

**LYNN WARSHAFSKY**

**Director of Counseling  
Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center**

**Violence Within Gay and Lesbian Relationships**

LYNN WARSHAFSKY: Thank you. I want also to introduce -- sitting in the back row there -- Barry Levy. Barry is a licensed clinical social worker who works at Didi Hirsh Mental Health Center and has been very involved in the battered women's movement. While I am doing the presentation, both Barry and I will be open to any questions that you might have.

I've been asked to discuss violence in a general sense within lesbian and gay relationships. I want to note at this point that I'll be discussing domestic violence specifically, or battering, rather than other forms of violence. For purposes here, what constitutes battering is conceptualized similarly in the gay community as in the heterosexual community. Quoting from a book on lesbian battering, edited by a woman by the name of Carrie Lovel, battering is defined as "violent and coercive behaviors whereby one partner seeks to control the thoughts, beliefs, or conduct of the other partner or to punish the partner for resisting the perpetrator's control over her/him."

I feel that I need to preface this discussion of lesbian and gay partner abuse with the statement that raising this issue in the public forum is perceived as very risky by many lesbians and gay men. In the gay and lesbian community's effort to bring legitimacy to the relationships they face homophobic attack, misperception, misunderstanding, and so tend to be very protective of those things which might in some way be harmful to them as a community or to them as individuals. But I speak here because I think it's really important that lesbians and gay men be able to seek help for and discuss their relationships -- all components of them -- without feeling that their homosexuality itself will be scrutinized, but rather the behaviors and feelings that disrupt their family unit.

Domestic violence does exist in lesbian and gay relationships. Anecdotal evidence suggests that such battering appears to follow many of the same patterns as heterosexual battering. We can speculate, though we don't know that battering exists with the same prevalence in gay and lesbian relationships as in heterosexual relationships. In Los Angeles, lesbian partner abuse has been addressed within the community over the

last four years or so. Again, female partner abuse remains unaddressed in any organized fashion. For lesbians, most of the work on domestic violence has come from grass roots organizing and from lesbian/gay community agencies. Despite the efforts of these individuals, there is still a great deal of silence surrounding lesbian battering including silence within the lesbian community -- and it's a silence that is only beginning to be broken.

Efforts to understand the prevalence and dynamics of gay and lesbian partner abuse, as well as the couples' service needs, has resulted in surveys, needs assessments, research, and some level of direct service. Most of what we know comes from anecdotal evidence from organizations who provide direct services to lesbians and gay men. Additionally, lesbians who have been battered are starting to speak out and some of their stories have been published and that is the book that I made reference to when I gave you a description of what battering is.

There is still a lot that we need to learn. We need to understand the differences and the similarities between lesbian/gay domestic violence and heterosexual domestic violence in order to assure that our services are as appropriate and sensitive as possible. We can assume that those issues which are unique to the gay and lesbian community -- internal and external homophobia, coming out, struggling to maintain a relationship that has no legitimacy in the culture as a whole -- compound some of the problems that lesbians and gay men face. Both lesbians and gay men have difficulty identifying the violence in their relationships as abuse specifically, and have difficulty in stepping forward to seek help.

Battered gay men and lesbians may defend themselves and they may defend themselves more frequently than a heterosexual woman does in a heterosexual battering relationship, and sometimes defense is confused with co-battering or mutual battering which it is not. Disbelief and denial is not an unusual reaction for a battered individual. For lesbians, this may be exacerbated by the commonly held belief that women are not violent and that women do not hurt one another. Male socialization teaches men that they cannot or should not be victims. We can speculate that fewer gay men than women identify violence in the relationship as battering and then seek help. For gay men also the problem is exacerbated by even fewer services or resources directed toward their needs.

Theoretically, the shelters that are available for battered women would also accommodate lesbians who have been battered. However lesbians who have sought help from shelters have often experienced homophobia and sexual orientation discrimination. A battered lesbian may find it difficult to shelter her children if the biological mother is the battering partner. The battered lesbian has no legal right to take the children from the battering home environment even if she feels that they are also threatened. Some lesbians may utilize shelters but never mention

that their partner is a woman -- if you can imagine what that would be like to finally seek out help but not be able to identify the gender of your spouse. Finally, protecting the safety of the battered lesbian can present unique problems since the batterer --herself a woman -- can present herself as a battered woman in order to gain access to her partner in the shelter.

Lesbians and gay men have reported many negative experiences with law enforcement and thus do not tend to see them as their protectors, as a resource for them when they are in need or as people who will take their concerns seriously. In some cities, police file mutual assault charges when intervening in a battering situation, leaving the fact of partner abuse unacknowledged. I've heard about this from a number of different cities around the country and frankly don't know what the situation is in Los Angeles on this score.

Another problem for the battered lesbian is that seeking help could jeopardize their child custody.

I have one or two recommendations that I would like to make to the City of Los Angeles:

(1) It is recommended that that the City Attorney's Office convene a time-limited task force comprised of law enforcement, community agencies, shelters, and key individuals in the lesbian and gay community to examine the issue of lesbian and gay partner abuse specifically.

(2) It is recommended that such a task force gather information from agencies and shelters working with lesbians and gay men, from battered lesbians and gay men themselves, from law enforcement and other sources to assist the Los Angeles community in furthering its understanding of lesbian and gay partner abuse and the barriers to effective use of service.

(3) It is recommended that following input from above described groups that the task force make further recommendations on how to best help battered lesbians and gay men.

(4) It is recommended that the city support and encourage research which will help us understand the similarities and differences between domestic violence in heterosexual families and domestic violence in lesbian and gay families.

(5) It is recommended that the City Attorney's Office take reports of discrimination based on sexual orientation experienced by gay men or lesbians who have been battered and who have not been fairly assisted by law enforcement or the courts.

(6) It is recommended that the city assures that homophobia workshops are provided to law enforcement -- perhaps through a training for trainers, whatever the method, and that family courts and police intervening in domestic disputes be trained to be especially sensitive to the needs of the battered gay men or lesbians.

(7) It is recommended that the city support domestic violence programs designed specifically for lesbians and gay men, including education programs or community speakouts, through funding such programs in full or in part.

(8) It is recommended that the City of Los Angeles provide full legitimization to lesbian and gay family units in the diverse forms that they're constituted.

(9) Lastly, it is recommended that the city require all city agencies, including those funded in whole or in part by the City of Los Angeles, to formulate policies which explicitly state their intent to protect the rights of lesbian and gay families and treat lesbian and gay family units with the same level, kind, and quality of services and benefits provided heterosexual married couples.

To overview: Lesbian and gay partner abuse is a known problem among lesbian and gay families. While the incidence is not known, anecdotal evidence allows us to speculate that it probably has the same rate of prevalence in the heterosexual community as in the homosexual community. Further, we can assume that battering dynamics are similar in homosexual and heterosexual families, though the gay and lesbian experience will be colored by such unique factors and internal and external homophobia, coming out, and struggling to maintain relationships not validated by the culture as a whole.

Lesbians and gay men have faced discrimination and insensitivity by traditional social services agencies, shelters, law enforcement, and the criminal justice system, and thus may be much less likely to seek help from these sources.

Lesbian and gay men fear homophobic insensitivity if they come forward for help and such fear can leave a battered gay man or lesbian protecting his or her batterer rather than having to confront an insensitive and anti-gay system.

Legitimization of the lesbian and gay family is essential. Such legitimacy can be provided through domestic partnership laws which provide that lesbian and gay relationships constitute a legal partnership with all the rights afforded heterosexual married couples.

Changing attitudes -- as I think we all know -- is long term work, and it's important work. It's also important that city agencies, again including those funded in whole or in part by the City of Los Angeles, reflect their commitment to sensitive and accessible services through the written policies and procedures.

I want to also commend the City of Los Angeles Family Diversity Task Force for your work in seeking to understand the issues that we all face and for acknowledging that "family" as a social unit really encompasses a broad range of lifestyles and configurations. Thank you.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: Thank you very much. You covered a lot of ground and it was very well done. Questions. (No.) Do you have a written statement that you can leave for the record? (Yes.) The book that you mentioned, you mentioned the author but not the title.

LYNN WARSHAFSKY: Carrie Lovel edited it and it's called Naming the Violence, Lesbians Speak Out About Battering. I referenced it in this testimony, so it's there. And it is the only written work at this point on lesbian battering specifically.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: Good. Thank you very much. Sue Ridenaur, the Chair on the County Commission on Disability, is with us this afternoon, specifically to address some of the areas for needed improvement in public transportation. We've mentioned this briefly in some previous testimony, but we appreciate her presence here this afternoon to further underscore what a critical issue this is. So we appreciate you coming. Thank you.

**SUE RIDENOUR**

**Chair, County Commission on Disabilities**

**Needed Improvements in Public Transportation**

**SUE RIDENOUR:** My name is Sue Ridenour. I am Chairperson of the Los Angeles County Commission of Disabilities. I'm very happy to be with you today and talk about disabled people and the issue of public transportation.

Several changes in the public transportation scene have resulted in local jurisdictions (cities and counties) becoming public transportation agencies. They are now designing and developing and funding transportation systems which serve the general public.

The primary causes for these changes are:

- 1) reduced federal funding;
- 2) the availability of local transportation funds (LA County Prop. A); and,
- c) the federal requirement for an increased emphasis on utilizing the private sector in the delivery of public transportation.

Public transportation and delivery is a new endeavor for local governments. The previous experience with transportation has been almost exclusively limited to NONPUBLIC transportation programs serving specific segments of the population:

- 1) by providing services to alleviate the effects created because public transportation systems were minimal or nonexistent in some localities;
- 2) by providing service because a social injustice existed within the community -- the PUBLIC transportation systems that did exist were not accessible to people with physical disabilities. (And they have called this service the Elderly and Disabled Dial-A-Ride type service).

Now that the local jurisdictions are planning and designing and providing general public, how are they doing as it relates to serving people with disabilities? It appears that many jurisdictions have come to regard their segregated Dial-a-Ride service as an end unto itself -- thus,

disregarding the accessibility features on the public systems. The City of Los Angeles is no exception to that.

To give you some examples of their disregard:

1) The downtown Dash system did not contain a lift in the specifications until disabled people loudly complained over that fact.

2) The Fairfax Trolley, which the city claims is accessible because it has a portable ramp inside that the driver will take out and utilize, and push you up into the vehicle and then back down backwards (but it's so steep that it cannot be negotiated, even in a powered wheelchair, by yourself.

3) Another area is in San Fernando, Sunland, and Tujunga. The general public Dial-a-Ride system was developed with one of its primary features being the transportation of people in the hills and living away from bus stops, down to the bus stops so that they could get there. This system too was not designed or planned to be accessible and that was said that was because disabled people had their separate Dial-a-Ride service called "Val-Trans" in that area.

Rather than insure that handicapped persons may use public transit systems, as prescribed by law (and I have brought copies of my presentation as well as a recent Attorney General opinion regarding this issue and how the law applies to private sector contracting that I will leave with each of you today) it would appear that many local jurisdictions are in fact keeping citizens with disabilities from using transportation systems which serve the general public. Disabled people are being deliberately discouraged from using these public transportation systems by the continued use and expansion of separate systems which restrict usage and really are substituting for accessibility on public transportation.

Although the City of Los Angeles is beginning to expand the public transportation system to provide service to those who have not previously had public transit and to reduce the need to depend on the private automobile, it continues to erect unnecessary obstacles to the use of these systems by people with disabilities.

A well coordinated multi-modal public transportation system which includes elements such as rail, fixed route transit, deviated routes, feeder systems and shuttles allow for effective use of the system by people with disabilities -- and they are the very elements which make the system more convenient and usable by those who are not disabled, thereby reducing the dependency on the private vehicle and creating the well-utilized public transit system. As the City of Los Angeles develops such a system may they recognize that disabled people are a part of the riding public and

provide the access to each of the public transportation components in order for people with disabilities to attain the spontaneity of travel and the freedom of movement essential to further participate in the community family and function as productive members of their family unit.

Additionally, the City of Los Angeles should not JUST specify a lift on a public transportation vehicle but should also require that the equipment used for service has enough clear aisle space, adequate seating space, maneuvering room, and adequate wheelchair securements to accommodate the majority of the popular mobility equipment that is utilized by disabled people today. They must also assure that the equipment and the policies accommodate those who cannot, who can walk, but cannot climb the regular vehicle bus steps.

