

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

Hate Crimes Task Force

Minutes

The Suffolk County Hate Crimes Task Force Meeting was held at the William H. Rogers Legislative Building in Smithtown, New York, on Tuesday, October 6, 2009 at 3:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Leg. DuWayne Gregory, Chairman
Laura A. Ahearn
Reynolds E. Hawkins
Dr. David Scott Kilmnick
Chief Inspector Ty Mojica
Rabbi Steven Moss
Renee Ortiz
Reverend JoAnn Barrett
Reverend Roderick Pearson
Det. Sergeant Robert Reecks

MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE:

Candido Crespo
Mohsen Elsayed

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Maxvel Rose, Aide to Legislator Gregory.
Kara Hahn, Director of Communications/ SC Legislature
Minister Thomas Humphrey Sr., Long Island Mens' Center
Sean Bergen, News 12
Giovanni Mata, Hispanic Advisory Board
Irma Irasco
Paul Kirwin
Waldemar Candelario
James Garcia
Isabel Sepulveda
Edwin Roldan, LI Immigrant Alliance
Ted Hesson, Long Island Wins
Osman Canales
Henry Terry
Sonia Palacio-Grottola
Francisco Hernandez
Matt Newborn
Peter White
Abby Litman
Kelley Stanford
MaryAnn Slutsky
Patrick Young
Phil Ramos
Peter Fontanes
Andrea Callan
Michael O'Neill
Berta Cevallos
All other interested parties

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Gabrielle Skolom, Court Stenographer

[The meeting was called to order at 5:49 P.M.]

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Good evening, everyone. My name is DuWayne Gregory. I am the Suffolk County Legislator for the 15th District and chairman of the Suffolk County Hate Crimes Task Force. I just want to take a second to introduce our members present as of right now. To my right, we have Dr. David Kilmnick; we have Inspector Ty Mojica; Renee Ortiz. To my right, Laura Ahearn from the Victim Crimes Center. We have Reynolds Hawkins. We have Detective Sergeant Reecks from the Hate Crimes Bureau. We have Alex Gutierrez, Chairman of the Hispanic Advisory Board.

So good evening. Thank you for coming out tonight. This is our fourth scheduled public hearing. We may have more, but as I just stated this is the fourth scheduled meeting, so we welcome you here. We welcome your input. We look forward to your dialogue that we have tonight.

I just want to quickly thank people here from the Suffolk Community College: Mr. Whitton and Carol Rutigliano for having us and hosting this event. This is a very important issue as we all have seen in Suffolk County, so it's important that we have a venue that is receptive and open that we can have access to. We have another member who just arrived; that's Reverend Pearson.

At this time, we would like have a presentation lead by Detective Sergeant Reecks, which is what we generally have done, and it's going to go over what the law is or what the law is pertaining to hate crimes. So at this point, we're going to hand the mike over to Detective Sergeant Reecks.

DET. SERGEANT REECKS:

Good evening. Good evening. Can you hear me?

[Affirmative response from audience]

That doesn't mean that discussion cannot go further than a hate crime. It just means we're try to give you an idea what we're talking about when we're talking about hate crimes. It's a very short presentation, so bare with me, please.

First thing we need go do is quickly put a formula together to give you an idea what a hate crime is. There's a lot of beliefs out there; there's a lot of thoughts of what a hate crime might be; however, as far as the penal law is concerned, there are categories and boundaries, obviously, that we have to abide by. The first thing I need for a hate crime to happen or be investigated as a hate crime is I have to have a criminal offense: A misdemeanor, a felony, anything in that category, I have to have a crime. If I don't have a crime, I can never have a hate crime. Most crimes require the who, what, when and where. Guy goes into a bank, he robs the money, runs down the street, and that's basically a robbery.

But a hate crime, I need the why part: Why did that person do what he did? And that requires an intense investigation, and we have to find a motivation as to what was the driver behind the fact that this person did what he did or why he did it. If I get both of those into the formula and I can put the package together right way, we will deem it a hate crime. There's lot out there that says it should be a hate crime, it might be a hate crime. I have to work with it in the category of the law. Motivation is that fifth 'W' that we talk about, the 'Y' part. Without that motivation, it's not going to be called a hate crime. The intent could be for something else. And I guess my best example of that is a black guy and a white guy are fighting out here in the parking lot, names are being said; however, the investigation winds up that they are fighting other a girl. That is not going to be a hate crime. That is going to be some type of assault. We'll do the investigation, but because the person was African-American and the other person was Caucasian does not automatically make it a hate crime.

So who commits hate crimes? Well, again, there's a misconception out there that only white people can commit hate crimes and only black people can be victims of hate crimes, but it's clear that these two individuals do not commit hate crimes. It's not in your DNA. You're not born with a hate crime element. You have to be taught that somewhere down the line, whether it's the environment you're in, home, school, the neighbor, whatever the case may be, you have to learn to hate like you have to learn to walk, you have to learn to drive, you ever to learn to hate. So the offenders are from all races, religions, backgrounds; however, the group we deal with -- we and the law enforcement deal with, are between the ages of 13 to 19, and this statistic has been holding true pretty much holding true nationwide. That's the group we're dealing with on a regular basis. And certainly, the incident we had in Patchogue fit right into that category of 13 to 19.

So getting back to the law, New York State says hate crimes or violations of law committed against individuals or property based on the belief or perception regarding -- now, in 2000, we had a hate crime legislation in New York. Prior to 2000, we didn't have a hate crime legislation. We finally got assigned into law in 2000, and they made certain categories protecting groups and they are as follows: Race, color, national origin, ancestry, gender, religion. We also have religious practice, age, disabilities and sexual orientation. Those are the categories outlined in the New York State Penal Law for a hate crime. It's a lot of categories, a lot more than we had in 1999. Certainly we can add more to them, and certainly more laws are coming into effect as we speak.

And it says, "Regardless of whether or not the perception or belief is correct." Well, what does that mean? Well, prior to the hate crime legislation, we had to have the separate parties. We had to have someone being Jewish to have a swastika be deemed a hate crime. We had to have someone African-American to have a noose be a hate crime. No longer. New York State law says that the belief or perception is they have done that because of who they thought they might have done that to -- that's a lot of words -- it could be a hate crime.

The other part of the hate crime statute is that it elevates the severity of the charge, so when someone is charged with a hate crime, at sentencing time, once convicted, they are going to be bumped up a degree as far as the element of law is concerned. So an 'A' misdemeanor will become an 'E' felony. An 'E' felony will go up to a 'D' felony. It increases and enhances the sentencing purposes just like robbery. If I snatch a chain off your neck, that's one degree of robbery. If I take my weapon out and point it at you, it's a higher degree of robbery. So it would require a larger sentence, and that's what hate crimes do.

New York State Penal Law, there's a problem in -- it's not a problem, but certainly it can be improved. There are specified offenses that can only be called hate crimes, and these are the specified offenses.

[Indicating a slide on the projector.]

That's it. That is not all of New York State law. Gang assault is not there, conveniently. Gang assault, as far as I'm concerned, should be a hate crime whether it's Hispanic on Hispanic, Black on Hispanic, they are targeting that person because of who they are.

[Rev. Barrett entered the meeting.]

Domestic violence, I believe Assemblyman Eddington had introduced a bill into law that will make domestic violence against females possibly a hate crime. It's way down the road. It's not happening imminently, but it is happening. Aggravated harassment in the second degree, it's a misdemeanor. It's been elevated already from the harassment section. It has been elevated because it addresses the racial or religious aspect of the crime. If you communicate by any electronic means, and in today's world, we're talking about e-mails, text messaging, whatever the case may be, and it has threats involved, we could possibly make it a hate crime. If you shove, kick or push somebody, and where do we get that a lot of? The school busses, playgrounds -- push,

shove, kick because of who you are. It could be a hate crime, or who you could perceive it be, it could be a hate crime.

Aggravated first degree has been enhanced in 2006 and in 2008. What has happened is prior to 2006, the only section of aggravated harassment first degree was damaging a house of worship more than \$50. That was it for aggravated harassment first degree. It's an 'E' felony.

In 2006, because of groups -- advocacy groups, law enforcement got together with the various elected officials. They added the swastika as an 'E' felony. If someone were to take a swastika on the playground and they were out to intent -- to annoy someone, they are committing an E felony. It is no longer making proceedings; prior to that, it would have made proceedings. The problem we have with this law, it's almost unenforceable because we still have to prove the intent to do that. Up top, "Intent to harass, annoy or threaten another person because of race, color, religion, etc." There has not been a successful prosecution of that yet in New York State.

In 2008, because we had the swastika and we had a couple of incidents out in Suffolk County, we had a noose situation where the nooses were showing up in workplaces, and people were being harassed by the noose, so they introduced that into legislation and they tacked it onto aggravated harassment first degree. Now, the noose if it's meant to harass or annoy someone, it can be deemed a hate crime. Again, if you notice, the wording really didn't change much other than the word 'noose' or 'swastika.' It's the same law, just they replaced the word. It's better than what we had, much better than what we had years ago, so we've got to keep working and going forward with getting these laws on the books.

