see what we're going to do, and they're going to build their confidence and lower those walls of reluctance as we move forward in this process so people get a greater understanding of what we're trying to do. Okay?

**MR. HERNANDEZ:**

Mr. DuWayne Gregory, I was threatened by Mel Guadalupe last time. How are you going to have -- and I'm an American citizen. How are you going to have people that don't even speak English come here if I, on the Advisory Board, was threatened?

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

I understand --

**MR. HERNANDEZ:**

How are you going to have them come here if they threatened me?

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

I understand your concerns.

**MR. HERNANDEZ:**

And then you're going to have people right on the Task Force lie about it. There's no real -- it doesn't -- this is not a concrete Task Force, then, if it breaks up what the Task Force is about.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

The Task Force --

**MR. HERNANDEZ:**

I was supposed to sit on that seat right there where Alex is at. Do you remember, Alex? But because I'm a big mouth, because I'm controversial, and all I'm doing is fighting for the rights of people, because of that I'm not placed there, because of that; isn't that right? I understand where you're coming from and I know why you did it, but there are people already manipulating it.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

I understand. I understand your comments and I appreciate them. Excuse me if I mess up the next person. Waldemar Candelario?

**MR. CANDELARIO:**

Yes, me.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Oh, I'm sorry.

**MR. CANDELARIO:**

How are you doing?

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Good. How are you?

**MR. CANDELARIO:**

Good evening, everybody. I'm so proud and happy to be part of this and be participating in these opinions, you know, part of the community that I'm working in Suffolk County, Long Island.

I wanted to say something very brief, it's not going to take a long time, but I'm happy to be here, and thank you for this evening. Many people in this place that have humanity, many people that have love for people to be in charge of the community, leaders that have love to other communities, just not thinking about what can they do for themselves, but what they can do for people around them.

I want to tell you a story about myself. When I was 15 years old I was kicked out of my own home because I had a problem at home with my stepfather, my stepmother and my mother, they had arguments, so I was forced to leave out of my house. So I met this gentleman called Francisco Hernandez. I remembered that yesterday what happened. You know, he saw me in the street and he told me, you know, "What's wrong with you?" I said, "I lost my home, I don't have no place to go." He told me, "You come home and live in my basement." I lived with him for four years, until I got myself together. I got a job. He helped me, how to get a job. He showed me how to be a man, a man of honor. And I'm so happy to talk about this right now. So this is the type of man that is -- be able to help people in the community. And right now, he's working for Patchogue, in the Seventh District for Patchogue. He's helping the community around.

He met this lady, she lost -- she had no home, with five kids. He helped her out, the five kids, already now have a house to live, with -- you know, with Section 8. He be helping people around the community, the people that need support. Spanish people that don't speak any English, they are always looking for help and he always helped them out. So we need a person that can have -- sorry, I'm kind of nervous. We need a person to have a humanitarian side to be in charge.

Me, in my behalf, I always wanted to be a Police Officer and I took the police test for Suffolk Police Department. So far, they haven't call me yet. But what I want to say is that we need to have more minority police officers in the Police Force, not just for Suffolk, for Nassau, but for the whole nation to represent the poor people that are suffering right now, because most people that see a cop, they just see a white cop and they get scared, like, "Oh, my God, I cannot say nothing." But if they see more minorities in the Police Department, they can relate more to what's going on and be better citizens. Thank you.

*(\*Applause\*)*

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Dianne Rulnick.

**MS. RULNICK:**

Good evening, and I want to thank you for forming the Task Force. I was at the Legislative meeting the day you did and it was by unanimous vote. And I hope and I know that you will put your hearts and your minds behind this very serious and unfortunate scar, scar on the County of Suffolk. It is a scar that is unimaginable; it is a scar against humanity; it is a scar that shows no respect to so many of the minorities in our community, if it's the taxi driver who runs over the Latino and says, "I'm glad I did it," at the 7-Eleven, and it turned out he was a citizen, the hatred, the tensions that went into that.

The quadriplegic, who I hope now is a paraplegic, but at the time was a quadriplegic in the new nursing home, and I went with Sister Breige Lavery to visit him repeatedly, as she fed him and spoke Spanish to him. I do not speak Spanish. And one day he asked to be helped and an aide put a pillow over his head and almost smothered him to death. She has never returned to that nursing home, and she has not, as far as I know, been found.