I'd like to move on to another issue which is not commonly recognized as a means of public transportation -- the public pathways and sidewalks provided in our modern urban setting. They are perhaps the most universally used means of getting from point to point over a relatively short distance. This holds true for disabled people as well as anybody else, and the most common problem faced by disabled people in downtown Los Angeles is the almost complete lack of curb cuts. The city needs to embark on a systematic program to cut the curbs at intersections and alleyways throughout the downtown area.

No matter how one travels to downtown, once there one can hardly go half a block without encountering a curb. Improved access to buildings and improved employment opportunities have enhanced the lifestyles of disabled people, thus making it more necessary for them to be able to move about freely. This necessitates an aggressive approach to making the public pathways accessible.

I'd like to thank you for the opportunity of being here and I'd be glad to answer any questions that you may have.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: Thank you very much. I again want to thank you for being very specific about certain deficiencies. It's very helpful to us.

SUE RIDENOUR: I tried to limit my remarks on transportation to those areas specifically where the city is involved in that delivery system.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: That was very helpful. I appreciate that. Are there any questions?

THOMAS FRANK COLEMAN: Good. I take it that you have already addressed these problems to departments of city government. What kind of response are you getting from, for example, the Public Transportation Committee of the City Council?

SUE RIDENOUR: I do not serve on the City Advisory Committee on Disability, but I am aware that several people on that committee, and other individuals and organizations have communicated with the city. I think that primarily the city felt that because some systems were operated by private sector enterprises the city did not have to regulate them on access. But, the Attorney General's opinion, which I have just received yesterday in fact, I hope will help everyone realize that privately run as well as publicly operated systems are public transportation -- and all of those systems must have the accessibility features on them.

THOMAS FRANK COLEMAN: Richard Smith, who is the President of the City Advisory Council on Disabilities, was here earlier today. He had told me privately that as far as the level of support from the city for their particular Council, that he'd been trying for a year to get stationery and the city still has not provided stationery. I'm interested in the differences in commitment to disability issues by the city and by the county. Are you receiving moral support, attitude support, as well as money from the county? Do you think that the city needs an official Commission on Disabilities, so that the status of the City Council on Disabilities is elevated to something with a little more muscle, so that and can deal directly and interface with the department heads, rather than having to go through the bureaucracy to get to a department head? How does your County Commission function in comparison with the city advisory committee?

SUE RIDENOUR: The County Commission was established by ordinance -- so it is official. Supervisor Edelman and I, several years ago, initiated the concept of a Commission on Disabilities, and it was formulated at that time.

The Commission is comprised of 16 individuals. The individuals must fit and fill certain categories so that all kinds of disability groups are represented. Fifteen members are appointed by the Board of Supervisors, each Supervisor nominates 3 individuals to be appointed. The 16th position is filled by the Department of Rehabilitation who appoints the individual who will represent them on the Commission. The ordinance spells out the duties of the Commission and it is primarily to advise the Board of Supervisors on issues dealing with disability. As a part of that, we are to work with the various departments on those issues and I have found them to be responsive -- I mean, at least, respectful.

That does not mean that we always agree and we often do take issues to the Board itself where agreement has not been reached within a department. For the most part I find that the departments do sit and meet and talk and listen, and I have seen many changes occur on a variety of different issues in that process and through that process.

We are provided staff as many of the other commissions of the county are, from an office which primarily is called Commission Services. Staff people share duties for the various commissions and they do primarily the letter writing and the secretarial type duties necessary to operate.

We are primarily, I would say, the office for disability within the county. There is no other separate office in the county. The city, I think, does have something called an Office on the Handicapped. However, I find that probably is to our advantage because all complaint type things, all issues that come to the county itself, do come to the Commission because whenever anything comes in, the Commissioners themselves actually review that material -- which may not occur with the system that is in place with the city.

THOMAS FRANK COLEMAN: That clears up the point of comparison. Good.

CAROL GILL: I just wanted to add that I think a demonstration of perhaps a bit of a power differential in the two organs is that -- as Richard Smith pointed out -- the violations of the Department of Building and Safety went on for a very, very long time. They were talked about and were protested and so on, and when it moved to the County Commission on Disabilities things began to happen, and I think that's a real important...

SUE RIDENOUR: Well I think one thing that did occur on that issue is that when the complaint was brought to us, that there were problems out there. The first thing that we did, after realizing the numbers of complaints, was go to the Board of Supervisors as an agenda item to ask for an investigation. So I think that in and of itself because at that time the Board said, "You know we do want buildings to be accessible. We don't know what's going on and we do want this studied and looked into." So I think that has made the departments much more responsive in dealing with us.

DUNCAN DONOVAN: Does the Commission act in any way as the Board of Directors to the Rehabilitation Department?

SUE RIDENOUR: No. It is just advisory to the Board of Supervisors.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: O.K. Thank you again for your testimony. We appreciate you being here. Jean Conger, Executive Director of Southern California Women for Understanding, is with us this afternoon to talk about domestic partnerships -- gay and lesbian couples -- and the agenda says "other lesbian issues," which I think gives you a great opening. Welcome, Jean.

**JEAN CONGER**

**Executive Director,  
Southern California Women for Understanding**

**Domestic Partnerships and Other Lesbian Concerns**

**JEAN CONGER:** First of all, I want to thank you very much for inviting us. For those of you who don't know it, although you probably do because Kathy Hamilton is secretary of our Board of Directors, Southern California Women for Understanding is a lesbian educational organization that has been in southern California since 1976. We now boast over 1,100 members and growing rapidly, and we're really pleased to have this opportunity today to talk about domestic partnership.

As you know, society benefits when its members form interdependent, socio-economic units such as the family, and although families have been described and defined in different ways throughout history, there has always been societal recognition and support of families. There's been the recognition of family needs and attempts to meet them and there have been economic benefits that have been given to families such as family discounts for health plans, insurance plans for families, tax benefits, tax breaks for families, etc.

I think the right wing has done a great deal to encourage that and frankly as a community, as a gay and lesbian community, we are very much in support of forming family units. Society benefits because there are people to take care of individuals and the burden is not left to society as a whole.

Gays' and lesbians' attempts to form family relationships also have a long history. Homosexuality has been practiced in societies throughout history but our relationships have no consistent history of recognition or support. There is a popular stereotype of homosexuals as promiscuous sexual beings. However the early Kinsey studies showed that, of those individuals who were categorized as predominantly homosexual, 71% of the females and 51% of the males had limited their sexual experience to no more than one or two partners -- figures which correspond almost exactly to those for heterosexuals.

Our own S.C.W.U. study of lesbians in the greater Los Angeles area -- by the way we had over 1,000 responses from people, from lesbians -- showed that 86% of those women preferred long-term close commitments,

and 65% indicated that that was the type of relationship that they usually have. So that those close, long-term commitments are happening. They are there and we need to recognize that.

I looked at the list of people presenting testimony today, and I happened to catch Lynn Warshafsky's testimony on issues of self-esteem and the stresses that homosexual relationships are subject to in society. So it is really a tribute to our desire for these relationships that gays and lesbians are able to form lasting relationships in spite of the incredible odds against us.

Homosexuality is criminalized behavior in 24 states. That has got to put tremendous stress on a relationship. No highly-visible positive role models for relationships exist. When I say highly-visible, I'm talking about the media; I'm talking about television specifically.

Last week I testified before the L.A. City Commission on the Status of Women which was holding hearings on the images of women in the media, and I testified on the images of lesbians in the media -- which is basically invisibility -- we're not there. And when we are there, unfortunately we are very often shown as man hating, murderers in some instances -- that's the most recent experience -- there are some award winning shows that have had positive portrayals but I'm not going to go into that here. I'd be happy to supply a copy of that testimony if you'd like it.

In addition, the pressures of the society force us, in a sense, to become almost a subculture -- and this is the prejudice and discrimination that occurs when lesbians and gay males are out in the workplace, and generally in their lives. So as I said it is a tribute to our desire for these relationships that they are actually happening in spite of this.

The sexual orientation legislation that has been proposed or passed to date has been mostly symbolic although most of it has been highly publicized. The one you're probably most familiar with is the Sexual Orientation Ordinance which is part of the L.A. Municipal Code, Sections 49.70 - 49.80. And I must say that, although it got a lot of public relations mileage, it still did not extend benefits to the people that it was meant to affect. It didn't extend the benefits of employment to gays and lesbians concerning pensions and survivor benefits. It did not extend these benefits in terms of health plans. It didn't extend the benefits in terms of sick leave or bereavement leave. In other words, people who are in relationships cannot take sick leave to care for sick partners. They cannot have partners -- dependent or otherwise -- covered under their health plans. They cannot take bereavement leave no matter how long standing the relationship, should their partner die. And this is frankly outrageous in a city that says it cares about gays and lesbians.

To our knowledge, little or no effort to educate those affected by the legislation took place when the legislation was enacted. These are businesses; business establishments; city employees who deal with the public every day, who deal with gay and lesbian clientele in our city agencies; employers who are covered under the law; and the protected individuals. I do not think that much effort was expended on telling those people whose rights this legislation was enacted to protect what to expect from it and what sort of action they could take to correct wrongs.

The domestic partnership legislation that has been proposed -- the one I'm most familiar with is the one in West Hollywood -- is mostly a symbolic piece of legislation. It has very little enforceability. It has very little utilization except as a symbol of a commitment at this point. As a matter of fact, I checked this morning and there are 134 couples who have applied for domestic partnership registration in the City of West Hollywood. So it is being utilized even though it's a fairly new thing.

At the state level, AB 1 has been heartbreakingly close. We all know that the governor vetoed it after a long campaign to have it passed and I don't think it's a reality in the near future. I would like to think differently and I will work to see that it is, but in fact I don't think it is a reality.

I don't think we can wait for the state to do anything, nor can we wait for the federal anti-discrimination bill because I think that has very little chance of passage in the near future. As we get a more democratic congress and senate we maybe have a better chance, but I don't think it is a reality in the near future. So I think the city is going to have to act here. We are prohibited from marrying in any state of the United States.

Homosexuality is not a choice, it's not a lifestyle, it's who we are -- for a very large portion of society. Some of us found it out later in life than others, after being married twice and two children, personally. It is who we are and we need to accept that fact and we need to move on. The cause of homosexuality is not known. There has been more attention paid to changing homosexuals -- more research has gone into how to change homosexuals -- than has been spent on studying who homosexuals are.

Our recommendations for what the City of Los Angeles can do in terms of recognizing the family relationships of gays and lesbians are the following.

In terms of administrative recommendations, we recommend that employee contracts concerning sick leave, pension and survivor benefits, health plans, bereavement leave, and other benefits of employment -- where there is a definition of "family" -- that the language be changed immediately to include partners in gay and lesbian relationships. I would leave the

language to the Committee. I would not suggest language, but I think something that provides for partners in gay and lesbian relationships to be included in the families. Please don't require individual employee units to negotiate it. If the city is serious about this -- if they are serious about granting rights to gays and lesbians -- don't place it as something that needs to be bargained for as most other rights and benefits are. We're not asking you to chose if you should have a health plan, the idea is that, if you are going to have a health plan, make sure that it includes partners or dependents of gays and lesbians, dependent or not -- we're not just talking about dependent partners. As it stands now it's something that could be negotiated in individual memoranda of understanding and contracts. Can you imagine saying to Blacks, "You must negotiate your employment rights into your employment contract." That would be horrendous to us, and so is this, frankly. I think this needs to happen immediately.

Develop and implement programs to inform all the people who are affected by the existing ordinance, the Sexual Orientation Ordinance. Involve community organizations in this development -- implementation and evaluation of the effectiveness of these programs. That would include city employees, business establishments, employers, educational institutions, landlord and tenants associations, and also public education to make the people whose rights we are protecting aware of what their rights are and what recourse they have in securing those rights.

I'm aware of the L.A. Police Advisory Task Force and the program that they have to try and sensitize the police department. I am part of a program. I work with Judge Rand Schrader to sensitize the county sheriffs deputies on the same thing. I have to tell you that laudable as these programs are, I really don't think that taking an hour or two in training is sufficient to do the job that needs to be done to sensitize people who are responsible for our safety in the issues and they are supposed to be protecting a very large percentage of the population. So I think it's real important that we involve community organizations and the people who are affected in the development, and in the implementation, as well as also in the evaluation of these programs, and that there be build in evaluation mechanisms to programs that are developed.