That's it for me. This is my card. This is my phone number. If anyone wants to give me a call, that's that number you call, and I'll now turn it over to Legislator Gregory. Thank you.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you, Detective Sergeant Reeks. Also like to mention at some of our public hearings, we've actually had some victims come forward, so we have some advocates from Laura Ahearn's organization, the Crime Victims Center. They are in the back. If you guys could just make yourself -- identify yourselves.

[Applause]

If you need to speak to someone and you don't want to come on the record, they are available for you. We have -- you can go outside or we have some other facilities that you can talk to them in private. We've also been joined by Reverend Barrett, who is on the Task Force, and Reverend Pearson. Today's hearing, as I said, is our fourth public hearing. This 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 the horrific acts of hate crimes here in Suffolk County. The rest of New York State, the County and even the world will know that Suffolk County is serious about addressing hate crimes. Myself and the members of the Task Force understand this is an emotional issue for many people, and we ask that you believe us when we say that we are here to help you and listen to your concerns. We just ask that in order to have a respectful and orderly hearing, the respect goes both ways, and we ask you to show us 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 and should receive input from the community as we gather information for our report. So again, thank you for coming out tonight and being a part of the process. We also have a Detective here from the hate crimes unit, that if someone would like to lodge a complaint that they would be able to do so during the hearing. Would you please stand up?

[Detective complies]

Okay. There he is in the back. Okay. So at this point, we will start the public hearing. Each person will have five minutes to speak.

[Rabbi Moss entered the meeting]

We are now joined by Doctor Rabbi Moss.

Minister Thomas Humphrey.

MINISTER HUMPHREY:

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Task Force for the work you're doing. I see Newsday had a nice article about -- we are now being focussed that sell -- some government is coming and look at us, so I think that's a good move. So again, I'm going to read into the record. I'm from the Long Island Mens' Center. I am the vice president of Long Island Mens' Center, and we are joined with our Latino brothers to fight this cause because it's needed.

"Climate of fear. Less than a year ago, on November the 8th, 2008, Marcelo Lucero, an Ecuadorian immigrant, was murdered in the Town of Patchogue, New York. The killing, police said, was carried out by a gang of teenagers who called themselves Caucasian Crew and target Latino residents as part of a sport they deemed "beaner hopping." It highlighted 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, 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 are 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 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 night; 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, posted their description as -- they make sexual overtures out of women. They -- the Hispanics, they urinate on the street, they defecate on the street, which is totally ridiculous.

Fueling the fire are many of the very people who are charged with protecting the residents of Suffolk County, like the report today in Newsday, the federal government is coming in to fight this case. Local politicians, law enforcement officials. At one point, the County Executive said that if he saw an influx of Latinos or day-laborers in town, "We will be out with baseball bats." Another one said that the Latino workers were to gather in a local neighborhood, I will load my gun before I shoot it, quote unquote.

The third publicity more undocumented residents that they -- that would be aware County Executive Levy, a high-ranking official in Suffolk County, is no friend of the immigrants, either. In closing, we are asking that -- to remedy this problem. We want, first of all, the local residents should talk to their [inaudible] on the interests of immigration. There is an abundant evidence that Suffolk County has contributed to this negative acts of conduct, and we ask the violence to stop. Thank you.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you.

[Applause]

LEG. GREGORY:

I'd like to also mention at this time we have an interpreter here, Berta Cevallos. For those of you who may need assistance, she's there to help you. And I'd be remiss if I didn't mention we have Assemblyman Phil Ramos who is here. He's in the back. Thank you for coming and participating. We have a representative from Suffolk County Legislator Rick Montano's office, Massiel, in the back. All right. And we also have a host -- you all know who you are -- of different advocacy groups, some organizations, human rights commissions, from LIIA to the ADL, from all over, all interested parties. I don't want to leave out any names. I don't want to start naming names and miss someone and then everyone will be mad at me, but thank you for participating and becoming a part of the process. I'd be remiss to mention -- if I fail to mention Colleen Ansanelli from the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, and it's important that we mention her because it's her organization that's actually going to write the report. Once we have our public hearings, once we gathered all the information that we need, it's going to be her organization who has experience actually writing the reports in Suffolk County. They wrote the report on the racial profiling a few years back and others. They are a credible organization, and we thank them for participating and being a part of the process.

At this time, we are going to call Francisco Hernandez.

MR. HERNANDEZ:

Good evening, Task Force members. I am Juan Q. Public, the unheard voice of many. I speak for those who walk in fear in this climate which gets worse every year. I'm speaking for the laborers, union and nonunion. For the innocent students who are getting abused physically and psychologically every single day. For the homeowner who bought a dream only to face selective enforcement. For the taxpayer, which gets denied protection of his or her rights. For the ones who are labeled spicks, wetbacks, beaners and illegals. For all those who were treated as second-class citizens and for all those who are so-called, quote unquote, anchor babies. For I, too, have been labeled many of these derogatory terms to my face, with my family, right in front of my children.

That's why I represent the victims because I, myself, am a victim. I'm also compelled to fight for those who I consider victims. Our teachers, our policemen, our leaders and our very own elected officials who have been bullied by the backyard bully who is keeping us both hostage, a kin to dictatorship, a terrorist to democracy. So I challenge you, Members of the Board, I dare you to go against the odds, push back when pushed, not defeat, but fight back. Seek within yourselves by the better angels of your nature. It is in the blood of true Americans to fight for freedom. We are fueled by fear. We do not adapt to its' environment.

I encourage you as patriots to stand up for those who bring fear. Do not run from it, hide from it, blend with it or try to defend it. It is our duty as citizens to fight for the rights of humanity. Let's not be mistaken here. This is a human rights issue. Hate crime does not only occur in a back alley out in Patchogue. It starts from the top of the County Exec's office right down to our school districts. You need to show us you're genuine, that you're not controlled, that you're different. There is no time right now for you to become defensive. Take this moment as an opportunity to prove your legitimate right before the public.

Words are just whispers that fade away in time. Action can change the direction of any moment repeated in history. There is a voice there that is still missing on that Board. The most important seat on that Board, we need a member on that Task Force who represents the immigrant. This country was founded by immigrants. Our Statue of Liberty is a symbolic demonstration for the world of our dedication to immigrants. This Task Force should have an ambassador that has a resume with the same dedication.

It is important to remember from where you sit that we, the people, need to feel this Task Force is authentic. Show us you're sincere. This Task Force should be our voice. Your loyalty should be only to the people and for the people. Make this be your task. Let us bare witness to that force. I leave you with a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King: "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience but where he stands in times of challenges and controversy." God bless you.

[Applause]

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you, Mr. Hernandez. Generally, we take a position that as a task force, we're here to listen to your concerns. We're not here to have a back and forth debate, but what I must -- I must address the concerns that was -- that Mr. Hernandez addressed. This is not the first time we've heard that. This Task Force was initiated, without any mistake, after the Lucero killing. Understanding that this County has had a history of racism, of hatred, of hate crimes. Documented or undocumented, the atmosphere is there.

Initially, we had 13 members of this Task Force. There was a member from the District Attorney's office, and after the legislation was passed, they had asked to be recused because they would be involved in a prosecution of the gentleman or the kids in Patchogue and other hate crimes. So after speaking to some of the members and advocates of the community, Dr. Valenzuela, if I could mention him, and others, hearing their concerns, I decided to amend the membership of the Task Force, and there's a woman here who has been sitting here quietly, and we haven't given her attention, but I have a bill that will be voted on, actually, Thursday at the Public Safety Committee meeting and for the general legislature on Tuesday, October 13th, and that's to appoint a person who is familiar, who has a background and an interest. They can be a speaking voice for the immigrant community, and she's right mere in the second row, Isabel Sepulveda.

[Applause]

So although she's not a member officially of the Task Force, we've asked her to attend the public hearings as her schedule allows, and she's been to most of the meetings so when she's officially onboard, she's fully abreast of what's going on and she can just jump in and join the rest of us. So I think it's important that the community has spoken and we responded, and that's what I think we're here for. We're trying to address issues as we hear them, and we ask that you not judge us as we sit right now but wait until the final report, and I think many of you will be pleasantly surprised, if I can use that word. Okay? So that's enough of my soapbox. Excuse me if I miss up your name. Waldemar Candelario. Did I get that right? My 11th grade Spanish teacher would be proud.

MR. CANDELARIO:

Good evening, everybody. I'm very please and happy to be here. It's an honor to be in front of this amazing panel. I just have an idea that I want to read here. Okay. My name is Waldemar Candelario. I live -- I'm a resident of Patchogue, New York. I was born in Puerto Rico. I know we are dealing with discrimination in our local communities. We, as citizens, should come together with ideas to fight for their rights of humanity. We are the voice of the immigrants and we need solutions right now. Many people are afraid to call the cops because they feel retaliation, and they need an advocate when they are being verbally, physically and emotionally very, very abused. Our first line of defense are the police officers who are there to serve and protect our communities.

Many hate crimes occur without being noticed. The main reason for this is the language barrier between the victims and police officers. It is hard for two people to speak different languages to give or receive information and proceed appropriately. Many people who commit hate crimes against immigrants understand there is a lack of communication; therefore, they take advantage of the situation.