The days that Sister Margaret and I and others stood in front of the 7-Eleven and were repeatedly told by Tommy Two Signs, I think he's popular by that name, "Sisters, you're whores, Sisters, you're whores," as they moved the Latinos to try to incite them in front of the cameras. When I told a little bit of this to Supervisor Levy, he became a little bit defensive and he said, "I'm not part of this, and I didn't kill Lucero, I didn't kill him." And I said, "No, you didn't kill him, but the rhetoric that we allowed to go on, that we perpetuate, killed him." Killed him. He said, "Give me an example." And I was in there with Rabbi Moss, and Detective Sergeant Reecks, and Reverend Pearson, and I said, "How about in front of Channel 12 when you came on the monitor and Tommy Two Signs came on the monitor? How about at the breakfast?" It was -- I don't know if it was an hadassah breakfast, but it was a breakfast, "When you spoke about having no responsibility for it." And then Tom Suozzi got up and said, "Let me tell you why this is happening and how we might prevent it." What a difference in rhetoric, what a difference in leadership. I know that I'm not supposed to get up in front of the mike and talk this way about individuals, but if we don't, if we condone it, we'll send our political leaders to higher office when they have not built a community here.

Now, I will say that under the leadership, current leadership, the Hate Crimes Unit had been demoted from bureau. It no longer holds the status of bureau, it is now a unit. It is now back to its original reporting relationship, as I understand. It now has the Detectives back under its leadership that were taken away when that unit was threatened. But when the Anti-Bias Task Force of the Town of Southampton looked to its leadership in a Councilperson, and that Councilperson brought forth a resolution before the Town Board asking that all alleged hate crimes be brought to the Hate Crimes Unit, some said it was apparent victory because they felt that the Hate Crimes Unit had been demoralized and was no longer strong. I hope that's not the case.

When I hear leadership from the Hate Crimes Unit to the Supervisor of Suffolk County diminish, diminish the balanced professional report of the Southern Poverty Christian Leadership Center, I say something continues to be wrong. By the way, at that meeting of the ABTF, the Suffolk County ABTF, Reverend Pearson got up and spoke to Steve Levy and said, "You know, I've never talked to you before like this in public, but the level of rhetoric is unacceptable." And then Rabbi Moss, who's kind of quiet at these things, got up and spoke to Steve Levy, too, and told him what was on his mind in a very gentle way. That's what we need, leadership.

And I have two quick suggestions. May I make the two quick suggestions? One is somehow -- I mean, we've had of our school boards terrible discriminatory action in the Town of Southampton by our Board leadership. We need to look at our school boards. We have financial training at the different levels. How about ethics training? How about human resource training? You know, writing memos about those Muslims who believe in multiple gods, or whatever, different kind of god, so, therefore, can never be part of us, where the Latino Barbie, who comes from -- is it Wyandanch or Brentwood, or wherever, and has kinky hair, that would be the African-American doll, I guess, if we were stereotyping, that came from the head of a school board in Tuckahoe. You know that, it was in the report.

What I'm going to say quickly is I think that leadership in government and, in our schools, and in our media needs to form a triumvirate and work with our not-for-profits, our businesses, and our religious leadership in saying, "You, the church, that wanted to help with Worklink Center and were told by your members you couldn't because they were illegal, let's help support you so that you don't hear that anymore.

And last, but not least, the second point is that don't tear down the Southern Poverty report any longer, the way you tore down the Hagedorn. I'm not talking about you, I'm talking about the leadership. You dismissed it. They were two good reports. They had problems, but they were two good reports.

The resolution that was passed in Southampton Town to ask the Hate Crimes Unit to look at crimes is something I've talked to each of the police units in other areas in the town and they've said to me, "We can handle it, we don't want the Hate Crimes Unit in here." They put it in different ways, but it was as direct as that. "We can handle it ourselves." I'm asking that you look at the -- it's not a proclamation, a resolution from the Southampton Town board bringing in the Hate Crimes Unit when there is an alleged hate crime, and that you talk about the fact that no other hamlet or village east of the canal has that. And maybe we need to get out of our little boxes and start acting together in a -- I like what that person said about preventive medicine and being pro -- being active. Thank you. I know I went over. I appreciate it.

*(\*Applause\*)*

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Maria Williams.