I also would hope that where the county is contracted with to provide services for the city -- health care services, for example -- that sexual orientation nondiscrimination would be extended to those contracts as well. One of the things that is very notable I think is when lesbians go for gynecological care for example, it is almost always assumed that they have relationships with men unless they actually sort of fight and say, "Wait -- I don't need birth control. Wait -- I don't have a sexually transmitted disease." Quite frankly, I don't know if you're aware of this, but while there is no case of sexually transmitted AIDS between lesbians, there also is a very, very, very, low incidence of sexually transmitted disease in general

between lesbians and so a lot of taxpayer funds frankly could go to testing and treatment that isn't necessary in the first place; but because of the insensitivity of the health care providers, people are not able to bring these issues to their attention so some sensitivity is needed in the county relationships as well.

Recognize and legalize to the extent possible -- I recognize that marriage is regulated by state law not city law -- but recognize and legalize the committed lesbian and gay relationships in more than just a symbolic way. Extend health care benefits and any other benefits accruing to a family member such as pension, survivor benefits, medical leaves, bereavement leaves, etc. Support those lesbian and gay couples who wish to be parents through adoption or foster parenting. There's a very good foster parenting program -- the Triangle Project I believe it's called for lesbians and gays who wish to be foster parents.

Promote an understanding of these committed relationships in agencies which deal with the public social service and housing agencies of the city -- domestic or family violence programs, the City Attorney's Office, the law enforcement agencies. This could be brought about through the programs that I mentioned earlier under the ordinance, under the Sexual Orientation Ordinance.

And secondly, mandate recognition of lesbian and gay relationships through city contracts with vendors such as insurance carriers and, essentially, I think, wherever the opportunity arises to do that.

We feel that, as the second largest city in the nation, Los Angeles is in an excellent position to provide leadership in developing a sensible and workable plan for lesbians and gay men -- to provide the societal support and the benefits of employment which should be available to all human beings.

S.C.W.U. stands ready to aid the Task Force, Councilman Woo, and any other organization or agency of city government in developing and implementing and evaluating these programs.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: Thank you. That's a very generous offer which we accept and will take you up on, by the way. Are there any questions?

THOMAS FRANK COLEMAN: On the issue of evaluation, I'm very interested in that because we're real good on symbolism and not on follow-through to the point of actually evaluating what's happening.

If you could develop some additional ideas on what that evaluation would look like I'd be interested on getting some more input on that

because, as you said, we have the Sexual Orientation Ordinance on the books and it's underutilized, not widely known. The meaning of it is somewhat questionable, and it would be helpful to have some evaluation. Maybe if we could get a little more specifics on it, if you have the time, we might be able to plug it into our report and see something happen in that regard.

Also on the issue of city contracts with vendors. I'm glad you said that because it's an area that basically the lesbian and gay community has ignored. You are the first witness that mentioned that -- city contracts with vendors -- and it just so happens that there is a specific code dealing with city contracts. When we were real high on symbolism and got a Sexual Orientation Ordinance, we did not amend that and so that needs to be updated so that we're not awarding money in contracts to people who would be violating city laws.

So thank you for bringing that to our attention and we can truly say this recommendation came out of the community rather than something generated within the Task Force. I would just like to compliment you for your insightfulness in that regard.

JEAN CONGER: Thank you. I think one of the things that has made us more aware is the fact that just recently West Hollywood entered into a cosponsorship -- if you will -- with Playboy Magazine on their jazz festival. Many of us took offense at that -- as women -- that Playboy does indeed exploit women. I know that Christy Hefner has been very generous, or tried to be very generous, with a lot of women's organizations with the money that comes from the Playboy Foundation. But many of us have -- and it's caused some strife in the organizations -- turned down that money because we feel that it is important to understand that we cannot take money that comes from that kind of an enterprise. So I would hope that you would look at that, whenever you are dealing with vendors. For example, Coors Beer, Carl's Jr., are other examples. There is a whole list of contractors, people, businesses who are well known for their discriminatory employment practices or who put the money that they make from all of our community into oppressing part of our community, whether it be women, minorities, gays and lesbians.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: And Jean, also you mentioned your testimony also before the Commission. Could you get a copy of that on the media issue. Thank you very much. We appreciate it.

Janet Witkin, the Director of Alternative Living for the Aging is here to speak to us for a few minutes about alternative housing arrangements for seniors. She has an exemplary program that a number of us are familiar with -- and some may not be -- so we'd like to hear more about that, as well. Thank you for being with us.

JANET WITKIN

**Director, Alternative Living for the Aging**

**City Support for Alternative Housing for Seniors**

JANET WITKIN: Thank you for inviting me. I thought that what I would do is give you a brief history of Alternative Living for the Aging, and a brief description of our programs, and then respond to your questions.

I started Alternative Living for the Aging in 1978 because I felt that older people really needed alternatives to living alone, and alternatives to institutionalization. At that time I was taking a group of teenagers through a board and care home not far from here and I was appalled at the older people who were there who were well. If they were ill I could understand why they had come to a place that would offer them some care, but for the ones who were alert and fit I couldn't understand why they would go into a board and care home which I perceive as kind of institution because life is regularized. Breakfast is at 8 and lunch is at 12 and there's staff and all of that.

So I asked a couple of the older people there who were fit, I said, "Well, why did you come here?" I'd go every Saturday morning with a group of teenagers, so I got to know them. And one older man said, "Well, Janet, my wife died and there's just really -- we don't have kids, and I didn't cook very well for myself, so I didn't eat very well and my doctor said I shouldn't be alone." So the bottom line was: to not be alone. This man entered an institution, I thought, prematurely, inappropriately, and unnecessarily. I asked one lady why she was there, and she said someone had been mugged on her street so her daughter felt she would be safer in this place. So again, there was no perception of options or choices. It was either that you live alone and you deal with the lack of security of that, or the lack of good food or the high cost of that or the loneliness -- or you go into an institution. Nobody seemed to think there was anything in the middle.

So that's what we at Alternative Living for the Aging have been doing for the last nearly nine years now. We have developed several programs that create alternatives to living alone and alternatives to institutionalization.

Our first program is our roommate matching program. We have matched up over 2,000 older people in the Los Angeles Area to share housing in their own apartments and houses. We match 35 to 45 people a

month. These people gain companionship, they gain economic benefits, and they gain a greater sense of safety and security by sharing housing. Someone has a two bedroom house or apartment, their spouse has died or maybe sometimes a couple wants someone to move in with them. Typically, if one person in the couple is a bit infirm, the healthier person might want someone who is more of a peer to talk with. So that's all it takes is an empty bedroom and some cooperativeness and flexibility and an ability to compromise. So we are matching 35 to 45 people a month. We have two types of matches. We have what we call share matches where we match older people with older people. We don't really match. We refer people to one another. We are social service workers, interview people in our office, rather extensive, in person, one on one interview, and we now have developed a computer program where we are keeping this data base where we have 300 to 400 people at any given time who would like to find a roommate, so that we have probably the pool of older people looking for roommates. So we have these share matches which are between two older people who can basically take care of themselves, usually. And we have what we call exchange for service matches where one person in the pair is perhaps a bit infirm or frail and would like the other person to perform some services for him or her, and that could be a younger person. A younger person could be performing some services for an older person; so then we would be doing an intergenerational match. We have been able to match up some homeless women this way. We work with the Good Shepherd Shelter, and Turning Point and some other shelters where they know -- the shelter staffs know -- what we're looking for. We're looking for reliable people who are mentally ill or who are not drug or alcohol dependent and who could live with a senior and be a help and so that's been a gratifying service that we've been able to offer because then the homeless, or the sometimes about to become homeless living in a home and sometimes a little bit of a salary from the senior. It's typically limited because about two-thirds of our clients are women and they typically wouldn't want a young man to live with them.

We also have our co-op houses where 9 to 14 older people share large renovated houses. They really become like a family for one another. We opened co-op one nearly five years ago. It's a large, Spanish duplex that we added on 2,000 square feet to in the Fairfax area. We have 9 bedrooms and 9 baths there, and we kept the existing living rooms and kitchens and we have a cook come in and do 5 dinner meals a week and they're on their own for breakfast, lunches and weekend meals so that they have the freedom, so that it's not institutional. They just come together at night, 5 nights a week, like a family comes together. And that's been going like I said for five years. Right now we have a few spaces in that house which is pretty unusual. It costs \$395 a month including 5 dinner meals a week prepared by a cook there, and including all the utilities; they each have individual air conditioners; it's a security building. It's about to go up to \$405 a month but it's cheaper than just about anything else around. These

people have to cooperate and get along obviously. They have to be relatively healthy, cooperative and flexible in order to live in this kind of environment while they have their own rooms and baths, they are on K.P. for dinner meals so they have to set the table, serve, clear, and clean up. We have house meetings. At the beginning of the house we had meetings every week, they are every other week now. It's been going for years so we have meetings every third week.

And then we started Co-Op Two on January 15 of 1985 -- we opened our second house. We have 14 bedrooms and 14 baths there, also in the Fairfax area, and the same set up. Then we just opened our El Greco apartment. We just had our big opening celebration last Sunday and we moved this historic building, the El Greco from Timberton in Westwood where it would have been demolished. Councilman Yaraslovsky called me one day and asked me if I'd like to have this courtyard building -- the only thing was I had to move it. It's not a bargain. I don't recommend it. But we did it. We put it on double empty in Fairfax. We've never torn down any buildings and we've never displaced any people for any of our projects I'm proud to say. We have an empty double lot in the Fairfax area and we moved the building in four pieces. You move a building -- I believe it's Sunday through Thursday night from midnight to 6 a.m. -- because when you come down Pico Blvd. you come down both sides of Pico Boulevard. So we took off all the red tiles off the roof in Westwood and put them in on Fairfax, we took the bricks out of the courtyard and we built the fishpond just like it was. Anyway, the fishpond is now the big project of the seniors, they're really into overfeeding the fish, but they also clean the pond. This is really a wonderful project.

We have 12 apartments, there are 6 singles and 6 one-bedrooms so that it's not our typical project of people sharing units. But we screen the people very, very carefully just as we have for our other projects for flexibility, cooperativeness, ability to function in a community. And they really are an amazing group. There are a couple of 87-year-old men; we have Blacks, Hispanics, Catholics, Christians, Jews, and they're celebrating their birthdays together -- they have initiated this. The place has just been full for a few weeks, but they've initiated like potlucks for the March birthdays and we paired them in buddies so that they look in on each other every morning so that everyone knows that everybody is up all right. But one 87-year-old gentleman said to me the other day, "You know, Janet, yesterday afternoon I asked Kurt if he wanted some crackers and some cheese and a little Chablis and we were sitting out in the courtyard and other people joined us." I ask you, "Where can you get that?" They're having a great time and they are low income seniors and I think many people would envy their lifestyle.

We broke ground in Santa Monica a couple weeks ago and we're grading the lot and we're putting in footings. For our first new

construction project we're building a three story building, ocean views for low income seniors -- I love it! And this will be 6 two bedroom, two bath apartments, a community room and kitchen and this will be primarily for the seniors of Santa Monica because the City of Santa Monica gave us the bulk of the funding.

Originally our roommate matching program was funded by the Federal Administration on Aging as a model project for the United States. When Ronald Reagan became President we could see that we were not going to continue to get those funds and so we set about to diversify our funding maze and we did that in a variety of ways. I worked very hard with Mike Woo on developing a bill that became the Shared Housing Procedures Law of the state and it now funds some twenty programs throughout the State of California. And we applied for Los Angeles City Community Development and Community Service Funds and we get a significant portion of our roommate matching program from the City of Los Angeles. Some of the ways that I've thought of that the City of Los Angeles could be helpful to Alternative Living for the Aging and thereby to the seniors in the City of Los Angeles are of course, additional funding. It's a very tight budget, as you all know, down at Community Development Department. But with additional funding we could reach out and serve more seniors. We primarily serve L.M.P.A.-3, a name of a planning area - Wilshire, Hollywood, towards downtown, and Fairfax, and it's a good chunk of the city. We don't restrict ourselves to that, but we're evaluated on that every month so we do have to target that area.