I have a great solution for this problem. We need a transformation in our system in starting every police officer car. It is assistance used in courtrooms and in the medical field. Not only will this device transfer the information for the officer, the victim of the incident will be processed [inaudible] in the system. At the time, [inaudible] will determine if it's a hate crime or biased crime. We all need to get -- work together to find solutions to the problem. We are responsible to come with ideas that will enhance the quality of life. For -- therefore, let's work together, and yes, we can together. Thank you.

[Applause]

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you. Also as -- I feel like I'm a game show host. We're playing as we go along. We also -- a part of the process, just so that you understand, just like we amended the membership of the Task Force by making recommendation of Isabel Sepulveda to be a member of the Task Force. And also an important part that is already happened, going through this process, is that we have a full-time hate crimes victims advocate -- actually a part-time, full-time in January. So Irma Irasco, will you please stand up?

[Complies]

That's important because this is the first time in Suffolk County's history that we've had a person take on this position. So she's going to be trained up. She's going to be doing educational programs, community outreach to victim advocacy, and she's out of the Crime Victims Center and she has a law enforcement -- I met her, she did a presentation in my District, 15 years in the New York City Police Department, so she has a law enforcement background, so that's important as a victim that you have someone with law enforcement experience that's there that can be an advocate and someone that can also work with law enforcement directly so we can get that information we need so that we can thoroughly investigate hate crimes in Suffolk County. That's directly a result of the meetings that we've had in this Task Force.

Okay. Matt Newborn.

MR. NEWBORN:

Good evening, and thank you for all your hard work. I was out at your Task Force meeting in Riverhead. I found it very interesting and very civil, and I think you're doing great work. I'm against violence. I'm against hate. But as an attorney, I'm also concerned for free speech and preservation of the constitution of New York State and of the United States of America. Therefore, I'm against the expansion of hate crime legislation or for the term hate crime to be thrown about casually, which lessens its effect.

For instance, we heard about the climate of fear in the report that was made by the Southern Poverty Law Center. When the press speculates that an incident involving two different races or two different religions is a hate crime when it's really not, as was pointed out earlier by the Commanding Officer, I think that lessens the effect of what a true meaning of a hate crime is.

If you want to expand hate crimes legislation, come to some other states. I saw missing from your hate crimes legislation protection of the armed services of the United States of America. At the Riverhead meeting, which other people here may have attended, it was indicated that certain Latinos or Hispanics were being spit at which is terrible, but also people returning from the armed services who are fighting the war in Iraq or Afghanistan or elsewhere are also spit upon, but they

are not deemed a protected class under this legislation. So why not have it all-inclusive? For that matter, why not have uniformed law enforcement protected under hate crime statutes? Police are often spit at. If you interview correction officers in the Suffolk County jails, they're spit at by inmates. Does that make it more of a crime? Is that a hate crime for sentencing purposes?

There already are many laws on the books, which you have seen from the PowerPoint presentation. Why not enforce those laws to the full extent and severity of the law? If somebody is murdered, prosecute them for murder. If it's a felony murder, prosecute them for felony murder. What becomes the burden of proof when somebody is charged with a hate crime? Is it beyond a reasonable doubt? Do you have a right to a jury trial? What if you're falsely accused? You're now the victim because you're accused of a hate crime, and I've seen that situation with some of my clients. What if a client mispronounces somebody's name? Is that a hate crime? What if the Counsel on La Raza, very important Hispanic-Latino protection group known as The Race -- what if there was white group that was called The Race? What if -- is that a brown supremacist [sic] movement instead of white supremacist movement? Let's think about everything equally here.

On a final note, in Riverhead, it was the -- the UN happened to be in New York at that time, and I thought of statements the emperor of Ethiopia made in 1963 to the United States -- the UN conference there many, many years ago, and I'll read part of it. His speech called for equality among all without regard to race, class or nationality of his cry for peace. This particular was immortalized in a Bob Marley song: "That until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned; that until there are no longer first-class and second-class citizens of any nation; that until the color of a man's skin is of no more significance than the color of his eyes, there will be war; that until a basic human rights are equally guaranteed to all without regard to race; that until that day, the dream of lasting peace, the world's citizenship and the rule of international morality will remain but a fleeting illusion to be pursued but never attained."

And I thank you for your consideration. I think I'm the minority here because I'm the only one who's spoken out against hate crimes out of here and I think everybody in Riverhead, and I am, as I said, for protection of the United States constitution and against all crimes. Thank you.

[Applause]

LEG. GREGORY:

Peter white.

MR. WHITE:

Good evening, everybody and Members of the Panel, and thank you for having me. My name is Peter White, and I hope to be able to shed something positive -- can you hear?

[Affirmative response given from the audience]

-- as far as young people in Suffolk County may go. I'm a recently retired teacher and attorney, but I consider myself, first and foremost, a practicing teacher. I taught for 36 years, 31 of them in Northport High School. I'm currently the director of a not-for-profit group called Friends of Student for 60,000, Incorporated. It's kind of an alumni and adult version of what these young ladies here are representing, the Northport High School club, Students for 60,000, which is now about 22 years old. I was with the club as an advisor from '87 to '08.

It may sound like an odd name for a high school club, but at the time, there was 60,000 homeless people in New York City, and the students decided to galvanize and do something about poverty. They started small, and eventually 12 kids going to the city to visit shelters turned into -- now, there's about 300 kids, and they raise about \$175,000 a year and they do work on Long Island, New York City, throughout the United States. These two young ladies just came back from New Orleans. They spent eight days with a Katrina group, Africa and chiefly Nicaragua.

The mission of the Students for 60,000 is rooted in the New York State constitution, which is alluded to, I guess, Article 17. If you're not up on that right away, it was put in in 1938 and says -- it's where all the right to shelter cases come from -- the aid, care and support of the needy are public concern and shall be provided by the State, and that is very mandatory language that requires us to be involved with the concerns of poor people as a State, and as teacher in a State school, I thought that was part of my job.

Since 1987, the Students For 60,000 raised over a million and a half dollars. About a half million of that went locally to various soup kitchens and outreach centers between here and the city, and about a million dollars went towards the very unique Nicaraguan Project. This project -- now, I'm going to get into some specifics, but it does provide young people with very important opportunities to have direct contact with people who are different from themselves, people who are poor, people -- Northport is about 95% white -- people who are -- in Nicaragua, anyway, and Africa, as far as the non-white, I never saw any white people there; and to have contact with people in all races and religion and ethnic backgrounds. The activities of the club are rather far-reaching. Since 1990, we have run over 45 trips to Central America, 1500 students have participated, only 500 adults. These are not vacation trips at all. They're very real, and they're very meaningful, and they address -- let's just call it substantial life and death issues. We don't stay in hotels. Students are divided into groups and stay out in camp posts and work side-by-side with the poorest people in the hemisphere, except perhaps {Navy}, building houses, schools, work projects, distributing supplies, eating the people's little simple diet of rice and beans and tortilla. There are no snacks, no cell phones, no iPods, no TVs, no nada; and all of the kids come back basically saying, "I didn't have a thing that I'm usually used to, Mr. White, and I had the best week of my life."

The poor benefit greatly when kids can raise a million dollars and tons of supplies for people who are shoeless and roofless. However, I believe -- and they'll bear me out when their moment comes in a moment -- that they, these two young ladies that are going to follow me, I hope, are the real beneficiaries because the student participants and the adult participants who have these kind of authentic learning experience where they can test their language skills, but more than that, really see people who are two hours from Miami. These are the people who maybe haven't made it here. Nicaraguans have a tough time getting here because they just can't get here. It's a hundred dollars, for a passport and our government wouldn't even give any of them a visa. So we try to bring Nicaraguans up; I would say more than half the time, we're unsuccessful for a little one-month visit. They learn decision-making, economics, organization, leadership, but most of all, they learn about others.

[Buzzer sounds]

And I would believe that these young ladies and the hundreds like them would be the least likely to go out and commit a hate crime. They probably, more or less, tend to abhor hate crimes. When they go off to college, so many have begun organizing -- is that beep saying I'm five minutes?

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Yes.

MR. WHITE:

Sorry. I'm a teacher. I was used to doing things in, like, 46 minutes.

[Laughter]

So one more minute, if that's okay, because maybe one of them are like -- and maybe some of you heard Our Lady -- I'm stealing your time -- one of the churches in Centerport, Long Island, Father Ryan -- Monsignor Ryan, came on one of our trips in 2000. He started the Nicaragua Project in his church. I believe it's the only church. I know the diocese has a project for the Dominican, but Our Lady Queen of Martyrs runs about four or five trips a year: American University, Harvard, Miami-Dade, SUNY Binghamton, SUNY New Paltz, Emerson College, University of Colorado, Fordham

-- I can think of about 15, 20 colleges that now have very active programs spawned from this high school group.

I heard the name of Mr. Lucero a few times. I don't know if you know that -- you wouldn't know. They do private work, and they don't really expect to get big plaques or -- a big plaque for it but as soon as that tragic killing happened last year, they raised \$1,000 and half went to the Lucero family and the other half to {Oncomoja}, which we went out and directly put bread in his hand.

So this is Abby and Kelly. They're high school seniors. I've known them for the last three years, and I'd like them to share what's in their hearts, and I think they have a proposal to make that may, I hope, shed something positive for your report as far as young people in Suffolk County go. So that's all I want to say since I already went over the time I have.