**MS. WILLIAMS:**

Good evening, everyone. My name is Maria Williams and I stand here as a woman of African-American descent. And I lock arms with the Latinos because I know that if it's not them, it's me and my family. I raised my kids in the Village of Patchogue, three sons, three black young men. They were constantly harassed by Code Enforcement Police, you name it, they were harassed. Three sons, they have a couple of friends with them. Maybe five or six of them would get together. Next thing you know, here comes the law enforcement officials, "Break it up, break it up." In the meantime, down the street, 7-Eleven, you've got 20, 25 Caucasian young kids, they're able to hang out, you know, drink beers, or whatever. After awhile, I couldn't take it anymore and I went down to the Town and I said, "Look, you guys better leave my kids alone because I'm not standing for it." I had a Caucasian man run after my daughter and we went -- I don't think it was Hate Crimes at that time. I don't know what it was. But, anyway, this guy got convicted. We're not standing for stuff this anymore.

As far as the Police Department, we already know that there was a discrimination case and Suffolk County lost, so we know that there's fear and hatred and all that just within the force, so how are they going to police us, you know? So that's pretty scary, too. And, like the young man said, he's right, we need more people of color in the force and, you know, we need people for our kids to look up to. I work in a school, 80% black, most of them are in the system. As far as I'm concerned, that's a hate crime, you know? We look at our jails, Riverhead, wherever, 80% people of color. As far as I'm concerned, that's a hate crime. Thank you.

*(\*Applause\*)*

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Michele Lynch.

**MS. LYNCH:**

Good evening. Legislator Gregory, thank you very much for forming this -- seeing the need, unfortunately, in forming the Hate Crimes Task Force. I'm here today representing 1199 SEIU,

which is the largest health care union in the country. We represent over 360,000 members in eastern Long Island. We have the hospitals and the nursing homes.

All of us here today are advocates, speaking on behalf -- and we want to be loud and clear that we abhor the conduct of anyone who mistreats a fellow human being. There is a responsibility, especially of leaders, elected officials, law enforcement and school officials to lead by example, showing respect, and treating everyone as human beings, as they rightfully should be treated. When we organize this union, we don't say, "What's your immigration status?" We say, "You want to belong to a union?" This is great, and this is how we can help you and work together.

Clearly, there's a need for education on bias in our schools and in government, in public and private sectors, and I would hope as a result of your Task Force, instead of -- my concern is that I don't want anyone coming before this Task Force -- should feel intimidated or that there's going to be a reaction for any statement that they make. Everyone's here to speak publicly and should be able to speak freely. They shouldn't worry about whether their testimony is coming back at them, no matter who they are. And I would hope at the end of the day that the Task Force would realize the responsibility that you have in hopefully coming up with an educational tool for everyone. There's clearly a need. I live in Riverhead and there is bias. And for anyone to say there is no bias on Long Island, I don't know where they are living; in a bubble somewhere. But there clearly is bias. You look at your school boards and who's represented on the school boards, you look at in town government and it's very rarely when you see too many minorities in there.

So, at the end of the day, I hope what the Task Force will do is come up with a bias training and making everybody aware of cultural and the needs for all of us. We are all human beings, and that is the most important thing that everyone should remember. It's a disgrace to hear, and I've heard many, many stories from Sister Margaret of people being spit at. We're human beings. What's wrong with us as adults. What are we teaching our children -- what are we saying to each other, that it's okay to let it go, that it's okay to mistreat and speak disrespectful to another human being? It's wrong. And each of us have a responsibility here today to go forward and say it's not acceptable, it is not acceptable to treat anyone, no matter where they're from, to the way that some of these people are being treated. Thank you.

*(\*Applause\*)*

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Gayle Sheridan.

**MS. SHERIDAN:**

Gayle Sheridan. Thank you for the opportunity to work with you. And it's really, really talking with everyone in the room, not just you guys on the Task Force.

I work at Suffolk Community College and one of the -- I teach one of the courses here and it's Group Dynamics, so I have a suggestion and then I have a call for help, I guess, from everyone. The first suggestion is, I don't know, many of you may be familiar with Jane Elliott's work. She is the woman that took the third grade class, right after Martin Luther King was killed, and she put her class through this exercise that was very controversial, to some degree. She separated the students by their eye color. So if you have blue eyes, you were over here, brown eyes over here. And she put them through this exercise of, okay, brown eyes were on top today, blue eyes tomorrow, and she switched it, and she saw what really were students -- you know, third grade all of a sudden turned into different individuals. Okay? "I'm on top today so I put you down." The bottom line of her work is tremendous and I still use her work in my class today. Yes, it's dated, and that's part of the reason I'm working on a project with my colleague, Joan Wozniak, and that leads to my call for your help.