Something the city could do, I'm not quite sure how, but to discourage or, if possible, outlaw landlords for upping the rent if a senior wanted a roommate to move in. That's not been a big problem for us, but I always say, "Did they lower the rent when your husband died?" And I never heard that they did.

The city could assist us with outreach by having some sort of citywide newsletter of senior services and events that really was out there and functioned. The city could assist us in publicizing our services at their senior centers and nutrition sites. I get around to a lot of the sites but it could be coordinated by some..like the city Area Agency on Aging or something like that.

The city could do information and referral tradings where we at Alternative Living for the Aged could come and speak to the I.A.R. workers and thoroughly acquaint them with our programs so that they could in turn pass that information appropriately on to the seniors who they serve so that they're not sending us people who we can't serve and vice versa.

For capital projects the city could continue to provide grants and below market rate loans, sometimes from bond financing, and the C.R.A.

from tax increment bonds -- as they have done with our co-op houses and El Greco apartment community. We have utilized a variety of private and public funds for our capital projects.

Our work is described in the 1986 Medical and Health Annual of the Encyclopedia Britanica. We were invited to submit something for that. We've testified before various congressional and state committees, in Sacramento and in Minnesota and we really appreciate the support of the City of Los Angeles and particularly of Councilman Mike Woo and of Councilman Zev Yaraslovsky in our work. Mike was on our Board for years and Zev has always helped us and had the vision to see that we were creating new ways for older people to live. You couldn't always measure the cost of a capital project in dollars and cents, you had to measure it in terms of human life and the quality of life.

I think the quality of life for people in our project is second to none and it's not only the seniors who benefit from living together but their families benefit. There's a ripple effect because the children are so much more comfortable knowing that their parents are in a secure, friendly, safe environment rather than living in a building where the landlord hates their guts or can't wait to get them out to raise the rent -- which is the case all around us. So that the children of these parents enjoy them more and are not be burdened with some of the concerns that we were before. So thank you for having me, and do you have any questions?

CAROL GILL: I'm interested in how this all began. You said you understood that if someone had a health problem maybe the other more traditional forms of residence were acceptable or reasonable, but not for people who were fit. And I listen to that and I think this may sound like a facetious question but it's not. When I retire from my life as a clinical psychologist and disability activist am I going to be able to find a place in one of your buildings?

JANET WITKIN: Yes, I can see where that could be misleading. We've actually had people who are in wheelchairs, we've had handicapped people; we're talking about people who can take care of themselves. We don't have any service providers in our projects and so as long as people can help each other out, or people can help themselves out there's no problem.

CAROL GILL: What about people like myself who have to hire an attendant. Would your facility be open to someone like me bringing an individual in daily?

JANET WITKIN: Do they live with you? (no). I don't see a problem with it. What we're always looking at the mix and the health of the group as a whole. So that if you, or whoever, seem like they would get along

with everybody, there would be no problem. We probably would interview the attendant too because we're looking at a household. So we just want to see that people get along. That's our purpose.

CAROL GILL: Then that truly is an alternative to board and cares and a lot of senior residence facilities that say if you're in a wheelchair, if you use a cane, if you have an attendant, you can't live here.

JANET WITKIN: Right.

BETTY HANNA WITHERSPOON: When last we talked some years ago there was some interest in the ability to get federal subsidies on the rent payments themselves. Has that come through?

JANET WITKIN: You mean like Section 8? (Right). We had not obtained Section 8 for our projects. We have attained the ability to utilize an individual's Section 8 certificate on our projects and we have, I think it's just one person. We kind of pushed and pushed through the Housing Authority and you weren't there to help us, but we found somebody who did help and we are able to offer people if they are willing to help, we'll help to some degree. We don't have advocates on staff. Yes, we could use it but we've never gotten our Section 8 in. And I don't know that it's impossible, it's just a battle we haven't had time to fight.

ADELE STARR: What kind of a backlog do you have, people trying to get in?

JANET WITKIN: Oh boy. In terms of the roommate-matching, we have 300 people that are looking for a match at any given time, that our workers are working with and referring them to one another and we have meetings of our clients, where they get to meet each other once a month and then also they're referred to each other, they can meet individually during the month. As far as the houses, we have spaces right now in our houses. There have been some changes, so we're dealing with people in their 70's, 80's, and 90's. A couple of people did move on to board and care because they really -- one guy came to me and said, "I really have to have 3 meals a day." So the people have chosen so far to leave, when they realize they need care. So we have spaces right now at co-op, but El Greco's full.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: One of the things that really is clear, I think, with your program, Janet -- and I've had very limited contact -- is your community support. They hold these huge bashes every year to raise money for the organization and fund raising end of things and I've come with Mike and Zev both to those, but in an enlightened society we would like to hope that the public sector would play a significant role in doing this kind of work. Clearly it has not. I mean it's your initiative and

people that are very committed to this kind of program that made it happen in probably a much more loving and creative way than if the government had had direct involvement and not letting some other people handle it. So it's been a beautiful kind of match in that way.

I'm not sure how many cities -- I was curious to know if there are other cities around the country who have either replicated this model or are using one similar to it.

JANET WITKIN: Yes, there are many cities throughout the country. We were one of the first to do it, but as I mentioned, there are some twenty programs now funded through the legislation and I worked on in the state and then throughout the country there are many more shared housing programs. Many of them are very small and struggling and you know everyone's just going after that little piece of funding, or whatever.

I don't think that anyone will feel secure about the funding. And in that regard I think it's really important to recognize that when you match up someone to share housing, in a certain sense you have to be careful. You've kind of created another housing unit, because you've freed up a unit and who around here creates 35 to 45 units a month? We match 35 to 45 people. I'm not saying that you don't need housing production. We need housing production -- all kinds of housing -- so that people truly have some choices.

BETTY HANNA WITHERSPOON: As you match folks up, what is your ability to reach across the ethnic diversity that this city has, because we're talking about seniors who have some very...

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: Clear cut ideas!

JANET WITKIN: You know, you're asking if we make interracial matches and things like that.

UNIDENTIFIED: Whatever, Janet. It was that nobody who had been referred by a council who was black had ever been matched. And I need to hear from you if that's... (I'm sorry say that again.) That nobody who was black, who had been referred had ever been matched.

JANET WITKIN: When was that?

UNIDENTIFIED: Out of the Fair Housing, out of one of the Councils. Is that possible? Do you get interethnic, interracial matches?

JANET WITKIN: I would have to ask my social workers, I know we've matched Blacks, I know we've matched Hispanics, I know we've matched Asians, I know we've matched Asians with Caucasians. We try to go along

with what the people want. We're not here to change these people at their age, so if they want to live with a Black Christian, we'll try to find them a Black Christian. If they want to live with a White Jew, we'll try to find them a White Jew. But if they're open -- and a lot of people are open -- then it's open. And the e El Greco, where their not sharing rooms, it's working out beautifully with Blacks, Hispanics, and Anglos. We follow their preference -- I mean if they're horrible people and terribly bigoted we're not going to match them.

BETTY HANNA WITHERSPOON: And you don't refer them to South Central.

JANET WITKIN: We will deal with people from South Central. If they can just get to our office for an interview, then we can work with them. It's not a problem. As long as we can develop a pool in an area, we don't have to be there. Because we can't afford to be there. We have two people matching people, running the houses and the whole shot. So if we can develop a pool in any given area.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: Good. Thank you very much for sharing all of that. Thanks. Connie Buaya, a youth counselor at Los Angeles Indian Health Center is here. She is here specifically to address the issues of education and counseling for Native American families. This has been an ongoing conversation we've been having over the last few months, so we're glad you're here today.

**CONNIE BUAYA**

**Youth Counselor, Los Angeles Indian Health Center**

**Indian Families in Los Angeles**

CONNIE BUAYA: Thank you. Just so you know a little bit more about myself, I work for the American Indian Free Clinic. It's the only large agency left in L.A. County which tries to meet the health needs of American Indians. Unfortunately, because of all the cutbacks and because there's a belief that federal funding to American Indians should be cut and that we should compete like everyone else is in this county, we may not last too much longer. So, hopefully, my testimony will help us to understand a little bit more about our needs.

I'm going to talk a little bit about Indian culture in general, and a little bit about problems in our community here in Los Angeles. We have the largest Indian population of the entire country here. A lot of people don't realize this. Many people have referred to Los Angeles as an urban reservation, and we really have probably the cross-section of all the tribes throughout the country. At the last part of my presentation, I'm make some recommendations.

I'm testifying today because I believe there's a need to educate the policymakers about the diversity of American Indian culture and the American Indian family. I feel that with understanding of this diversity among Indian people we'll be able to develop better programs that will meet their needs. At present I really feel that we're not doing that. I'll be focusing a lot on my experiences with Indian youth, because Indian youth make up about 40% of our population, and because they really need our full attention at this point. You'll understand more after I talk about my experiences have been.

In terms of Indian culture -- what is it? It's a real difficult question to answer for the following reason. American Indian culture is made up of over 300 tribal affiliations, originating from reservations and urban areas across the country. Each Indian tribe has a different relationship with the federal government, depending on treaty law. A lot of people think that American Indians take home a paycheck every month from the government. That's not true. It depends on the tribe, it depends on the treaty, and it depends on how the government reads the treaty. Also, although Indian people share a common bond in terms of their closeness to nature and the emphasis on ceremony for continuity of their culture, the methods by which

they do this vary. Many people assume that because they've gone to one ceremony that all Indians are that way. When they make these assumptions to other Indian people they really turn them off, especially in counseling situations. So you have to be careful with that.

Indian people living in different areas are at different levels of acculturation. Some live as traditional as possible in their environment, and others use their culture only as a point of reference. Some Indians live on reservations, some in urban areas, and some do both during the course of one year, and for many the reservation will always be home. Some Indians go to pow-wows. A pow-wow is a social gathering where traditional dancing occurs, and some go every weekend, some don't -- so as you can see there is no one way which is the Indian way.

The best way to understand the culture is to involve yourself in the culture, and that is to talk to Indian people themselves, talk about the tribe they're from, talk about what they believe in. I've worked with Indian youth and their families in several different settings over the years, and the experience has given me some insight about their struggles in dealing with their teenage years and with feeling good about themselves as Indian.

It is difficult for people in the mainstream to believe that Indian young people might feel shame about their heritage. Afterall, many people feel a certain sentimentality about American Indian culture because to them it is romantic and unique, and more of a fantasy than a real, actual lifestyle. What the average American youth understand is that they are dealing with negative stereotypes on a daily basis. Every day something comes out on T.V. that misrepresents Indian people, that either just scratches the surface of what Indian people are about or completely misrepresents them. And our youth are dealing with this on a daily basis. Additionally our Indian youth feel a negativity about their heritage from contexts in schools, among peers and in every day encounters with the public. Our youth are processing this information and coming to the conclusion that the odds were stacked against Indian youth and their families. They lived in the poorest of neighborhoods, where gang involvement with the culture whether it be a pow-wow or a ceremony or family gathering. They often identify with other ethnic groups, put aside all the knowledge of their culture, their tribe and even their relatives. Some manage to cut themselves off completely, much to the disappointment of their family and friends. Others slip into and out of an Indian world and a non-Indian world and they confuse an attempt to fit in and feel good about themselves and their backgrounds. Because they find little direction in their quest to find identity and pride they often get involved in alcohol and drugs, criminal activities. Many of them reach out only to find that, because of their age group and minority status, they are not a priority among policymakers in L.A.

A few years ago I worked in a program that received referrals of troubled, at-risk Indian youth from county probation and other sources. Our program was funded to serve 40 Indian youth. In three months we had more than 40, and we had a waiting list. And these youth had lost all interest in school, had been turned off by their teachers and other people in the system, had very poor relationships at home, had become saturated with violence, death, and loneliness. Their families had had no luck in locating any services until we were there. And they were at a point of despair when they finally learned of our program.

Once we began working with the youth we began realizing how much the odds were stacked against Indian youth and their families. They lived in the poorest of neighborhoods, where gang involvement was inevitable. There were few alternatives. They also suffered from very low self-esteem stemming from as I mentioned before, exposure to the negative stereotypes, the atmosphere of alcohol and drug addiction that is prevalent in Indian families, and the pressures from peers to conform and turn against the Indian ways or the ways promoted by their Indian relatives. We attempted in the program to increase their pride in their culture and their good feeling about themselves. And we actively involved them in cultural activities. Our contract said we had to turn these kids around in a short amount of time. I mean we had to prevent them from getting involved in any criminal activities and it was very unrealistic to expect that in three or four months time. So, of course, we didn't do well and we lost our funding. That was the last Indian program until the one I work for now. And that's pretty sad in a city which has the largest urban Indian population -- about 60,000 American Indians. It really takes a commitment, a promise that someone cares and will back them up as they attempt to find out who they are and where they are going.