[Applause]

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Thank you for not giving us homework. Abby Littman.

MS. STANFORD:

My name's Kelley.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Kelley Stanford?

MS. STANFORD:

Yes. I'm a senior at Northport High School, and I have grown up in Suffolk County my entire life -- for most of my entire life, and I was shocked to find out that it's been rated one of the most violent counties in the country as far as hate crimes go because I have grown up in a school district that cultivates a healthier understanding of all people and especially in high school. This idea has been put in my mind. Whether it be like my honor society's senior citizen prom that's given me a better understanding of the elderly people in my community. Being a part of A Midwinter Night's Dream, which raises money for ALS and more importantly involves spending time with the patients and getting to know them. That's giving me a different view of sick people. And more prevalent to my message tonight, my involvement with Students for 60,000 has really changed the way that I view the Latino culture, any people who are affected by poverty. I have realize that people are people and we all need to help each other, and finding out that Suffolk County was rated so violent, it really hurt me.

So I think we need to find a way to deal with hate crimes that are being committed in Suffolk County, and the easiest way to do so right now is through prevention obviously. A mentor of mine once said, "You can't hate or love something you don't know." And I think this goes to the root of problem here. People don't know Latinos. People on Long Island don't necessarily understand the culture of them, and you really need to give them a chance, and we're all people, and they have just as much -- just as much of a right to live here as we do.

Students For 60,000 is giving me the opportunity to get to know the Latino culture. Every Monday night, I work with the immigrants in Farmingdale to teach -- to help them learn English, and for the past three years, I've spent months preparing my trip to Nicaragua. I remember my freshman year, my first year down, I was shocked to go down there and eat and sleep and live with people in Nicaragua. I had never even seen anything to that effect, and I was just shocked, and now these people have become part of my life. I'm a senior now. I have friends in Nicaragua. I e-mail people on a weekly basis in Nicaragua, find out what's going on down there. We're involved with a community called {Huevo Montecer}. And if it wasn't for us right now, they wouldn't necessarily have clean water to drink, and knowing that I can have such a lasting impact on people is something that I'll never forget.

And I believe that it's this act of participation in learning that is the only -- one of the only solutions to this problem, and it's where I believe the potential for a solution to this problem in Suffolk County exists. Direct contact has caused me to see the world differently, and I, along with hundreds of other kids in Northport, spent time in Nicaragua, spent time with people of Spanish descent. I'll never ever, ever forget these lessons that I've learned in Huevo Montecer when I was talking with my team, or what I learned in [inaudible] having dinner with Panchita. People need to have direct contact to truly learn about any culture or heritage. We need to implement programs in high schools all across Long Island that cultivate this healthier understanding of all people that Northport High School has given me.

[Applause]

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Abby Littman.

MS. LITMAN:

Hi. I'm Abby Littman, and I'm from Northport High School as well, and I'm going to talk about something similar to Kelly. She just basically went over all her experiences that she's had with Students for 60,000, and, I mean, I found it just as upsetting that the county I lived in all my life has been rated one of the most violent counties pertaining to hate crimes, and I think this is, like, embarrassing. I think about it. It's atrocious. It makes me very upset to know that this kind of stuff goes on around me. And I'm here to say something about, like service -- I mean, learning through service, and I know that's been a methodology that's worked beautifully in my school, and I think that if we were to implement similar programs in high schools across Suffolk County that there would be a very positive impact on students.

And I'm not saying that Northport has all the answers because, certainly, we have our problems too. We're not perfect, and I'm not putting a blame on the school districts that have been involved with any of the things that have gone on around here, but I think that students very often form their opinions based on what goes on in school, what goes around their school. So I think that -- well, I just said that we should implement these types of programs, but I'm proposing a trip because I think that the programs need to be hands on. When I say learning through service, I don't mean raising money and giving it to the Red Cross and walking away. I mean going and, like, spending time with people in -- not only in Nicaragua, just any impoverished country or just even around here, there are so many places that nobody knows are needing help. Just to go there and experience what other people are going through, it needs to be hands-on. There's no other way. You can't just raise money for someone and give it away. You need to go, learn what they're going through, accept them for who they are, and legal or illegal, we're all people.

So that's what I have to say. I think there should be a program or maybe even a trip to -- well, I just said -- and I would be willing to be a part of that if maybe even one of you, if you would like to be a part of that. I know Mr. White, my old advisor, would like to be a part of that, so if anyone's willing to push that forward, I think that would be a great idea to maybe take one student from a couple schools on Long Island, and they can go back to their high school and implement the same programs at their own high schools.

[Applause]

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you, Mr. White, and you, young ladies, for coming out and sharing your experiences with us. It's obviously a program that works and has had an impact on you personally, and I think it's something worthwhile venturing into or at least looking into, so we'll be in touch, okay? At this moment, I'd like to mention there's another elected official that's walked into the room, Suffolk County Legislator John Kennedy, who is here today.

[Applause]

Next speaker is Assemblyman Phil Ramos.

SENATOR RAMOS:

Thank you. Today being the last day of the hearings, I think it's important that we sum up some of the things that have occurred and they're important to what your task is. I believe that your main task is to make suggestions. You have heard, I think, over the past several weeks, you've heard testimony from the community, a lot of repeated messages coming from many community members about the climate of hate, about elected officials promoting hate, about politics entering into a police department and how law enforcement is applied, and I think, you know, one of the things, most important, one of recommendations I made the last time I spoke, I would like to reiterate it since this, being the last meeting, if anything, comes out of the things I mentioned.

I ask that the members please consider a recommendation I made of the way hate crimes are handled in the Suffolk County Police Department. I was a police officer for 20 years, and I could tell you from the inside what happens, not to sound biased to try and confuse the issue or direct it towards that public that doesn't understand police procedures.

When somebody comes to a police officer and says, "I was walking down the street. Somebody shouted racial slurs to me, then they stopped me. They beat me up, and they robbed me." What happens is police officer gets called. Police officer goes there and says, "What happened?" He explains it. Police officer says, "Well, it seems to be biased," and he will the Biased Crimes Unit.

Now, what normally happens is political influence on a police department. Sometimes pressures come down and policies come down to minimize the number of certain type crimes that are reported. So some elected officials can either say, "Crime is down," or "No, I'm not to blame for hate crimes because look how we only had one for a whole year." Then it's the influence that comes on the police department that changes policy from a commissioner that's appointed by an elected official. And what happens is that police officer told, "Well, you know what? They were robbed too." So they handle it as a robbery. If down the road seems, it seems to be biased, we'll upgrade it to biased or biased crimes.

This, I believe, is a direct violation of the civil rights of that victim. A biased crime is a higher charge, and if after a week of investigation by that detective, he finds that it is, in fact, bias, now a week later you have to interview -- like I said, you have to find witnesses; you have to look for evidence that's now cold. My recommendation is that if it is a bias-related incident, in any way seems to be related to bias, it should be investigated as a bias crime. If they find it is not, in fact, a bias crime, then downgrade it. Give the benefit of the doubt to the victim, not the criminal. Give the benefit of the doubt to the victim.

That is my main recommendation of the many things that I spoke about. I don't know if this Task Force can influence elected officials who use negative sentiments to get votes. Certainly, a recommendation would be welcome. I don't know if it would be affective or is enforceable. I think the climate of fear has been reflected in the participation of victims to this particular Task Force. Legislator Gregory took a stand on this and brought something to light and created this Task Force to try and bring these issues to light, hear the input, and, believe me, the last things some elected officials wanted was more hearings and more dialogue publicly about the hate crimes happening in Suffolk County, and I applaud Legislator Gregory for bringing this to light.

But unfortunately, this is why, precisely why, what we see has happened here is precisely why we welcome a federal investigation of what's happening here. When victims of hate crime -- victims of hate crimes come up to this podium here and allege that they have been intimidated by Task Force members, that to me is just a disgrace, and I'm so glad that there are so many honorable community leaders that are not capable of selling out in any segment of the community.

[Applause]

I offer a plea to you to maintain the integrity, and I know we have that commitment from DuWayne Gregory, but this is a democratic process, and I know in the end whatever recommendations are made that will end up in this report will be made out of a democratic process here. So I hope that the influence or infiltration of those who still want to minimize or want to intimidate -- and we wonder why more victims haven't come forward -- if the very victims are alleging that they are being intimidated or discouraged, we shouldn't be surprised when it's happening. So I ask the good leaders here, who I really respect, who have been out there to please remain the integrity of your recommendations. Please put out a message. The whole world can't be the lunatic fringe.

[Laughter]

The leaders here will make a recommendation. Yet another body that will probably be attacked if they make recommendations to make real changes. Your credibility will be attacked. You know, this is why this community had to reach out to the federal government that doesn't enter into local politicians. But no, when you have a county where people are hunted down on the streets as if they were animals, and we have elected officials saying anchor baby is a legitimate term, what do you think a high school kid who is going to school with that child being referred to as an anchor baby, what do you think his image is of that person? We have to do something --

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:
Senator?

SENATOR RAMOS:
Yes.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:
Your time is up. I don't want to cut you short. I know you get fired up like Reverend Pearson here.

[Laughter]

SENATOR RAMOS:
And it's difficult to limit the time of an elected official. But again, as I asked you, please make sure this report has some integrity and that it reflects the true spirit of what you have heard from our community, and trust -- I know that Legislator Gregory, you will do your best to make sure that happens. Thank you.