In the absence of having some of these -- I know several people are working on projects to help with this training that was mentioned earlier. We have a lot of work to do, it's obvious, right,

whether it's, you know, the different groups that need training, but in the classroom, this starts early. Let's get it early. Some people felt that Jane Elliott did this -- it was too early, third grade, "No way, don't teach my kid that." Taught them the opposite, taught them to respect the difference. And when I use that material in my class, it's -- it is the richest discussion we probably have throughout the semester. People do want to talk about discrimination, prejudice, biases, they're willing to talk about that, so let's give them the opportunity, let's have the dialogue, let's help and sensitize ourselves. So that's my first suggestion. I don't know if you can all buy copies of the DVD.

I actually wrote to Jane Elliott right after the -- you know, the murder in November of Marcello, and I wrote to Jane Elliott, I said, "This is terrible, this has to stop." And I said, "Your work could be so, you know, helpful." I said, "Do you have the program? You could train the trainers." And she said, "Gail, just go use my DVDs, do it, whether you want to put the students through the exercise." In my class today, we used it in a passive sense, students see what she did, they don't live it. It takes a while to live it, you know, it takes a whole day.

But leading to my call for help, we are trying to put together a multimedia piece that instructors can use in their classroom. And, as far as the age group, I'm not sure, because we're not quite there yet. I've talked to some of you, you know, who are in the room tonight and have -- and guys have helped me. Part of what we're missing is some people will not tell their stories for the reasons mentioned tonight. We can tell that story without, you know, giving away your personal identity. We can use a different photo on the scene and use your voice. There are lots of things we can do. So what I'm really asking if you have people that would tell their story to help educate our communities, that would be really helpful. So Joan and I, I think, will hang out; that's Joan Wozniak. So we'll hang out at the end, and if any of you can, you know, help us move this project along, I'd appreciate it.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Thank you.

*(\*Applause\*)*

Anthony Durham.

**MR. DURHAM:**

Good evening. I apologize for getting here so late, but I'm here. My question coming today is I'm confused. From one end of the County to the other, what is a hate crime? If one of you will volunteer your definition so I have something to gauge by, what is a hate crime? In other words, does that -- does a hate crime -- for it to be titled a hate crime, does it have to be blood attached to it? So that's what I'm lost at, because I feel like I've been a victim more than once. And I could point two people up on the panel that I've been to and basically I felt they looked the other way. So if I could get feedback from you in regard to -- the question is, for it to be a hate crime, does it have to have blood attached to it? If someone could be --

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Okay. Well, we'll let you comment. Detective Sergeant Reecks gave a presentation earlier --

**MR. DURHAM:**

Okay. I apologize.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

-- about what the hate crimes are, the different offenses that come under it, and he said that he'd be available to speak to anyone afterwards about your particular circumstance.

**MR. DURHAM:**

Okay. Well, excuse me for my ignorance, but I'm going to act as if, okay, a hate crime -- to

constitute a hate crime you don't need to be bleeding. Okay. You don't need to see my heart bleeding in order for you to say, you know, "With that behavior and as a result of this particular condition, he's experienced a hate crime." Okay? For all intents and purposes, I'm going to say that I'm a victim of a hate crime.

What's concerning is that I've been fighting this on many levels and I won't stop, and those here that want to come up with retaliation, oh, it's real, it's real. And as I sit and look at all of you there, I'm sure no one's going to raise their hand say, "No, it's not." It's very real, okay, to the point where you get shut out of doors. But I guess by persistence you might make it.

December 2nd last year, I believe it was the 2nd or the 9th, when they had the meeting at the Congressional Church in Patchogue, I think it was, there was a forum that was held. Anyway, once again, still feeling like a victim, I called that number. The reason why I called instead of going there is because I'm not the knew kid on the block. Okay? I'm so used to being told what we can and what we -- okay. I called and I left a message and the Reverend Dwight Wolf, I believe, pardon me if I got his name wrong, he left me a message and I explained the merits of my case, and he said, "You know, you sound like you got a good case, but this is limited to Latinos and Hispanics only," and that right there just emptied the bottom of my gut. What difference does it make what color I am, what ethnicity I am. Okay? But, you know, right now I feel there's no place to go, there's no place to go.