Because Indian culture is so diverse and our youth come from different tribal backgrounds, and families with different value systems, it requires even more time and patience and dedication. There must be a continuity of services in L.A. available to them. And it must be made up of people who have shown that they can successfully live both worlds, that is bi-cultural -- live in both the Indian and the non-Indian world.

Unfortunately, all but one program has survived and I wanted to talk to you a little bit about this program. It's called the Family Life Information Education Program and it's located at the L.A. Indian Health Center in downtown L.A. I feel that this program could really set an example for policymakers, and invite them to come and talk to us about what we do. In short, what we do is we work closely in a community, in the Indian community, to identify youth who may be reaching out to find a balance to their lives. The main emphasis of our program is to increase the good feelings that these youth have about themselves, including their interests and abilities, their heritage, their unique personalities, and their

goals for the the future. Our workshops in cultural activities provide them with the time to share both their negative and positive feelings and to learn to identify strengths to make positive decisions and to grow. We are totally dedicated to the goal and we make efforts to involve the community and to make community members equally dedicated. We have a unit advisory council of Indian businessmen and professionals.

But continuity has been a problem in our community. You have probably noticed that. An Indian program can be around for two years and then gone and then something else replaces it. The program is successful because of all these things and I think too because the Creator is one of our biggest supporters. That's the way Indian people believe.

I would like to make some recommendations to members of the City Council. And in some ways these could be a challenge, but nonetheless important.

I think you should familiarize yourselves with the diversity of Indian culture. The best way to do this is to talk to Indian people themselves. You can attend a pow-wow, you can call an Indian program, and you can talk personally with someone so that you can increase your knowledge about the diversity. It won't be long before you'll realize how important the culture is to all ethnic groups in our society. Our culture represents a balance of good things, a preservation of natural things, of closeness of family and community, of responsibility for all things, more than material things, things that count like family and children. It represents a continuity of something to look to when life becomes hard, a spirituality that can calm us so that we know where we are and where we're going.

Once you become more familiar with this I'm sure you'll recognize the importance of supporting a program such as our Family Life Information Education Program and for expanding the city's services to all youth -- not just Indian youth -- to all youth and their families. All youth need someone to believe in them, to counsel them, to hire them in the summer, and after school, to help them with school, to help their families when their families are in need. We urge the City Council to work closely with our Indian programs and other ethnic programs, and to work with our community advisory committees. I think most of them would welcome the attention that we haven't really gotten over the years. We know that these interrelationships will result in some positive relevant service for Indians -- but we need to see some support. That's basically what I have to say, if you have any questions I'd be gad to answer them.

THOMAS FRANK COLEMAN: You mentioned that there are 60,000 Native Americans in Los Angeles. Is that in the city?

CONNIE BUAYA: No that's in the county. The majority of the population is in the city though. I can't give you an exact figure.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: About half of which, parenthetically, I've been told, and read some demographic features, are Navaho?

CONNIE BUAYA: I wouldn't say half. It's not that large of a percentage. There are quite a few. We get a lot of relocatees from Arizona. It really puts a stress on our community programs because they usually come in large groups. They usually come as a result of some legislation that's going on in Arizona -- some relocation.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: O.K. I just wanted to be sure we were talking about the various tribal backgrounds that people were coming from, particularly from reservation to urban experience.

THOMAS FRANK COLEMAN: O.K. For the record I wanted to clarify that because there was an ambiguity there. As far as something substantive, as far as city boards and commissions and so on, is there some type of an Indian Cultural Heritage Commission or some similar city commission dealing with Indian issues?

CONNIE BUAYA: Yes, there's something called the Native American Indian Commission. Some of us in the community, we wish that their work was moving a little faster -- and I don't know exactly what the problem is -- but I think what we need are more Indian professionals working in our communities. And like I'm getting ready hopefully to get my M.S.W. in June and I want to work in my community. I want to do planning, and there are a lot of young people who are interested in the same thing, but just by the same token with federal cutbacks how do you get an education with no help? And that's what's happening? It's real difficult, and everybody thinks Indian people get all kinds of money to go to school. It's been cut back tremendously, and so anything that the city council can do to encourage supportive educational programs is definitely important -- especially social work type, you know human service type training.

THOMAS FRANK COLEMAN: I have two other points. There's a Hands Across the Campus program on 17 campuses in the school district and I think that it's dealing with immigration, and religious diversity, and tolerance, understanding. I don't think it's included Native Americans in its scope. Are you familiar with that?

CONNIE BUAYA: You know, Paula Starr mentioned it and I think she was getting ready or had done some networking as far as that and I'm not sure what the result of it. But it's definitely a good idea and I'll be sure to mention it to her.

THOMAS FRANK COLEMAN: The final thing, this is something I think that cuts across a number of communities. In looking at the City Human Relations Commission, its mandate is to foster understanding and respect and so on within different groups in the community. I took a look at the membership. There are nine members, and I don't think there is a disabled person, I know there isn't an openly gay person on it, and I don't believe there is anyone from the Indian community, the Native American community. It seems to me that maybe a recommendation -- I'd like to get your reaction to this -- would it be helpful to have Native American representation as well as different interest groups represented on an ongoing basis so that when you need outreach you've got all these other similar minority groups to exchange ideas with and so on -- is that something that you think the Native American community would have interest in and support?

CONNIE BUAYA: Yes. Well, actually there is a person.

THOMAS FRANK COLEMAN: There is? On the city or the county?

CONNIE BUAYA: Oh, you're right, it's the county.

THOMAS FRANK COLEMAN: The more I see this, the county commission is miles ahead of the city commission.

CONNIE BUAYA: Right, you're right. We definitely need something like that and like you said we need to work more closely together and we need to support each other. Different ethnic groups need to support each other and in the past I don't think it's been done. I think it's been every man for himself. I would definitely think that would be a good idea and I know that there's some people out there that would man something like that would be representative of us.

DUNCAN DONOVAN: I'm curious. Is there a tendency of the 60,000 who live in the county and city, is there a tendency to congregate to specific geographical locations?

CONNIE BUAYA: No, that's one of our problems is community organization.

DUNCAN DONOVAN: They're scattered all about then.

CONNIE BUAYA: Right. It's one of our big problems when we're trying to reach our community and get the support we need and even help the people that we need to help.

DUNCAN DONOVAN: And is there a tendency then for a large volume of them, because they are isolated, to identify with their neighborhood more than with their tribal background?

CONNIE BUAYA: It depends on the level of acculturation and the state of poverty level -- all those things. In my experience there was kind of a mixture in the people I worked with. Some really related to the minority right there, and then a lot of the kids became involved in gangs, Hispanic gangs, and were taken in and really recognized as Hispanic. Then there were others who lived in isolated areas who went to a pow-wow every weekend and were able to keep those ties going. I just depends on the person.

BETTY HANNA WITHERSPOON: Could I get a clarification of your funding for the clinic, which if I heard you correctly might be endangered. What is the source of your funding?

CONNIE BUAYA: O.K. It's under Indian Health Service monies. It is federal funding. Some of it comes through the state and the federal funding is in jeopardy and the state funding is in jeopardy both. Governor Deukmejian wants to do away with Indian Health Service by next year and he wants us to compete with other county health programs. If you are familiar with treaty law, we were promised health services forever and that's a legal basis and fighting it is difficult because when you're fighting that you're not taking care of business at home and that's been our problem. So I don't know what's going to happen.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: From time to time, we have sharing among Task Force members and Paula Starr, of course, who I think is ill today participates very much in our proceedings and as these funding emergencies come up we need to have those shared with us so that we can be supportive in the networks that exist around the table.

UNIDENTIFIED: Is there a federal office in Los Angeles?

CONNIE BUAYA: No. We must deal with Sacramento.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: And the Indian Health Service at the federal level is in the department of Health and Human Resources as opposed to the Bureau of Indian Affairs which is another department -- so they are not even the same department of government -- different cabinet secretaries differ and everything.

CONNIE BUAYA: You can imagine how complicated it becomes.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: Thank you very much for being with us today. Donzella Lee, project director of the Watts Health Foundation is here to continue a discussion we've had over several of our hearings about particular issues of concern to families in the black community and we're delighted that you're here today.

**DONZELLA LEE**

**Project Director, Watts Health Foundation**

**Family Needs in the Black Community**

**DONZELLA LEE:** Thank you. Thank you for the opportunity to present one perspective regarding the family needs in the Black community. My name is Donzella Lee and I am the director of adolescent services at the Watts Health Foundation.

This presentation is just one perspective which is mine, and it's based on my experience, my work experience in the Black community in the Watts area and throughout Los Angeles county. As you are aware, the Black community is a diverse community in the City of Los Angeles. So this paper will be directed to helping those families most in need and I will talk about the issues of Black families from an historical perspective.

Black families in America, in California, and particularly in Los Angeles have contributed and continue to enhance the development of this country, state, and city. We have a rich history of accomplishment and perseverance in conjunction with the savage history of attack and destruction from within and without.

This rich history of accomplishment and perseverance includes: the formation of functional family units, particularly the extended family; the creation of inventions such as the signal light, gas heating furnaces and such; discoveries and inventions of technologies such as Dr. Charles Drew discovery of blood plasma, Dr. William Daniel, H. William Woo had the first successful heart operation; the numerous contributions of scholars, writers and orators including Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, Benjamin Beniker and a variety of other writers; significant contributions in the performing arts such as Marian Anderson, Hubie Blake, Sidney Portier, Stevie Wonder; the establishment of separate and independent institutions to continue the development of Black people such as Black Independent Colleges here in L.A., Charles Drew University, churches such as the American Methodist Episcopal church, N.A.A.C.P., the Urban League, sororities and fraternities, insurance companies and radio stations; the enhancement in the field of sports with sports greats like Arthur Ash, Wilma Rudolph, Jesse Owens, Sugar Ray Robinson, etc; and contributions to world peace in American society, from people like Ralph Bunche, Martin Luther King, Jr., Thurgood Marshall, Shirley Chisholm.

The history of attack and destruction from within and without includes the deliberate separation of families done in the time span of the system of slavery; the institutionalization of racism to create unequal outcomes in education, which is now being evidenced by our high dropout rates and the low percentage of Blacks attending colleges; the problems in access to health care by barriers of cost and location; the problems in the legal system with the high incidence of Blacks incarcerated in all institutions, both juvenile and adult -- anywhere in the nation 45% - 65% of those institutions are occupied by blacks; the institutionalization of racism and the economy which means we don't have any control in terms of decisions; the lack of participation in all facets of economic growth and development; politics -- this country's refusal to elect a black president, or to think it possible, the state's refusal to elect a black governor or to think it possible; the proliferation of violence particularly gangs, drugs, and alcohol -- and the acceptance as if this is the norm by society and some black community residents.

Black families are functioning in a variety of configurations in Los Angeles, including Black families with working mothers, female head of households, male head of households, two-parent families, extended families with two generations of parents in the same household, and teen families. Black families are affected by the same societal pressures and changes as all families in Los Angeles.

The major societal changes and pressures impacting Black families at this time are: (1) the change in American from a post-industrial society to an information-age society, (2) the necessity for women to enter the workforce is now in unprecedented numbers, (3) the lack of affordable childcare and after school care, and (4) the loss of the concept of community, which provided community norms, acceptable behavior norms -- protection and support to children, youth and women.

The following recommendations are presented from the philosophical frame which states that: (1) investing in the uplifting of Black families is investing in the future of Los Angeles, thereby in California and in the future America; and (2) the focus of all policies should be to increase the number and avenues of opportunity and encompass those opportunities with supportive structures.

The four recommendations made to the Task Force are:

1. To establish a viable history of employment which equals employment opportunities within and surrounding Black communities beginning with the age of middle adolescence.
2. Establish a citywide Black Family Day to highlight the cultural, political, and societal contributions of Blacks within the City of Los Angeles.

3. Enforce the right of students to have a free education. If that includes the reestablishment of truant officers, so be it.