[Applause]

LEG. GREGORY:
Next speaker is MaryAnn Slutsky.

MS. SLUTSKY:
Good evening, and thank you for this final opportunity to share my thoughts with you, and I would also like to thank you -- thank the Task Force for the very, very difficult work that you are faced with, and I really respect the hard work that you have to do, and I really want to thank Legislator Gregory for initiating this very [inaudible] Task Force.

Today, Newsday reported that the United States Department of Justice is aggressively investigating allegations of discriminatory policing in Suffolk County. Apparently, the Department of Justice had enough evidence to initiate a probe of Suffolk County policing policies. According to experts, these probes are rare and signify a situation. Commissioner Dormer says that he welcomes the investigation and that the Police Department has very comprehensive policies in place, but these policies don't seem to be working. Why, then, are so many immigrants, Latinos especially, complaining about being victims of hate crimes, about the way they are being attacked and those who are doing the attacking are getting away with it unpunished? That sends a message of "It's

okay to throw bottles at immigrants. It's okay to shoot them with BB guns. We're not going to get in trouble for it."

Regardless of how we feel about the presence of immigrants in our communities, letting those go unpunished who commit hate violence against anyone has made our communities as a whole more dangerous. No one should get away with that, and acts of hate should be called what they are: Hate crimes.

I live in Suffolk County. This makes me feel like I live in a place where people will begin to feel that they can take the law into their own hands. I don't feel safe, and I'm not even a target. Even though Commissioner Dormer says that there are very, very comprehensive policies in place, it sounds like he needs to revisit those policies because they are not working, and I don't point a finger at the police. I don't feel it's the police officers themselves. It's the policies, and these policies come from the County administration.

My hope is that this Hate Crime Task Force will identify the real sources of hate crime and develop recommendations that are practical and that will work for everyone in our communities. Thank you and good luck.

[APPLAUSE]

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Thank you. Patrick Young.

MR. YOUNG:

Patrick Young from the Central American Refugee Center, Caracen, here in Brentwood. Particularly happy to see Legislator Kennedy here. Just for those in the audience, this is the second of these hearings that he's attended. He's practically an additional member.

You know, I'm glad I'm speaking right after MaryAnn because your report is not going to come at the end of these hearings. It's going to come in the middle of a federal probe and at the beginning of the Marcelo Lucero murder case. So what you're doing is going to come out just when the national media is going to refocus on this case, on what's going on in Suffolk County, and you're going to be able to answer the question, "What is Suffolk going to do now?" You know, it was interesting that Phil Ramos pointed out, if you reported is an honest one, it's going to be attacked because I wanted to talk a little bit about an honest report that came out in July.

The Levy administration has established a record of dismissing any evidence of shortcomings in its relations with the immigrant community. When its own Immigration Task Force tried to path towards understanding between immigrants and native-born, he decided never to reconvene it. That was his first year in office. When his Hispanic Advisory Board disagreed towards policies towards Hispanic immigrants, he fired it in his second year. In July of this year, Cardozo Law School -- not on Long Island, not controlled by Newsday or the Hagedorn Foundation or any of the other bug-a-bears that he has -- when Cardozo Law School released a report on police ICE raves, which demonstrated widespread constitutional violations by ICE, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the old INS, these raves that were looked at included a series of raids on Long Island in 2007, both in Nassau and Suffolk Counties and earlier raids that occurred in the Hamptons and in Riverhead. In these raids, ICE agents arrived at houses with Latinos living in them accompanied by Local for County police. Ice agents entered the homes without warrants or other legal authorization and arrested non-targeted individuals: People who weren't on their list of people to arrest but who were Hispanic. The only people questioned were Latinos in the areas of these buildings.

While those arrested, and you may remember this from 2007, were identified as gang members, in fact, only about 10% had any gang involvement at all. According to the report, ICE used local police accompaniment because immigrants are quote more likely to open their doors if they see a local police car outside and therefore do not suspect immigration an immigration raid, and quote the fear

of local police leaders is that to the extent local police are perceived as working with immigration agents, particularly when ICE agents are illegally entering homes, immigrant residents will be less likely to cooperate with the police on criminal matters. When this report appeared in July, the County Executive issued a response which was not, "We'll take a look at this to see if we need to change our policies." He said, "It is a sad day when law enforcement officers are characterized as bad guys." They -- he doesn't have that problem in other characterizations with the Suffolk County Police, as we all know.

After the report was issued, the Obama administration suspended these home raids because of the constitutional difficulties, and I want to read what an immigration judge wrote this year or actually wrote two years ago concerning the raid at Riverhead. It is hard for me to fathom a country or place in which we live in which the government can barge into one's house without authority from the third branch of the courts after a probable cause finding. For all these reasons, I find that what is essentially a warrantless search in the meaning of the fourth amendment, meaning that the entry was without judicially authorized warrant, what's an egregious violation, and I suppressed all the evidence under these proceedings.

Folks who don't work for the County understand the problem of tying the police in with the immigration service, even threatening to tie the police in with the immigration service. Whatever the County's position should be -- these are the ICE -- the County Executive needs to not respond to criticism, and this wasn't criticism level to him. This was criticism levelled at the use of local police by ICE agents. The County Executive needs not to respond to that simply by attacking as people who hate cops. The professors and one of the people on the advisory committee was actually the police commissioner of Nassau County, Commissioner Mulvey. The County needs to address policies so that the police and the immigrant communities, police and Latinos, police and non-English speaking communities can work together to create a safer Suffolk County. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Thank you. Next speaker is Peter Fontanes.

MR. FONTANES:

How do you do? Let me first start off with I'm not from Long Island. My name is Peter Fontanes. I'm from Queens, New York, but I'm the State Chair of the League of United Latino American Citizens commonly known as LULAC. It is the largest oldest several rights organization representing Latinos all over the United States. I want to point out to you just this particular issue has become a national issue. LULAC is very concerned about the treatment of Latinos in Suffolk County. The reports that have been coming out and have been written by a number of organizations have grabbed our attention, and we're here to tell you that we're here to help.

We believe that you need some of our national ties and affiliations that we will provide this Task Force with resources that could be helpful in resolving some of the issues we're facing here in Suffolk County. I would also point out that I'm a member of the FBI's Hate Crimes Task Force Advisory Committee, and we've been meeting on a regular basis over the years the past two years I've been a member, and we've come out with some really good recommendations, and I would like to discuss with you some of those recommendations. In some of these cases, we have actually initiated and hopefully this year, especially in New York City, we hope to organize a couple of very successful programs that we formed and we believe will be helpful in addressing the issue of racism here in our state.

Racism really has no place in American life. We've been around too long. It's about time we got noticed. We feel that many people who deal with these issues forget that they use verbiage that lends to the atmosphere, that poisons the atmosphere toward a resolution. First of all, we wanted to tell you please do not use the word illegal. Undocumented migrant workers come here, and I insist that they come here at the invitation of those who want their gardens tendered, who want

their restaurant food cooked and served well, they want their homes well-maintained. They want their homes to look a little better. They want their children to be taken care of a little better. So when they come here, they came invited. Let's get that straight.

And that's the races of course -- all colors, all nationalities, all ethnic groups, not just a Latino issue. It's not just a Latino issue. I know I speak on behalf of all my Muslim brothers; they've had very difficult times since 9/11; and obviously the African-American community has had their share. This is something that we have to understand is a universal problem. It's not a Latino problem. We understand that. Consequently, what we've -- the mission -- let me talk about the one program that I'm excited about. LULAC has formed what they call the New York Good Neighbors Program of New York City, and what we're planning to do is to actually take a hundred people from a certain community, let's say from Spanish Harlem. Now, most people from Spanish Harlem very rarely visit Astoria, New York because it's a large Greek community. We're going to take a lot of people from that community -- young, old, in-between, businessmen, regular housewives and bring them to Astoria, Queens and let them spend a day there, and it's a day-long program where they get to learn the culture, and they learn about what "Pluto" is and what "opa" means and all these other things, and they'll -- the Greeks will know what "ole" means and what "pasteles" means and how the -- the great leaders we had, who Cesar Chavez was, you know?

And hopefully by educating -- and we're going to do this with different communities. It's just the first step, but we believe with the publicity, and we have a great program set up in terms of outreach, that when people learn about each other, when they learn about each other, they tend to like each other a little more. Most people are decent people. There's the lunatic fringe, and we have to deal with them, and we have to deal with them harshly. The criminal system has to respond immediately. The press has to bring the issues to the forefront in a way that makes sense so people recognize these crimes for what they really are and make sure that those who would use these issues as a political ploy would try to develop some sort of constituency that has no place in American politics.

We have to make sure we work very closely together, and that's my other recommendation, that we get the media more involved in trying to develop a type of a cross-cultural understanding. One of the ways we do this is by working with organizations like the free press media and by Juana Ponce de Leon, which is an organization of all the different ethnic newspapers, and we will be having a symposium of each of these communities to begin knowing about each other.