Legislator Gregory, I've come to you. Reverend Pearson, I've come to you. I've had plenty of issues and interaction to the point where publicly, publicly, right here, right now in front of everybody, I'm willing to challenge NAACP because they do nothing, they do nothing, or that's my experience, I'll keep that to my experience, to the point where, in a nutshell, housing discrimination complaint, okay, not by me, but by the State of New York, found that discrimination did take place, I was a victim. Okay. I gave this to NAACP, a copy, not from me, I had won (Mr. Durham Applauded). I had won. This is for -- it was a senior complex, a senior place to get more seniors in. Why did I give it to them? Not for me, once again, but to help other seniors that could use a break on paying these high rents. What happened? I'll let them tell you. Okay?

But the point is, Reverend Pearson, Legislator Gregory, both of you have a copy of this, a verified Federal Court complaint. Okay? And I know you don't want to get into a give-back-and-forth, but even this, economically I've been hurt here. Okay? And I'm going to say I've been hurt, because still it's a legal matter. No one has told me, "You know what, you're full of it, go take a hike." It's almost impossible to get people to look at it, and I just won't stop until someone looks at it and really does something about it, because this should not happen. I don't care if you're gay, you're purple, your ethnic -- your ethnicity, whatever it is, we're all human beings. And, frankly, it is really time. Thank you all for taking a position of being on the panel, but guess what, there comes a responsibility with it and you're charged with that responsibility. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Mr. Durham, we do have -- I know you came late. We have Laura Ahearn, who is here with some of our advocates from the Crime Victims Center. They could take your complaint and they'll follow through and they'll -- you know, we've had several people that we've followed through. We have heard their complaints in -- for investigation, for further investigation. So we do have some advocates in the back, if you'd like to see them, they'll take your information and they'll forward it to the proper authorities.

**MR. DURHAM:**

Well, I was going to let -- I was going to let it be a pain, but since you opened that door, what did you do when I gave you mine?

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Well, I know you came to a Legislative meeting, you spoke to one of my Aides, which she's outside.

**MR. DURHAM:**

Right, and you were going to turn --

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

And my -- and that was a few months back, and my understanding was that you were supposed to get back to us and you never did, and it was a job-related complaint. But I don't want to take that up here. We can talk after.

**MR. DURHAM:**

Right. No, no, no. I understand that, but that's essentially untrue, completely untrue. The ball was dropped. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Greg Fischer.

**MR. FISCHER:**

My name is Greg Fischer. I'm a resident out here in Riverhead Town. It's hard to get to this issue of bias against Latinos when bias is endemic in this government, in this system. Bias is endemic in the Police Department, bias is endemic in the D.A.'s office. They will process female complaints at a lot higher rate than male complaints, they will turn away male complaints. And I'll give you an example of two breaches of Federal Law today.

There's a system called the NCIC system for reporting missing children. The law says, the Federal Law says you must enter that information within two hours of receiving the report, two hours. I've been trying to get those reports in for two years. So I went out of my way today to inform a lot of individual players and agencies to enter this information today. Even had conversations with the Victims Center, so before you refer me there, let's talk about that. So the Victims Center did nothing about it. They were concerned about invalidating my complaint, they weren't concerned with forwarding the Federal Law and the complaint. That was the Victims Center. And I had long conversations with them about it, but they did nothing to follow the Federal Law.

So we have big problems in Riverhead Town that did not follow this procedure, would refuse to enter the information into NCIC. The East End D.A.'s Office refused to enter that information into NCIC. I gave them written notice today. Why? Because I spent a little bit of time in Federal Court today, and I'm going to have a whole new round of Federal lawsuits against the players as individuals, not just as agency employees, because they're breaking Federal Law. Now, I have no more patience for this. My kids have been abducted for two years, and I've been watching all kinds of gender bias way before that in terms of processing female complaints, but ignoring male complaints, ignoring them, turning them away. So now we're just going to go up the ladder, Federal Court, we'll see what's next. I'm not waiting anymore. I'm not waiting like this other gentleman. You get determined, put on to Victims Services to be re-victimized by being ignored. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

We don't have anymore cards. Does anyone else that's in the audience that hasn't filled out a card, would like to speak? Yes, sir.

**MR. TODD:**

Yes.

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Please state your name for the record.