4. To continue the continuity of supportive services for families, including Family Life Education programs, gang and drug prevention programs, targeting youth, real employment opportunities particularly targeting Black males, and responsive educational programs.

Thank you for the opportunity.

THOMAS FRANK COLEMAN: I'm interested -- the first one -- did you say to establish a history of employment opportunities?

DONZELLA LEE: Yes. In our community there's a lack of people saying, "Well, I worked when I was 13, 15, 19, 20." They enter the workforce after they've graduated from High School, so they don't have the experience of working; what it takes to be a good employee, what the expectations are of an employer -- those opportunities no longer exist. I was born and raised in Los Angeles and when I was a teenager I had those opportunities. They no longer exist. There are so many federal grant cuts, state grant cuts, our kids don't have the opportunity to practice what they know and who they are.

THOMAS FRANK COLEMAN: O.K. And then the other -- this issue of the implementation of the students right to a free education including the concept of truant officers. This is an interesting notion. Could you maybe explain?

DONZELLA LEE: It's an old notion. That was rescinded and so now we have what we call in L.A. County particularly L.A. Unified School District you know we have anywhere between 40 and 50 percent drop out rate. I particularly work in Jordan High School and at any one time 600 students will be absent from school, just plain old ordinary absent. All the schools I would think would be begging for some kind of enforcement policy to ensure the kids are in school when they are supposed to be there.

THOMAS FRANK COLEMAN: I think the law is still in the books, theoretically -- that it's mandatory education, right?

DONZELLA LEE: Mandatory education but..

THOMAS FRANK COLEMAN: As far as actually implementing it -- there's no effective implementing mechanism?

DONZELLA LEE: Not at all.

THOMAS FRANK COLEMAN: And the truant officers? This would be arresting the kids if they don't go back to school?

DONZELLA LEE: They used to, they used to pick them up and either call their parents or pick them up and take them home or back to the school.

THOMAS FRANK COLEMAN: And how would you identify the truant kids? Let's say that we go into year round schools -- is that going to be an impediment? If one were to adopt this approach how would you know whether the student was supposed to be in school or not -- by just seeing them on sight in year round school?

DONZELLA LEE: That's an interesting concept. I'm not sure if our kids who are in year round schools, don't they all have I.D.'s? All schools issue I.D.'s. I would rather refer you to some principals who could really help you to address that issue. But I know principals are asking for help in that area and that's why I made the suggestion.

THOMAS FRANK COLEMAN: So it needs to be explored. Maybe some type of a study group or task force that could flush this idea out within the framework of the district -- of how to implement or have an effective program against truancy including truant officers or whatever.

DONZELLA LEE: I would say so. One of the other things about truancy I know is that kids don't think that education is relevant anymore. And the reason they don't think it's relevant is because they know a lot of employed people who do not have jobs. And so why should I go to school to get an education not to have a job? And they also view other opportunities to make money. And those other opportunities make a lot of money -- and there are no taxes to that, I mean you know they weigh their pros and their cons and so you know we're going to have to do something in terms of education to make it palatable to kids -- and to make it interesting and to make it seem like there is something worthwhile in terms of the educational process.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: I'm really appreciate the fact that you added that because I was struggling sort of with the punitive notion of you know capturing this reluctant student and taking him down to school.

With the exception of the most affluent schools in the state, the dropout rate is scandalous all across the state and it's been denied systematically until recently by school administrators up and down the state. I mean I went through a conversation with the Superintendent of Public Instruction or we were telling him exactly where schools were, where the school authorities were falsifying the records to show that the dropout rate did not exist. You know their funding is tied to that, their

success, reputations, so people would try to perpetuate there's a 5 percent dropout rate when it's like 40 and 50 and 60. So there's a problem that transcends particular communities or ethnic groups.

There's something wrong with education and the way we're doing it -- where we're not attracting people in a way that they find it beneficial to their future.

BETTY HANNA WITHERSPOON: First, You were going so fast, I got four. I'd like you to repeat four. Then I'd like to know, because my young people are now older, does OSIS still exist?, which is Operation Stay in School? Is that still around?

DONZELLA LEE: Not that I'm aware of. Number four was the continuity of support services for families including Family Life Education programs, gang, drug, and violence prevention programs; targeting youth, real employment opportunities particularly targeting Black males, and responsive educational programs.

BETTY HANNA WITHERSPOON: This is an ongoing battle with the sixties. And I understand why you're targeting Black males because of the incredibly high employment rates for Black male youth. But as you also went down your figures and did a breakdown on what's happening with families and how families are developing, and as you work in Jordan High and as you deal with young women who are becoming very young mothers and who need to be supportive of their children, what would you put out there for them so that they could adequately provide and be adequate Mom's?

DONZELLA LEE: The number one problem that we have with our teen mothers is child care. There is no adequate child care for our teen mothers. There are no subsidized child care programs for teen mothers. My teens tell me that the reason they don't go back to school is because they don't have any child care. I would say that would be the number one issue for teen mothers.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: Is there a parenting program on the campus where you work?

DONZELLA LEE: Most of the High Schools have, I should not say most, but in our area Jordan has parenting programs but they only accommodate 20 parents.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: And does that include child care for those parents?

DONZELLA LEE: That includes child care for those parents.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: But only 20 positions or slots.

BETTY HANNA WITHERSPOON: When you say parents are we talking about Moms and Dads?

DONZELLA LEE: Depending on the relationship of the teen mother with the teen father.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: Yes, but we're moving to some emphasis there where -- I used that deliberately to parents as opposed to a teen mother.

NORA BALADERIAN: Number four you said responsive education and I don't know what that means.

DONZELLA LEE: The issues that we were talking about in terms of making education palatable to kids. Our kids say that they don't want to come to school because it's boring. They don't learn anything. The teachers don't like them. There's no reason for them to be there when they could do other things that they like to do. So education is boring to them. It's not challenging to them. I mean there are a lot of things going on on the school campuses that our kids say is not appealing to them. Even though we've transcended and have done a lot of things in terms of television and making television real creative for kids and them being into television we haven't done the same thing in education. We just haven't responded to where our kids are. And we need to do something.

NORA BALADERIAN: I have one other question and it may be real inappropriate and real wrong. I've been told by one person, and had a second person tell me I'm real wrong. I'm struck by the numbers in which Black children and adults kill themselves, through drugs and through suicide, teen suicide is real high. Homicide is the first, number one cause of death among teenagers -- 16 to 25 or something like this. And I'm wondering what kind of community education is done in the area of prenatal education, malnutrition, drug education, homicide, suicide, matricide, patricide -- everything.

DONZELLA LEE: You know because the number one problem is funding. It always is funding because it's so fragmented. I mean each individual the city funds something, they fund it for a year and then it's gone. The same issues that the lady who preceded me talked about in terms of funding for Indian issues. State funds for so long and then there's a new government in and they change their focus, the federal government is the same thing -- so the issue is consistent funding to alleviate and address the problems.

Usually what happens with those funding agencies there's no real evaluation component included in those programs to assess whether or not we made a difference. And I think that's important so that people can look at and see what models can work and models can be replicated across the country. Because the problems that are endemic to Los Angeles city are endemic to all large cities throughout our nation which have various ethnic populations in them. We have in our community a high incidence of those things that you described, but again I don't want you to take it out of context because some of the reasons why people feel more comfortable with hurting somebody who looks like them has to do with racism. And racism, like I stated before, is endemic in this country. You know, it's been moved to other levels but it's still here.

NORA BALADERIAN: Is the Watts Health Foundation taking over the issue for all the prevention kind of work?

DONZELLA LEE: Watts Health Foundation has been taking a leadership role in preventative education for 18 years. We have always had an extensive preventive program there and Watts Health Foundation saw the need to particularly target adolescents and that's why there's an Adolescent Services Department.

NORA BALADERIAN: Thank you.

DONZELLA LEE: You're welcome.

CAROL GILL: I don't know if this is an appropriate question for you, but I'd like to get it on the record anyway and that is that, in my stepson's school, I have a 15 year-old step-son who goes to a school that's predominantly White and Hispanic, not a large proportion of Black students. But what's happened in his school is that the tremendous drop out and truancy rate seems to coincide with this mass exodus of trained teachers out of the profession, and their lack of fulfillment and their declining morale and in their place an influx of teachers who are recruited desperately without credentials, without training in skills of being educators and possibly without -- in some cases that we've seen -- a lot of motivation to be with children and to help them develop. There's been a real problem. Is that also true in your experience?

DONZELLA LEE: I think that's true in education period. This country has an inverted priority list. I mean education is not a priority -- they don't pay teachers any money. They don't want to put the money there so teachers can feel good about their profession. There are many excellent teachers throughout the school system and I'd like to make sure that goes on the record, but again this country does not really have a commitment to education, it does not have a commitment to children, youth, or women. So when you talk about those issues -- I mean you know you

have to keep that in context. But that is one of the factors that is impinging on the educational system.

DUNCAN DONOVAN: I never heard of Operation Stay in School before, and I'm sorry that you haven't either. I was wondering if at Jordan High School there's been much cooperation with the Parent Teachers Association in trying to help with the people who are cutting classes and staying out of school.

DONZELLA LEE: Jordan has a wonderful principal and they've been doing a lot of things over there in trying to counteract the problems in terms of attendance and truancy. But thus far none of those things have worked. I think there are some federal grants coming down for schools to deal with truancy problems. But almost all of the schools I've been in who have that problem have access to those funds. And they're trying to address the problem in terms of vocational training, special other kinds of programs to divert kids from the streets. If they're not interested in sitting in the classroom all day there's something other for them to do. So they are trying to address the problem but it's school specific and it's not district wide. And it depends on the principal and the principal's commitment to education in the kids that she serves.

DUNCAN DONOVAN: I wonder if the Parent's group is the place to look for some help and motivation.

DONZELLA LEE: I work with both the advisory council's at Jordan and the parents who attend are interested. And those parents who attend - the issue is the parents who don't attend.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: That's right, and in some communities, the P.T.A. has become an irrelevant institution anyway in many places. I noticed this morning's testimony from Michael Eng who was telling us about some of the activities in Monterey Park in a tri-cultural community. And one of the things we didn't talk about was the fact that in Alhambra and in Monterey Park, the Chinese P.T.A. is the huge P.T.A. In other words, an entire group of individuals felt it necessary to come together in a completely different way and engage the school system outside of that traditional organization. So it was just created as if it didn't exist and that's what engages those principals and those teachers in a different way.

CAROL GILL: I get concerned though when attendance is equated with interest because with all the pressures on parents today to work and to provide the home it's extremely difficult, plus the alienation from the kids. And it's the same thing as with teachers. I mean my point was that society doesn't give teachers an incentive to keep them in this and to make it a true profession and to develop educational opportunities and interest, and I think it's also true for parents.

NORA BALADERIAN: A point of interest -- in Harlem there's a program that addresses issues of teen employment that's also looking at teen pregnancy. And it's a multi-funded, privately funded and publicly funded, that works in a community center. It provides child care, and dinner for the P.T.A. meetings, and classes for the parents and classes for the teens and classes for the little ones, and if they don't come, someone goes and knocks on their door and says, "Mrs. Jones, how come you didn't come, can you come tonight, we're having spaghetti, we have child care, tonight we're doing sewing, or parenting."

DONZELLA LEE: What is the name of the program?

NORA BALADERIAN: I don't know the name. Michael Carrerra is the person who organized it and you can find him with Planned Parenthood in New York.

CHRISTOPHER McCAULEY: Good. Thank you so much for being here. We appreciate it.

DONZELLA LEE: Thank you for having me.

CHRISTOPHER McCAULEY: Dr. Allan Heskin is from the UCLA School of Architecture and Planning. He is here to discuss with us the subject of housing -- how to create more affordable housing for city families, emphasis being on families. Welcome.

**ALLAN HESKIN, Ph.D.**

**UCLA School of Architecture and Planning**

**Creating Affordable Housing for Los Angeles Families**

**ALLAN HESKIN:** Some days I have to decide how damning of the city I want to be and how generous I want to be. It's not hard to be very damning of the city, particularly when it comes to family housing. Housing policy in the city -- to the extent that it exists at all, and there isn't very much in the way of housing policy -- it's extraordinarily dominated by the industry, if you will, the real estate industry. Even if you're talking about affordable housing, affordable housing in this city means a small number of very large private firms that get huge sums of money from the city. You read about them in the real estate section in articles on bond issues, on block grant dollars, on C.R.A. dollars. It's a major industry. And that heavily dominates what happens at the city.