And lastly, kids learn racism from their parents, from the older people. And the media, "These young kids are crazy." No, that is not true. Most young people do not grow up being -- you don't give birth to a racist. You teach a racist, and I think we have to really start getting to the union hall, to the poolroom, to the bar, wherever that is and begin telling people, "You cannot teach children this type of hate." And this might be naive for some people, but I strongly believe that most people, when you confront them, just like Martin Luther King said, when you confront them with the content of the character, then you can get beyond the color of the skin or what gender you are or what sexual orientation or what creed or whatever ethnic -- so I thank you very much. I thank leaders like Linda {Ayalla} and Phil Ramos. I enjoy coming out here visiting Long Island. I would love, if you need to depend on LULAC, we have good members like Linda {Ayalla} and Jose {Quintana} who are here and myself ready to help you and help you to pass anything that you might need or give you some -- whatever resources that we may have at the national State organization. Thank you very much

[APPLAUSE]

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you. Michael O'Neill.

MR. O'NEILL:

Good evening, panel, and I, too, want to congratulate you for the effort and sincerity in which you have undertaken this enormous task, and before I get into what I want to say, I missed the

Riverhead meeting, so I might not have heard it, but this is the first time I have heard that a person outside of this committee was going to write a report. I find that very troubling. I think that -- is there any mechanism set up so that if you don't like the report, you can cancel it and write your own? Or is there any mechanism set up so that if you object to a part, you can have it excised? I think it's a very difficult procedure which you have -- are doing, and I hope you revisit it and write your own report because you have been to all four meetings and your three executive meetings. I don't think anybody else outside of this committee has done that.

I think what's indisputable and fundamental to this whole problem to the raison d'etre of this committee is that we tonight do not have an attendance; the District Attorney of this County, Mr. Spota; we do not have the Police Chief; we do not have our Executive, Mr. Levy; nor have we had them one time up here as if hate crime is not a significant and serious problem in this County. We cannot expect police to do their jobs when their jobs are not -- when their responsibility is shirked by those who supervised it.

[APPLAUSE]

The -- I hope that you will recommend that because this is problem has been so large, so significant that it will not be a one-time proposition, but it will be a yearly occurrence, and I hope in the years to come that you will expand it and have on more people from the community and less from Suffolk County government.

I think that there's no reason why the Chief of Police cannot go to every high school -- which I think are eight in Suffolk County, maybe it's nine --

MS. AHEARN:

It's more than that.

MR. O'NEILL:

Go to every single high school every semester and tell the students their rights. They don't have to take these slurs. They don't have -- they have to expect that their principals and their administrators will report hate crime. There has not been any reported from the schools, and even though they occur on a regular basis every semester, why isn't the police demanding these reports? What happens when someone walks into a precinct and the policemen writes down and then nothing is done? There is no mechanism set up by the Police Chief, and no policy -- although he said there's a policy, I would ask you to ask him for that written policy. What policies are there in place that police know that their work is being looked over, is being supervised?

I think the fundamental problem with hate crime is that it is so underreported. We do not understand or appreciate the extent of its existence. If only 15% of gay men according to the study -- a well-respected called the Stonewall study, 15% of gay men report hate incidents and hate crimes. So we know something is seriously wrong, and the number of people reporting hate crimes of the people with mental illness and people with disability and developmental disability, maybe it's even lower and their harassment and subject to being tormented and tortured is perhaps the greatest of any group in our country. I wish that our Police Chief and our District Attorney would go to about -- would repeat over and over again there is no small hate crime; there is no small hate incidents; and I think we will see a collective gathering consciousness about this that it has a terrible effect on our communities.

One -- my last thing I will make is that one big problem is this definition, this law that we have. To have the policemen discern the motivation of a criminal is probably -- is impossible almost, and it's the only crime in which the person must discern the motivation. In England, they have a very simple law. It says that a hate crime is any crime committed and the victim or a person who has witnessed it perceives it to be a hate crime. There, the shift is dramatically different. It's not through the motivation of the criminal, but it is to what is perceived by the victim. I think if nobody would consider asking a woman who is abused, maybe raped, what was the motivation of her

abuser, it's battingly absurd. I hope that this Body will recommend changes in the law to reflect realities and be sensible about it. Thank you

[APPLAUSE]

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you. Andrea Callan.

MS. CALLAN:

Good evening, and thank you again for this second opportunity to speak. I know by now you all know I represent the New York Civil Liberties Union in Suffolk County, and I actually wasn't going to speak tonight but I just wanted to go on record and make a comment with regard to a statement that another speaker made regarding the First Amendment as it pertains hate crime.

From the New York Civil Liberties Union perspective, of course, when we talk about hate crimes statutes, it's very important to ensure that first amendment protections are protected. We all know that under the First Amendment, just ordinary kind of hate speech, calling someone a name, swearing to someone, cussing to someone is not something that would be classified as hate speech under our hate crimes law. We all know that the only kind of speech that are not protected under the First Amendment are -- is speech that incites violence. The reason I'm telling you all this is because I know some of what you want to do in your report is to make recommendations on perhaps how the hate crime statute may be expanded, and I just want to caution you that, you know, some people may think that, you know, we should go further and classify what kind of actions should -- and kinds of speech should be classified as inciting violence. But I just urge you to very careful with the recommended -- recommendations you make in that regard.

Really, what we're trying to do is trying to reduce the tension and the climate of fear so that that speech doesn't even become an issue, right? So I hope and expect that your recommendations, you know, will not suggest that merely objectionable speech should be less protected under the hate crimes law. You know, this is not entirely about the expansion of the hate crimes law. This is more about the kinds of activities that are sort of overseen as being -- as falling under this law.

The other thing I just wanted to mention is something I think we've all talked about, maybe not formally in this sort of venue, but we've all kind of talked about it in conversations behind closed doors that we all know we live in one of the most segregated places in the county. We've all heard that Suffolk County, and Long Island in particular, is one of the most segregated places in the United States. I don't envy you. Your challenge is huge. How do we go about identifying the sources of racial tension and finding ways to root those things out in, you know, this segregated place that we live. If we can't, you know, live next door to your neighbor who looks different, speaks different with an accent, or parents come from another country. How are we going to really understand each other? I don't have answers for that. That's a very difficult question. I hope that that's something that, you know, not just you, but you along with the advocates that work here in this County can brainstorm on and think about what we can do to sort of alleviate those conditions.

Just as a final note, I mean, I know your task is very hard, and Legislator Gregory, I commend you for taking this on. This is a very important issue that we've all be screaming about for a long time. Again, at the first Task Force hearing, I spoke to you all about the legitimacy of this Task Force. You all know now how important it is. After some of the events that have occurred over the last several hearings, we know that the legitimacy is going to be tested, and some people are looking at this Task Force as [inaudible] of the County, whatever it may be.

I know you've tried to dispel those kinds of thoughts, but I do have to raise -- there is concern that one of the Task Force members here is not actually a Task Force member, which could really hurt the legitimacy of this entire Task Force, and I hate to name names, but we know Mr. Alex Gutierrez was not originally the appointee to this Task Force. It was, indeed, supposed to be Mr. Candido Crespo. From what we understood, Mr. Crespo was sworn in, had taken an oath, had signed everything that he needed to become part of this Task Force, and Mr. Gutierrez, it is not clear that

you have, and, you know, based on some of the actions that have come from you and the hearings that you -- before the Suffolk County Legislature, I hate to point fingers, but you are part of the reason why the legitimacy of this Task Force is being challenged. It's not my style to come up here and name names, but I'm very concerned for what comes out of this Task Force, and I think that's a point that really needs to be raised, especially in light of some of the actions that you had taken in retaliation allegedly against some of the people that spoke before this Task Force.

[APPLAUSE]

So just in closing, I just again want to thank those dedicated members of this Task Force for taking on this challenge, and again, you know that the advocates are here to work with you in whatever way that we can, and I do believe that you continue to reach out to us. Thanks.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you. I'm just going to take a second to respond to the concern that you had brought up. Yes, originally in the makeup of the Task Force, there were 13 members, as I mentioned earlier, one being the District Attorney's office, two community members, a member from the hate crimes unit, a member from a school district, clergy, a member from the LGBT community and also a member from the Hispanic Advisory Board and the County Executive. The Hispanic Advisory Board, it was their decision who -- they were to decide who would represent the Advisory Board to be a member on the Task Force. It is my understanding that Candido Crespo was that person. For personal reasons, he wasn't able to fulfill his obligations. The Advisory Board at that moment made a decision to have the Chairman of the Hispanic Advisory Board, Alex Gutierrez, represent this Advisory Board.

There was a letter of resignation submitted on behalf of Candido Crespo and also appointing Alex Gutierrez as a member of the Task Force.

So he is now an official member, although at the point that he made some statements, he was not, but he is now. I understand that some people have concerns about outside activities, but I ask you and I plead with you to just wait until the final product. Wait until we see what happens. We've also made a statement as a Task Force -- I want to read it now -- alleging from some of the incidents -- well, the incident that happened with the -- coming out of this Hispanic Advisory Board, and that -- this statement is something that we as a Task Force had voted on, and this was our official statement and response to that:

"The entire purpose of the Suffolk County Hate Crimes Task Force was to encourage hate crime victims to come forward without fear of retribution, and allegations that someone who testified at our hearing at Briarcliffe College was threatened by a County Official are deeply disturbing. If such threats occur, we must find out who issued those threats, discipline that person and make sure that it never happens again. I urged Governor Patterson to have this affair fully investigated so witnesses in the future can be sure they can tell the truth without fear or retribution from anyone."