**MR. TODD:**

My name is Mel Todd. I'm actually a -- I'm a survivor of bias crime and hate crimes. I don't really have anything prepared to say, but I understand the frustration of these people, and I understand the distrust of you, not you, of your panel. Your panel represents Levy and it represents -- and my

experience, from going through prior hate crimes in my life, I've survived, like I said, there is nowhere to go. There is nowhere for the victim to go. There is nowhere -- right now, the victim has to -- there's no one, there's nobody to go to, there's no person to go to. Even going to you would make the victim afraid, because he would lose his job if he complained to you about his -- something happened at work or something that happened in his community. He would be -- his neighbors would disown him, they would put him out, they would make his life miserable.

So the only thing I could say is I didn't even know who the Task Force was, is that -- you have a big job on your hands and I hope that you don't take the political part of it and go with what Levy wants you to do, but I think if you don't, you won't be on his Task Force very much longer. I don't know -- I haven't followed Mr. Levy very much, but I -- what I did hear of him, he sounds like a -- he sounds like someone who is a hate monger. He sounds like he builds up hate. He makes -- he takes the majority of people that are his voters and goes to the side makes it more favorable, which is anti-immigrant. I'm -- as a minority, I can't really say that he said anything anti-black, but, you know, if you go against the immigrants, they're the new blacks of 2007, you know. They're where we are in the 1950's.

So I can just say there is nowhere for the minority or -- for minority to go even if he does file a hate crime. Where does he go? He goes to the police, he goes through the court system, he goes to -- he goes to Human Rights Commission. Five years he has to wait why he made that complaint. Five years he has to wait until that process -- in the meantime, he has to go back to work, back to his community with them knowing that he made a complaint, he made a complaint about race. So what happens in those five years when that person setting there and he's going through this -- he has to feed his family. He knows he doesn't want to lose his job, but for five years he knows that they know that he made the complaint, and for those five years he -- I mean, corporate -- the corporate culture is -- now is let's not change -- let's not change it, let's make it -- let's get rid of the problem, and the problem is the person who makes the complaint, instead of solving the problems.

Now, in my opinion, your job is to -- when somebody comes to you go out there and find in the community, take the individual, tell him where to go. Tell him -- give him some hope and give him some -- give him a feeling of security that he has a place to go and that you're not going to take his complaint and just fluff it off, and he's going to go back to work, he's going to go back to his community and you're not going to keep track of him. Your job is to keep track of him. I think your job should be to keep track of him. If you don't keep track of him, like this Spanish guy said before, he'll be lost into the world of discrimination and bias, and deported, and he'll lose his job.

You know, I'm a survivor, so I'm here to tell you that I made it, but I'm going to tell you, it was hell. If I didn't have enough money to survive, I wouldn't be here. You know, you've got to get a lawyer, you've got an unfunded -- you've got a Department of Human Rights that has no money. I mean, you go in there and they've got used desks. I mean, why it isn't -- why isn't somebody giving them some money to fight these causes?

EEOC, politically -- a politically planted corporation -- I mean, organization, it's all political. And I can only -- I can only speak as a survivor in saying that it is my wish and my hope that you, as a minority, and who has suffered a bias crime, or have been subject to what it feels like to be discriminated against, treated differently, that you -- not for your political gain or to make Mr. Levy happy, but do it for yourselves and make sure that each one of your members is doing their job. If they're not doing their job, kick them off. Put somebody in there. Put some more minorities on there. Put some more Spanish people on there. And we know that, like Mr. Reecks said, you know, I don't know Mr. Reecks, but I thought I'd see him one time in my life, I never saw him, is that the bias crimes, the laws are what's wrong. I mean, he can only go by the letter of the law and I know that. The laws are wrong. I mean, somebody has to change the laws. If a person can do swastikas and hoods, and so forth to the next, so that's not a crime, what is a crime, besides, you know -- and, so they basically have to kill you in order for you to consider it a crime, or beat you up, you know.

So that's all I have to say. I just -- I just want to see you guys stay proactive, stop being political, stay on task, and if they don't do the job, kick them off.

*(\*Applause\*)*

**CHAIRMAN GREGORY:**

Is there anyone else that would like to speak? Only once. Okay. Before we adjourn, our next meeting will be October 6th, 5:30, at the Brentwood Campus of Suffolk Community College. So, if you have -- if you'd like to make the journey the other way, up Island, as I hear you, as you refer to it as, we'll be there. That would be our last scheduled Public Hearing, so, please, we ask that you pass the word out to family, friends and associates, so that we can have an informative last Public Hearing. All right. Thank you for coming out, and thank you for your patience.

***[THE HEARING WAS ADJOURNED AT 7:44 P.M.]***

***{ } INDICATES SPELLED PHONETICALLY***