Families are very much not a part of that whole operation. Particularly when you are talking about affordable housing, the emphasis is very much more on senior housing, which, of course, is desperately needed -- but is considered much safer than family housing.

**CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY:** Safer political issue or safer housing issue?

**ALLAN HESKIN:** Safer from an economic point of view, and safer from a community reaction point of view. If you're trying to build a senior unit you get less reaction. If you're trying to build a family unit, you get much more reaction -- so it's safer all the way around.

Aside from a general lack of policy, particularly as relates to families, and aside from a somewhat hostile situation, part of my presentation is designed is to try and help you understand why -- at least my theories of why there is no family housing policy -- aside from the fact that the particular economics and the particular people in the business and their economics contribute to this. I believe it has to do with accounting.

**Accounting for the Lack of Family Housing Units**

Every person I've heard who's gotten up here, tells you we serve 40 people, or 45, or we serve 145 or we do whatever. If you produce lots of little units, you produce lots bigger numbers than if you produce fewer but

larger units. Housing is very expensive. It costs about \$100,000 -- give or take \$10,000 or \$20,000 dollars -- to create a housing unit. If you're really subsidizing it to build it, you can build many more one-bedroom or zero-bedroom apartments than you can build 3 and 4 bedroom apartments. And the bureaucracy in the city is very much into a numbers game -- like anybody who is in a social service agency -- they want to report large numbers, as large a number as they can produce.

It not only relates to dealing with smaller units which cost less, or cost less to rehabilitate, or cost less to build, so they are going to produce small units -- they're not going to produce family units, large units. But the other thing that goes in on this is, if you're in the business as a bureaucrat and you want to produce large numbers you don't want to put all your eggs in a single basket. You want to run your money through, over and over and over again. Well, if you want to run your money through over and over again, use it over and over again and produce more and more units, particularly more and more small units, to say we've done 10,000 units, or we've done whatever, you are not really looking for affordable housing. Because if you're taking the money out, somebody has to be replacing that. If you loan \$5,000, \$10,000, \$20,000, you say pay it back, there has to be income there to pay it back. If you're talking about income to pay it back, you're usually not talking about an affordable housing unit in any real sense.

So what happens in the city is: (1) they want to produce small units because they can produce more, and (2) they want to get their money back as absolutely quickly as possible so they can use it again, so they can do more units, so they can justify their existence like any good agency would anywhere -- it's a human feeling.

Unfortunately, the end result of this is often disaster. For example, the city has a program called the Rental Rehabilitation Program, where they make loans of \$5,000 to a private landlord. The landlord is supposed to match that with \$5,000 and then they give the landlord a three-year rehabilitation certificate -- which means that for three years the tenants rent is subsidized by basically a section 8 voucher which says the tenant pays 30% of their income and the federal government pays the rest. Well the city loves this program -- although it only loves it when it comes to small units -- because the \$5,000 and the \$5,000, the \$10,000 isn't enough money to rehabilitate a large unit. So the city actually is sitting on dozens of these vouchers for three and four bedroom units that it can't use. It can use all the one- bedroom units it can get, the zero-bedrooms, and some two-bedrooms, but the three-and-four-bedroom units, it actually has subsidies it's not using. Because the structure of the program won't even allow their use. What they do with these units is they find someone who is usually an investor or finds a piece of property with pretty low rents and pretty low income people in it. They go in and do the \$5,000 match --

they do some sort of cosmetic improvement to the property. If the landlord can get the tenants to move in the meantime, or, in fact, it's not even clear to me that the landlord has to, because after three years the city is basically out of it, your out from under rehab rent control because you've spent the money. What happens is, the property is usually sold within three years. They city forgets about what happened to the property. When this property is sold, they get their \$5,000 back. Until recently, they get another certificate from the federal government, they go out and loan out the \$5,000 and they are sort of going through the city destroying affordable housing. And it is quite remarkable if you look at what this program is doing!

The city loves it because they pay the \$5,000 to a speculator, the speculator sells within three years, so they get the \$5,000 back, they soothe their conscience with this three year rent supplement. At the end of three years, lord knows what happens to this tenant. And the place is cosmetically fixed up and the rents are doubled, tripled, quadrupled in the process. But it produces great numbers. It produces numbers that are outstanding. You can talk in the thousands in this program.

The Redevelopment Agency has done all kinds of housing. They are very proud of bragging about their housing -- and except for what they've done for the homeless which is fairly remarkable -- most of their affordable housing requires that you syndicate it immediately because they want their money back. Even though they have millions and millions and millions of dollars, they want their money back right away so they can use it again. Well, where does that come from? It comes again from speculative market -- people not really in the long term affordable housing business. The Redevelopment Agency has no process to monitor whatever happens to this housing after they build it. They only care about building it. And lord knows what's happening down the road except that the C.R.A. has it's money back, they have big numbers, and who knows what's going on out there. Except we know that the syndication process is a process where you sell the property to very wealthy people who are trying to make money off of it, who are looking to maybe convert it to condominiums somewhere down the line, or some other very favorable economic process.

If you say, "Well, why don't you just leave the money in there and why don't we put in some sort of non-profit ownership or why don't we put it in some public ownership?" That's not what they're interested in. They're interested in production, get the money back, more production, get the money back, and numbers.

Also, the Redevelopment Agency, until very recently, had no interest in families -- again, because you could produce more numbers with smaller units. Recently, there has been some awakening in the Redevelopment Agency, partly in the Hollywood Redevelopment program and partly through

Councilman Woo's efforts in asking, "How is family housing?" But it's something that ought to be asked in every part of the housing program. If concerned Councilpeople, when they saw these reports and saw these numbers, just asked, "Well, how about family housing?" Instead of counting units, maybe they should ask, "How many three-bedrooms have you produced?" Maybe if you changed the accounting system -- you'd get a better result. But if simply we ask the question, "How about family housing? I know you've produced one million one-bedrooms, but how about family units?"

In Hollywood, for example there's a classic example of this problem. Hollywood is massively families, and massively overcrowded. It's almost entirely one-bedroom apartments and it's almost entirely families. So we have this incredible mismatch of the housing stock and family composition and the city has historically been very much part of this problem. You'll find one-bedroom after one-bedroom produced by the city.

Now, another part of this -- and there is some inkling of changing this, but the pressure against it in the bureaucracy is extraordinary -- the private market is even saturated with one bedroom units. We're in a rental building boom right now. We've just been in the midst of it, and I'm sure there are going to be foreclosures and bankruptcies very soon in the private industry because the structure of the zoning laws also tremendously favors one-bedrooms, and the parking requirements tremendously favor one-bedrooms -- both of which relate very heavily to the economics of building.

So you'll find in neighborhoods throughout this area of the city, and throughout the whole city, huge complexes of one-bedroom units. We have basically exhausted that market. We're basically at the same situation we were in the condo boom. Remember how they built condos? Now we're into one-bedroom rental situation the way we were in condos. There are only so many people who can pay \$700 for a one-bedroom and they sort of exhausted them. So I think we're going to find the end of that.

#### **Re-Defining "Affordable" Housing**

I'm not sure what horrendous mistake we're going to make next but one of the great problems among all this too is how we define "affordability." So not only is it that we don't think about the match between what we really need -- family units -- and what we build -- one-bedroom units; but, our affordability standards are really something we inherited from the federal government. To the extent that the city can say, "Well, that's what the federal government says "affordable" means -- I guess they're blameless for copying the federal government. But what the federal government says doesn't make any sense.

The federal government defines "affordable" as 80% of the median. That's basically 80% of the average. Well, when very low income (which is now defined by the Reagan administration as 50% of the median), sounds like pretty affordable housing -- except when you think about how they calculate the median.

To calculate the median, they take everybody's income in L.A. County. That includes everybody in Beverly Hills, everybody in the west end, all homeowners, all renters, everybody. So if you look at renters income, particularly and the heavy percentage of low income people are renters, that's about half a homeowners income. The average renter's income is about half that of homeowners. So if you're creating programs either for first time homebuyers or for renters, and you use even a 50% of median figure, you're up in the 80th, 90th percentile of renters. So the city will brag about producing of affordable housing. If you ever ask them, "Well, what is the rent?" You're going to find out for a one-bedroom it's \$400 or \$500 a month. Well, for South Central or Indian populations, or for many other populations, that's not affordable housing for those populations. It is affordable for a particular segment of upwardly-mobile or higher working class families, but for the tremendous percentage of low-income people? Five hundred dollars per month for a one-bedroom apartment is not affordable for any low income people -- it's simply not affordable.

So, even if you look at all these units that they produce, they're not really affordable.

However, when you go to other kinds of Task Forces, I'm on Jimmy Hahn's Task Force -- although I think I'm getting off Jimmy Hahn's Task Force.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: Which one is that?

ALLAN HESKIN: He has a Housing Task Force. Recently the rules have been changed, the syndication rules, and one of the large private developers who has made a fortune off of building affordable housing -- which is to 80% of median housing -- and who has used unbelievable amounts of city bonding and block-grant money is saying, "We're getting out of the business. You can't do it anymore."

They used to say we are building affordable housing if 20% of the units were available to people at 80% of the median. Then they would brag, "We're building affordable housing." Well, so it would be a one-bedroom apartment at \$500 a month, or a two-bedroom at \$650 a month or \$700 a month -- which is certainly cheaper than the market but not really what you'd think of as affordable. And that would only be 20% of the units.

Again the city doesn't have any real way to regulate that other than good faith. There's no real way to really find out what's happening down the road.

Now, the federal government is saying if you want to syndicate -- which is this way that you sell off the property and you get your money back fast -- you have to increase the percentage of affordable units to 30 or 40 percent, and they are throwing up their hands...you can't do this anymore! Developers are saying, "Thirty per cent -- you're crazy; you can't do this." They say this because their numbers don't work out. They can't make a profit, so they're all in a tizzy. Even these guys who are making fortunes off of this -- when in fact it wasn't affordable housing to begin with.

But to show you the nature of the problem, is it costs about \$200 a month to operate a housing unit, a rental unit. So if we're talking really affordable rents more the two, three hundred, three fifty, four hundred dollar a month rent, which particularly when you're talking to the homeless population you heard earlier, that's what you're talking about. Well, with \$200 per month overhead per unit and only charging \$300 per month rent, you're talking about basically a free building. That's what gets me back to this thing about when they talk about they want their money back, if they talk about they want their money back, immediately, if the government says we want our money back, immediately, it's not affordable because it costs \$200 a month just to pay for insurance, utilities and just operating, just general operating cost -- excluding the mortgage. So the first \$200 is just going to keep the roof from leaking, and the insurance paid.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: Are there some remedies that you would suggest that we ought to be particularly aware of?

ALLAN HESKIN: Well, I think the city has to take some responsibility for this. The city's position on this -- I heard the Mayor give a speech not long ago -- he said, "Housing is not the city's responsibility." And that's the general response. That's the general position of the the city. It is not the city's responsibility. As long as the city takes that position we're in trouble.

So, I think, number one, you have to say it's the city's responsibility to make sure it's population is housed. I think in New York City that's basically their position. It's one of the few cities in the country that maybe takes that position -- but the position of Los Angeles is very clear, "It is not our responsibility."

Most cities in this country, major cities have dozens of nonprofits in this business. They have ten times the number of public housing units we have and dozens of of nonprofits in the affordable housing business. We

have virtually a handful of public housing units, when you're talking other major cities, and we have virtually no nonprofits in this business. If we have a dozen significant ones it will be a lot for a city this size.

This city does not support nonprofits. Basically, their position is, "We do not support non-profits in the housing field." That's their position, they make some exceptions, some very glorious exceptions like the S.R.O. Development Corporation, which I make real clear that's an exception. I know there's a push being made to make a nonprofit as part of the redevelopment process in Hollywood, but the redevelopment agency is going just absolutely slow as it can and by the time they create such an organization, real estate values will be so high that it will be so expensive to function that it will be virtually, it will be almost impossible to do anything.