We've all read today's Newsday. We don't stand -- we stand on the side of justice. We're not trying to impede any investigation, so I can -- we'll just let the investigation speak for themselves. That's it.

Berta Cevallos.

MS. CEVALLOS:

Good evening. My name is Berta Cevallos, and I represent the non-English speaking community of Suffolk County. I'd like to thank Mr. Waldemar Candelario for bringing up the language issues as a big problem between the community and the police department and a transformation of the system as one of the solutions. I agree with that. My experience in the medical and legal field has given me firsthand experience of the impact between cultural and linguistic barriers. I appreciate the consideration of the Task Force to address this and have services available for our community. Thank you very much and I appreciate the invitation.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Thank you. Those are all the cards that we have, but if there is someone in the audience that would like to make a comment, please come forward. Please state your name for the record so the stenographer can have it.

MR. GARCIA:

James Garcia. Hey. How you doing? My name is James Garcia. I'm a filmmaker. I am immigrant. I'm from Ecuador. You know, I think the keyword about the hate crimes issue -- the keyword is immigrants. The people who are committing these hate crimes is because -- they are doing this because they don't know the victims. They don't know the Latino culture. So I think -- somebody mentioned already this -- I think that's the key issue here, is immigrants. So I think for the young American people, it would great to show them how we are, not only Latinos, you know, also Muslims and people from other countries, from India, from everywhere in the world because if they know how we are, then these things will never happen.

I come -- I work with Americans, and it's unbelievable how some educated Americans, they have no idea -- they have no idea about my culture. So this educated Americans. Imagine now the ignorance in teenagers like the onces that committed the crime against Marcelo Lucero. They have no idea about, you know -- I don't think -- maybe they think we are different. They -- how can they treat, you know, these people like animals because they have no idea about these people's culture. So I think it's very important they -- I love the speech by, you know -- they left already -- Mr. White and the person that went to Nicaragua. Now that they know how the people from Latin America is, they would never do something like that, you know, because they know how similar we are. They know we are all humans.

It's amazing how, for instance, when I talk to my Italian friends, how similar our cultures are. We're Catholic, after all. So for me, I've been living in this country for nine years, and I'm still amazed, you know -- this might -- that -- that sound too rude -- too well -- but how ignorant some Americans are. I'm sorry, you know, but that's the truth. The ignorance of different cultures, sometimes-- Americans, they live in this wonderful society. I love this country, but I guess they have no idea of what is going on outside this country.

So for me, it's very important to show the young people of this country -- you know, to give them good images of the immigrants. I remember in the 80s -- you know, I am filmmaker, so I love movies. I remember in the 80s, you know, where all the Latino characters were gang leaders. Remember the 80s? Remember the movie Colors? So that's how the American people used to see Latinos, maybe, in the 80s, 20 years ago. So it's very important, I think, to show the young people great Latino men and woman so they know -- so they understand our culture better.

And it's very important also -- look, these attacks are against a Latino indigenous people because, you know, we have white Latinos too, and usually the white Latinos are not attacked because maybe Americans think, "Oh, they are white, so we're not going to attack them." Usually, the problem is against indigenous, you know, Latinos. So it would be great to show how great some indigenous people are, to show them -- to have more indigenous-looking teachers at their schools, to show and to have more people at the media, you know, that looks different so because -- I think that's a problem. I don't see that -- too many indigenous-looking Latinos at the media. I think that's very important. Okay. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you. Yes, sir, please come forward. State your name for the record.

MR. KIRWIN:

Hello. My name is Paul Kirwin, and I'm from Farmingdale, New York. I live right on the border of Suffolk County in Farmingdale. I spend a grew up in Glen Cove. You know, I've spent a lot of my

life on the Island. I have travelled around. I spent some time in Juarez, Mexico, and I have seen what real poverty is. People in this country, they complain, you know? They complain a lot, and they don't realize that they got more here than anywhere else in the whole world. People in this country who think they are poor, they are not really poor. They are rich. A lot of people complain about the wages. They complain about how expensive things are.

But the truth of the matter is, you got how many million undocumented people in this country? And they can come here and somehow escape the long arm of the law and buy their own houses, set up businesses without papers or documentation. A lot of people like to complain. Part of the problem is real estate prices and people influencing the real estate market, and it's making people feel very stressed out, and then they'll see Latin families, who work together and understand the meaning of community and helping each other, buying houses and then they are like, "Well, what's going on here?"

The truth of the matter is as Americans, we don't know how to work together. We weren't taught that way because our generations before us made a lot more money than they were supposed to because of the fact that the American government, along with Salvadorian government, Mexican government, the Caribbean governments, okay, they took advantage, and they made trade deals like NATO. All those trade organizations, they started back hundreds of years ago, okay? And it took advantage of people's hands for generation upon generation, much like slavery did in this country, except it wasn't shackled and chained, but it was influenced by political figures in those countries, so they manipulated their societies so we could have better lives here in America.

Now, we're all Christians or Catholics, whatever --

DR. KILMNICK:

No, we're not.

MR. KIRWIN:

-- we're all together under God, and it's a personal belief that everybody has to themself [sic], but the truth of the matter is Christianity was inflicted on people in an ignorant way, and now, when we should be welcoming each other and starting a new life here when we achieve a clarity mentally, we're just falling apart. And what we should be doing is lending hand-in-hand and really sticking to our principles here that this country is supposed to be based on, you know? The constitution emulates everything that we're supposed to be doing, but we're not. We're falling short. We're chasing the money. Everybody is chasing the money now. They are going crazy. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you. Henry Terry.

[No response]

Is there anyone else who would like to speak?

MR. HERNANDEZ:

[Raises hand]

LEG. GREGORY:

I'm sorry. We're only allowing each person to speak once. Osman Canales?

MR. HERNANDEZ:

I'd like to set the record straight.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

I'm sorry. What was that?

MR. HERNANDEZ:

I just wanted to set the record straight. They were saying about the Hispanic advisory board.

MS. ORTIZ:

We can't --

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

We're only allowing people to speak once.

MR. HERNANDEZ:

I just wanted to say that the County Executive is trying to destroy what you're trying to do here. That's how he's manipulating --

UNKNOWN SPEAKER:

Did you guys call Henry Terry?

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Yes.

MR. TERRY:

Hello. My name is Henry Terry. I'm a resident of the Village of Patchogue, 16 Branford Street. The first meeting I came and -- when you guys were in Wyandanch, right? I presented my -- our research to you. We've been researching the Village of Patchogue's illegal police force for, I guess, about five years, maybe six years now. I actually gave you documentation from the Division of Criminal Justice Services, which licensed New York State power and controls New York State power, and they -- which is definitive, they are the only people that have the power to call a person a police officer or let a person be a police officer. And after much investigation of the Division of Criminal Justice Services, we have documentation here that says, essentially, the Village of Patchogue was impersonating police officers when they call their employees constables.

Not only were they impersonating police officers, they were illegally carrying weapons. They did some kind of crazy thing where they fudged their permits with Suffolk County Police. They were carrying all kinds of police regalia. They marked themselves as constables. The purpose of this entire police force was essentially, one, to one pull over people in the Village, many of whom were minorities, many -- I think a disproportionate amount of minorities -- but also specifically to push immigrants and minorities and the poor and the working class out of the Village of Patchogue. That was redevelopment program that was supported by New York State grant money illegally. So essentially, the redevelopment of Patchogue itself used all types of government money, and also the fake police force of Patchogue, in order to attain these essentially unconstitutional illegal and immoral hands.

My concern is that you guys never contacted me. You guys never got back to me. I presented. I left one of the letters with my phone number on it in Wyandanch. I mean, it would be a very simple thing to call me up and say, "Hey, Mr. Terry, you know, could we see --" We have file cabinets worth of documentation. We have been on this thing for years. We have hundreds and hundreds of man hours essentially trying to get the information from, say, Suffolk County District Attorney's office, which is very well aware of this illegal police force, very well aware that this illegal police force deprived all members of the community, but specifically minorities and Latinos, proper police protection in our town and the Suffolk County police is very aware that Suffolk County -- Village of Patchogue's police force is illegal. They aided and abetted them. They thought it was a good idea -- "Hey, let's have black [inaudible] police force in the Village of Patchogue so we can take care of all the things we don't want to do."

We're restrained because we're Suffolk County police. We're restrained by our own disciplinary

procedures. We can't do the really nasty things to people, so let's -- whenever there's a situation, hey, let's give it to Patchogue police. They'll do it for us, they'll keep it under wraps, and with the Suffolk County District Attorney's office behind it and supporting it, along with Mr. Dormer, then it's a slam dunk. It's a way that they can essentially gentrify a town and not have anybody really know about it. Because it's using essentially public moneys to essentially discriminate against other American citizens.

So I'm a little disappointed that you folks didn't get back to me, and I have here tonight some more documentation for you. I have a stack of documents here. They are essentially a pile of fraudulent documents. In order to create an illegal police force, you have to have training. You have to have deadly force training. You have to have all these different forms of training. Now, the village knew they were an illegal police force, and they tried to get -- they tried to get Albany to, you know, train their guys and start-up their guys and stamp their guys as legitimate. And Albany kept refusing. Albany never acted, never came down and said, "Hey, don't do it," but they never accepted it, so what they did instead was they came up with these fake documents here. Fake training, they spent public taxpayers money on this kind of bogus thing where they would have their training inhouse in the Village of Patchogue. But they did -- in order to do that, they had to have other people -- for example, in Suffolk County Sheriff's Office, kind of train their guys, kind of give it that element of acceptability. They had to have Suffolk County -- I think the Suffolk County police involved with it as well. These police officers from the Sheriffs Department knew absolutely that the Village of Patchogue employees were not constables. They knew that they had no right to carry weapons because they were cops. They went through the particular process themselves. They created this training. They knew it was fraudulent. They knew it would be used for fraudulent purposes. They knew it would be used to make the public believe that the Village of Patchogue fake cops was real when it was not. Those are those documents, and I have one more letter for you.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay. Please wrap up.

MR. TERRY:

We're talking about -- this is the -- those documents were sent to the Division of Criminal Justice Services in Albany. We asked them to, "Hey, would you guys take a look at these documents and tell us what you think about it?" I mean, not that they were done, breaking out laughing about it the first couple times we called them. They sent us back this letter, which says basically these documents cannot be used to ratify or certify that anyone's a constable, just so you guys don't have to actually do that work yourselves. I don't expect you to know who is a constable and documents they needs. The Divisions of Criminal Justice Services, this is their job. They say these documents are no good.

At the very lest, I would think you guys would return my call. At the very least, I would expect you to call the Division of Criminal Justice Services, find out if there's -- find out if what I'm saying is true, all right? But what we would like from you is, we would like every record that the Village of Patchogue Constabulary created. We'd like all the tickets, all the summonses. We'd like to do a statistical analysis of them. I'm sure they are going to come up with a tremendous racial bias. There were two courts in Patchogue. There was the white court for the property owners. And there was the colored court for everyone else. It's almost like Alabama. It's really an outrage what's happened here. We've tried with three different [inaudible] to try to get these records here. Suffolk County judges have turned us down every particular time. It should be two seconds. You guys should be able to go in, file a FOIL, get every constable record that was made, get to the bottom of this, find out what happened here, find out that -- essentially that government organizations, our leaderships -- the leadership of the Village of Patchogue use this tool, a fake police force to essentially redevelop itself and essentially push anyone out of Patchogue that they didn't like. Believe me, they did not like the immigrants on the streets of Patchogue. Okay. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay. Just, I know we exchanged e-mails recently, and be rest assured that I had a conversation with Laura Ahearn and the Crime Victims Center. Calls are being made out to the State, and he does make some -- at initial blush from the information that he's given us, looks like he's made some valid complaints. So we're going to be talking to the State and other authorities to investigate Mr. Terry's concerns or complaints.

So we have Osman Canales.

MR. CANALES:

Good evening. My name is Osman Canales. I'm from the South Huntington town. My question is, as you know, most of the hate crimes are happening to the -- to undocumented people. What can you say to those people that are afraid to say something because they don't have documents and they are scared that police officer will ask for documents or will put them in jail just because they don't have documents? And also I think it's very important what you are doing tonight, educating people and giving information out to the community. I also think that, like, now a lot people aren't here because they don't really have time, so I think what you should do is, like, send more people to every town, every city, to give -- like hand out to people information about what you should do if they are victims of hate crimes.

Also I think you should also go to schools and speak to students about, like, hate crimes and to know -- let them understand what the issues -- what are the issues that are happening in the community because I think if you educate, like, young people, we will have a better future. We will have a better community in the future, so you should start with the earlier people, like with young people, educate them, and also educate everybody. I think that really important to educate everyone, no matter, because, I mean, we all need to stop this hate crimes. We need to stop hate crimes because we all need to -- tell everybody we all equal, no matter where you from, no matter what color skin you have. We are one. We are human, and that's what makes us equal. That's what make us a special community. So that's my comment. Thank you so much.

[APPLAUSE]

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you. That's it for our public portion. I just want to make a brief statement or comment about -- this is our fourth scheduled -- oh, Dr. Valenzuela? Okay. Our last speak, Dr. Valenzuela.

DR. VALENZUELA:

Good evening. I just wanted to make a brief comment. As many here have said, "Thank you, Legislator Gregory, and distinguished Task Force Members. Two comments. One has to do with the police. I mean, obviously the community wants to work with the police and the Long Island Immigrant Alliance is always ready and willing to work with anyone. One of the things that would be helpful from the Police Department is a declaration, written policy that the police will not ask people what their immigration status is and that is specifically for crime victims and crime witnesses. We are told time and time again that that policy already exists, but as hard as we try to find that policy, we do not find it. So hopefully the Department of Justice will lend a hand and find it then.

The other comment that I want to make is just to contextualize [sic] some of the testimony that's been give here and that's provided through the Southern Poverty Law Center, just look at the transcripts of the Legislature, Suffolk County Legislature, over the last few years, and you'll see some of the comments that were reflected in the Southern Poverty Law Center report in the transcripts of the Suffolk County Legislature, and that should prove to be very helpful to the job that you're doing.

And to contextualize again, the content within which hate crimes occur and the connection between the elements, all of the elements within the County, not only the schools who have been

scapegoated too often, not only the parents of the youngsters who are committing those actions, but the rhetoric, the heated rhetoric that comes out of the County Legislature over the last few years will provide some sustenance to the report that you're looking to compile for the benefit of our County. Thank you.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER:

Legislature Gregory?

[Leg. Gregory is handed a card]

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Okay. Sonia Palacio. All right. Last speaker. The last speaker. The bartender is flicking the lights. All drinks cut off.

MS. PALACIO:

Sonia Palacio-Grottola. I represent the National Association of Puerto Rican Hispanic Social Workers. I have been around long time, 48 years in Commack, still a segregated area, but I love Suffolk County. I'll never leave it. And I have seen changes from the days where we sat for hours like this illustrious panel is doing, fighting English-only many, many years ago and winning.

Today, which I have seen we have representatives that represent our people finally, and I'm so proud of the few that we have, but we are presented, and that's what we've been fighting for all these years. Where does it all begin? With the little children. If we don't go back into those schools -- we have 52 school districts -- I don't know, maybe more. If we don't start educating them about hate and not hating each other and not bullying each other -- we have a bill in the State of the Senate that keeps being kicked out because the Senators don't want it, indignity for all students we need that passed.

[APPLAUSE]

I would like you to put that in your report. It's a very important bill, and we've been fighting for 20 years to get that fixed. If we don't get the State Senators to back us, that's where it all starts: With the little children. The parents will learn from the children, like all immigrants do. We learn from our children. Thank you.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you. So that everyone has a clear understanding, where do we go from here? This is our fourth public hearing. The legislation calls for a minimum of four hearings. Among the Task Force, we've already been in discussions about having more hearings, probably on a smaller scale so that we can have a more intimate setting, if you will, so we can reach different populations of people, potential victims.

On October 21st at the Suffolk County Legislative, the William H. Rogers Legislative building, on Vets Highway in Smithtown, we're going to have a presentation by the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Anti-Defamation League -- I think they have confirmed -- as well as the Hagedorn Foundation. We're going to have them present. That's just one meeting of some more meetings. It was mentioned before that I have been in discussions with the District Attorney's office. They are certainly willing to come forward and make a presentation and talk about hate crimes. They only asked to recuse themselves as being a member of the Task Force, but they have no issue with coming forward to the Task Force or making a presentation. The Attorney General's office of New

York State has expressed some interest in coming before us, making a presentation and other organizations. We're working with the Long Island Immigration Alliance, local NAACP and others to come before us in various meeting times to be determined so that we can get as much information as possible so that we can input -- put it in to the report.

And to speak about the report, Colleen Ansanelli, not her, but the organization that she works for, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, I felt that it was important when putting this Task Force together that we have an outside entity that is responsible for writing a report. This has not been secret. She's been to the majority of our meetings because I understood the climate and the concern that the community would have and if they were an organization within the County itself, considering the perceptions that people have the County's policies and actions that a County organization would be responsible for writing a report. So to have an independent outside agency who has such as Criminal Justice Coordinating Council who has a history of writing unbiased reports, I felt that it was important that Colleen and her organization be a part of this process.

My feelings are that we as a committee, we as a Task Force, we have taken this information, and so far, we're looking to take more information in, as I've stated, with presentations to come. We're going to make recommendations to the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. I suspect it will be a back-and-forth report, but they are professionals. You know, they have done this type of thing in the past. They have all the data and things and the background to make it a professional report, report that all of us, including us as Task Force members, I believe, that we can be proud. I'm honored to actually work with them and -- given their history.

So I think, you know, in the end, everyone will be satisfied. Particularly given the information that we're going to be receiving. We're going to be receive a lot of information from nationally- and locally-recognized organizations. I think in the end everyone will be proud. We've already seen good things happen just during the process, and it's not even over yet.

So thank you for coming out tonight. I know it's been a long night. I don't know if tonight's House. I like to watch House.

[Laughter]

I'm sure anyone can find a number of other things to do, but we thank you for participating in this process, so thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

[Meeting was adjourned at 7:52 PM]