It ought to be that when they create a redevelopment area, the first thing they do is create a nonprofit to look after the affordable housing. The real estate activity in Hollywood, for example, is extraordinary. The buildings are just turning over very rapidly. I have students studying areas now and the amount of speculation in Hollywood is just unbelievable. Any kind of building is being sold, being looked at, being studied. There's people out hustling just about every lot in the Hollywood area. The fact that there's no public entity or nonprofit entity out hustling, looking to save and create affordable housing, while the private sector is going to have a two or three year head start on the public sector, means that the public sector is in real trouble. The redevelopment agency doesn't see the particular need.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: But you're suggesting very specifically that the City Redevelopment Agency should include a non-profit house....

ALLAN HESKIN: Very early in the process of declaring an area a redevelopment area, they should create a nonprofit to actively plan to preserve the affordable housing in that area.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: Any other specific things that you have for us?

ALLAN HESKIN: We should redefine the affordability standard. We should take 80 and 50 percent of the renter's income rather than the average income of the county. I don't see why when we're talking about affordable housing that we have any interest in people who live in Bel Air, and their incomes. Why we average in the people in Bel Air's incomes it doesn't make any sense to me. What do we care -- they're not in the rental housing market.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: And specifically you are suggesting that it's too large a regional base.

ALLAN HESKIN: I'm suggesting that we ought to look at renters and not include homeowners in general. Another possibility would be to exclude the top 20 percentile right off the top and then calculate it. There would be an infinite variety of ways to do it. What's clear to me is the way we do it now does not produce affordable housing. Because we're including a top end that makes no sense to include at all.

THOMAS FRANK COLEMAN: What agency or would redefine affordable -- the City Council?

ALLAN HESKIN: The Council. The Council has the power to do that. They use the figure they use because it's the standard.

DUNCAN DONOVAN: There was something I was unaware of that was on the redevelopment \$5,000/\$5,000 matching.

ALLAN HESKIN: That's an example of one of the programs the city has -- it's a rehabilitation program.

DUNCAN DONOVAN: Yes, but what I was not clear about, was you indicated that when the developer is going for that particular rehabilitation, that the tenant is usually having his rent stabilized?

ALLAN HESKIN: The rent on the unit is dramatically increased. The tenant gets a three-year rent supplement.

DUNCAN DONOVAN: A supplement that's somewhat similar you said to Section 8?

ALLAN HESKIN: It is the Section 8, but it's only a three-year certificate. When I've asked people in the city, "What happens after the end of three years?" They sort of get vague about it. They say, "Well, it gets extended."

DUNCAN DONOVAN: What I don't understand is that you seem to indicate that after three years the rent adjustment controls no longer exist on that unit.

ALLAN HESKIN: Well, you rehabilitate it again. Well, now, it depends how many dollars you've spent. If you've spent \$10,000 on the unit, yes, you get out from under rent control. But \$5,000 of those dollars are city dollars. Also, if you can get the tenant to move in this process, the tenant has this certificate which the tenant can take anywhere for three years. So, if you can encourage the tenant to move, then you...

DUNCAN DONOVAN: I understand that is a mechanism that would be a benefit to the owner of a property. But what I don't quite understand is, you indicate that there would be a sale at the end of the three years, and that there would be a second getting out from under rent adjustment.

ALLAN HESKIN: No, what happens is the city gets its money back. They require that the loan is paid off in the sale. So they're actually looking to give this money to owners, where they're going to get the money back in three years. That's their history. Their history is they get these properties that they're putting this money into. The average time is three years, they get their money back. The properties are sold within three years

DUNCAN DONOVAN: Yes, but you indicate that there's a second getting out from under rent control.

ALLAN HESKIN: No, there is not. It's out from any kind of government regulation at that point, once they've paid the loan back, they're free and clear.

DUNCAN DONOVAN: Whether the tenant is still present or not?

ALLAN HESKIN: Right.

THOMAS FRANK COLEMAN: Is it because there's \$10,000 renovation on the unit that they're out from control?

ALLAN HESKIN: They're out from rent control. The rent on the unit is raised, see, in this process the rent on the unit is raised.

DUNCAN DONOVAN: The rent is raised at the time of development..at first, but I don't understand.

ALLAN HESKIN: It doesn't revert back when the subsidy is gone. When the subsidy is gone, the subsidy is gone.

DUNCAN DONOVAN: And there's already a new rent established. And that new rent is not changed.

ALLAN HESKIN: No. But what happens is -- its a city program that's doing this. The city program is basically helping landlords, giving them enough money, to get them out from rent control. The only thing it does is -- it gives a cushion for the tenant for three years in this process. But it seems to be a strange policy of the city to be going around doubling, tripling rents. The kinds of repairs they do -- the projects are actually are fairly cosmetic. What I've seen is -- they often stucco the buildings, which is a nice thing, you drive around Hollywood and see these pastel stuccos,

sort of boxy units and chances are it's probably one of these projects. They're all over Hollywood, so they've done a lot of units in Hollywood. But the end result is not affordable housing in any way, except a tenant for three years got a rent supplement.

ADELE STARR: I was just wondering -- the redevelopment of these buildings -- once they're sold they make probably a good profit. Are they the same people who -- I often hear about the Councilmen/women getting big donations from real estate developers -- are those the same people who want to perpetuate this program?

ALLAN HESKIN: I think that the housing policy of the city is written basically by those people. On this Housing Task Force I'm on, I am the only person who is not an industry person. I'm not comfortable being there. They wanted to expand the Task Force, because they said we're not enough people. Well, who do they expect -- with banking people, finance people. So with that expanded, they bring in more industry people.

ADELE STARR: Don't the tenants complain after three years?

ALLAN HESKIN: Well the tenant is alone at that point. Sure the tenant complains, but where is the tenant going to be. I don't want to focus too much on that program although I think it's what they call in housing a gentrification program. It's basically set out to take inexpensive units and turn them into not inexpensive units. It's not the only program. You could go through almost any of the programs the city has and they're not producing affordable housing. Most probably the best programs are the condo programs, and they're not very low income, they're only good because they produce about a \$60,000 condominium which is a pretty affordable unit if you're talking about ownership. The advantage to that is -- if somebody moves out of a rental unit into that condominium, hopefully praying there's something behind it, and getting someone into home ownership.

We have vacancy to control, so one of the great ironies of what we do is.... For instance, when you build a senior unit, most of the very low rent units in Los Angeles are occupied by seniors. And the people involved in rent stabilization, rent control, will hear about historically low rents. Landlords will scream about what they call historically low rents. They have a tenant who's been there for twenty years and was there from the beginning of rent control and pays \$150 a month where other tenants are paying \$600 a month, or \$700 a month and they are very upset about why should this person get a benefit? Well the city did a study and found overwhelmingly these people are seniors. So, because those are the people who don't move in 20 years are seniors -- young people tend to be mobile -- so what happens is you build a senior unit. You spend a fortune, you spend your \$80,000, it's cheaper to build a senior unit than it is a family unit. You spend your \$80,000 rather than \$120,000. And what happens is a

senior, who actually is in an affordable housing unit, but maybe is very insecure in there because they're isolated in some way, moves into some kind of more congregate facility -- something like Janet's places -- which are much more supportive. But what happens is -- what you've done is -- you have taken the senior out of \$150 a month unit, spent \$80,000 of government money to build something to put them in and what happens behind them? That \$150 unit becomes a \$600 a month unit, so you've spent \$80,000 of government money to give an incredible subsidy, basically, I mean in that sense, to a private sector landlord who has got an enormous windfall out of the fact that you just spent \$80,000 of government money. Now it's a good thing for the senior who now has not only an affordable unit, maybe a more affordable unit, but now has a socially supportive environment. But that doesn't seem to me to make sense, that you spend so much government money and the senior gets a more socially supportive environment and some private sector landlord gets a \$500 a month windfall, which is most probably an \$80,000 windfall.

BETTY HANNA WITHERSPOON: There are two in here hopefully they can be answered briefly. The first has to do with the configuration of our elderly population. Assuming that much of that population is in fact in homes, if there was the movement to one-bedroom units, what are the possibilities of freeing up houses that could be used for our larger incoming immigrant new families that may in fact be very large families?

The second question has to do with building multiple-family units on a site. It's my understanding we're covered by some kind of state ordinance that indicates once you go to more than five units per site of subsidized housing we've got to get a vote by the folks to agree to that. So my question is were the City Council to in fact approach the state about getting rid of that, could we in fact see some greater production of affordable family housing in the city of L.A.?

ALLAN HESKIN: O.K. The first thing is that many people have said that we don't really have a housing square-footage problem. We have a distribution problem. It's not just the problem of the senior in the large house, it's also the problem of the very wealthy family in the large house so we actually have enough square feet to house our population. It's not distributed on the basis of the population's needs. It's distributed on the basis of -- can you afford it? So there's no doubt that if we came up with some system to redistribute the housing that we could house our population.

Take the example of the million dollar plus condominiums on Wilshire Boulevard in Westwood. Some of those buildings are empty and in foreclosure. In Europe what they would have done is occupied those buildings. The homeless would have just taken over those buildings. We have a much more law-abiding, placating population than the European population. Take one of those towers. You could house an extraordinary

number of people in them. They are huge structures. So we have a lot of housing. What we do is constantly mismatch our need and our production. Like overbuilding the condos, now we're overbuilding one-bedrooms, and what bothers me is, obviously the private sector builders who want to commit economic suicide have the right to do that. What bothers me is, because our policy in the city is so dominated by that sector, we usually help them! We usually subsidize them to commit suicide. We get into these trendy things and the private sector wants to go. Then some Task Force -- a very different kind of Task Force than this kind of Task Force -- meets at some place and they plan out, "We're going to do one-bedrooms like crazy, we could build you a zillion units," and they go ahead and do these. Very often, there's government money in these crazy schemes. So I think that's what's wrong. I mean we're constantly mismatching. Fortunes are made and fortunes are lost in the real estate industry. If you're in the beginning you make the fortune, if you're at the end you lose the fortune. But it really bothers me that our government subsidizes this.

The other question is that story of why you need a vote -- it's in the state constitution actually. So what happened is, it relates to why there's no public housing in Los Angeles. It's related to that. It's in the same McCarthy era. All that came out of one of the darkest periods, if you will, the least pleasant periods of U.S. history and its housing industry. Then, if you know, Bunker Hill was supposed to be the largest public housing project. Ten thousand units were supposed to be built on Bunker Hill. The project was stopped partly with J. Edgar Hoover's doing, by saying it was a communist conspiracy to do this. And, in fact, one of the leaders of the Public Housing Authority spent a year in jail under contempt because his job was to meet with the public, and at that point, Dorothy Healy, who was a famous Los Angeles Communist was organizing the people in Chavez Ravine to resist the public housing. So he was meeting with Dorothy Healy because she was the organizer of the tenants and so they confronted him in an eminent domain hearing which was amazing with, "Isn't it true that you've been seen with non-Communists?" He would have lost his job if he were to answer. But, being a good civil libertarian, he spent a year in jail. And out of that, that was the last -- we didn't build public housing after that. At that same time, there was a statewide initiative, what you're talking about, to require this vote, if you go more than five units. So it would take a major statewide campaign now to undo what was done. It would be very difficult. Actually, the history though is that after years of those not passing, most of those initiatives pass now. Now the history of those initiatives across the state is actually very good. The question is one of commitment.

One good thing I'd say, something you might be interested in if this commission continues, you might invite the new director of the Housing Authority to come talk because the Housing Authority is going through one of the most extraordinary reorganizations that I've ever seen. I've spent a

lot of time there. Right now it's a mess. Right now it's just craziness because they're changing people hourly and reorganizing and putting in new systems. But the general direction seems to be actually very positive. So it might be a person to talk to what she plans to do because she is doing dramatic things down there. I think it would be very hard for her to do things though because of extreme competition. See there's basically no leadership. You have the C.R.A., the C.E.D., the Housing Authority, competing, backbiting, cutting each other off, going at each other without leadership.

UNIDENTIFIED: Out of Chavez Ravine, there was something but as horrible as that was, and it did happen, Frank Lewison made a totally new career and contributed tremendously to the advancement of civil liberties.

ALLAN HESKIN: One of the ironic things is -- all of this stuff that the C.R.A. writes about -- homelessness projects are being developed out of that money. It's out of the Bunker Hill money that they're doing it. It's the great irony of this, having destroyed all those units.

CHRISTOPHER McCUALEY: Thank you, Allan. And thanks to the Task Force members for sitting through nine hours of testimony. Even though we are all tired, I'm sure you will all agree that it was worth it.