COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

THOMAS H. EARLE, ESQUIRE, CHAIRPERSON
RABBI REBECCA ALPERT
REGINA AUSTIN, ESQUIRE
WEI CHEN
D'ONTACE KEYES
SARAH E. RICKS
OMAR WOODARD

ALSO PRESENT:

RUE LANDAU, ESQUIRE
Executive Director

HELD AT: Liberty Resources
112 North 8th Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107

REPORTED BY: Susan A. Hurrey, RPR
(Whereupon, the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations hearing began at 7:06 p.m.)

MR. EARLE: Let's get started, please.

I would like to let people know that the police are not keeping any particular person out. It's purely a matter of capacity.

(Mr. Earle: Inaudible.)

MR. EARLE: Well, try to get here a little earlier.

(Mr. Earle: Inaudible.)

MR. EARLE: I'm not disciplining you.

It's a --

SPEAKER: Okay. Now, do you want this to go smoothly or do you want to start some bullshit?

MR. EARLE: We're going to proceed.

Okay. 6:00 p.m. to 8:00.

SPEAKER: You're going to proceed with respect. You got that?

MR. EARLE: That's mutual.

SPEAKER: Yes, but you're going to respect us and we'll respect you.
MR. EARLE: We will respect you. We're not excluding anybody, just to correct you for the record.

I'd like to welcome everybody. My name is Thomas Earle. I'm the Chair of the Commission of the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations and I'm here with seven of eight -- excuse me?

SPEAKER: He said you should learn human relations.

MR. EARLE: If we can just proceed in a civil way.

SPEAKER: You got to speak up. You're not going to tell us to be civil because you're a white man. So you need to shut up and let us speak.

MR. EARLE: Actually, I'm Mexican American, but okay.

SPEAKER: That's fine.

SPEAKER: So is my partner of nine years.

MR. EARLE: Really not relevant right now. I'm here with seven of my eight fellow commissioners, Rebecca Alpert, Regina Austin, Wei Chen, D'Ontace Keyes, Sarah Ricks and Omar Woodard.
Commissioner Shalimar Thomas is unable to join us tonight.

Collectively, we are a richly diverse group; black, white, Latino, Asian, immigrants, LGBT, straight, cisgender, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, older, younger, disabled and we recognize our differences and the racism and discrimination that we sometimes face. I'd like to call this evening's PCA charter hearing to order by a brief overview of the Commission and the history of the Commission.

Since its inception in 1951, the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations has been charged with enforcing the civil rights and ordinances that prohibit discrimination and promoting equality and understanding among the City's diverse population. Under our Fair Practices Ordinance, Chapter 9-100 of the Philadelphia Code, the Commission's jurisdiction extends to discrimination in employment, housing, use of public accommodations, including the delivery of City services in over 16 protected categories or classes. Among the protected categories covered by the various provisions of the
ordinance are race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, disability, domestic violence, and domestic violence victim status. The Commission also enforces the City's Ban the Box Law, a unique law that makes it illegal for employers to inquire about a job applicant's criminal records until after a conditional offer of employment has been made.

In terms of intergroup relations, members of the Commission and its Community Relations division work in Philadelphia's neighborhoods throughout the City to resolve conflicts and to build positive relationships among people of different backgrounds. Commission staff work with community leaders, neighborhood organizations, local businesses, labor, schools and the police and use a variety of conflict resolution techniques from counseling to formal mediations. Throughout our work, we also connect community members to resources because we know that access to resources and knowledge on a nondiscriminatory basis is essential to the creation and maintenance of thriving diverse and integrated communities.
Each year the PCA Charter investigates approximately 300 cases of alleged discrimination and Ban the Box cases, resolves 350 neighborhood conflicts and conducts over 200 prevention and outreach activities.

We are holding this hearing tonight pursuant to our powers under the Home Rule Charter, the Fair Practice Ordinance and our governing regulations. Tonight the Commission is interested in hearing from you, the community, about your experiences with racism and discrimination in the LGBT community and your ideas for ways to improve relations in the community. To be clear, we are not deciding a pending complaint that has been filed with our Commission. This is not a trial or a court hearing. Instead, we are here to listen to you, gather information and the information is being documented by a court reporter. Once we have gathered this information and all of the written testimony that might be received, we will issue a report with findings and recommendations. If you do not want to speak tonight, you still can submit testimony in writing for the next full week.

Instructions on how to do that are on the table
right outside this conference room.

Before we start, let's review some quick ground rules to make things go as smoothly as possible. First, as a courtesy to everybody, we ask that you put your cell phones on silent so we don't hear ringers. We have a lot of speakers who are already lined up or signed up, and to give all speakers a fair opportunity we will time limit your comments to three minutes each. Please stay on topic, keeping in mind the mandate of the Commission. If you want to talk to staff from our office, or if you want to file a complaint, a formal complaint, the staff will investigate it and we have that information also on the table outside.

Many speakers signed up in advance and we will attempt to hear from them first and others who have signed up here tonight. We then will open up the floor to others, if time permits. There's no intent on the Commission to exclude anybody. We ask that you please speak with respect and sensitivity to everyone else. We understand that tensions and concerns have been rising in the LGBT community and we are here to try to help. Again, please stay on topic, keeping in mind the mandate
of the Commission. We do not want to hear about personnel concerns in the Mayor's office or issues outside of our jurisdiction of the Commission. Also, some people in the room may have discrimination cases already filed with our Commission and we ask that you do not speak to the specifics of your case. At the Commission there is a wall of silence between the staff who conducts the investigations and us, the commissioners, who ultimately may hear your cases in a hearing and decide them. We do not have any knowledge of who, if anyone here tonight, has filed a case. And we do not want you to potentially prejudice your case by speaking about it tonight.

The Commission has information on the table in the hallway. If you need additional information about the work of the Commission and how to contact us, please check out our Website and also the literature that's been provided outside.

Finally, there's also a support team from DBHIDS available this evening to provide emotional support if anyone needs to speak to someone or is in need of resources. The team can be identified by their light blue lanyards. The
team is here because the community members asked for the support. The team members identify as LGBTQ people of color.

Now, to get started, we're going to have Rue Landau, our Executive Director, who has put a tremendous effort into organizing this hearing call the first person to testify.

MS. LANDAU: Okay, everybody, again, I just want to thank you all for coming. I want to thank our wonderful staff for all the help that they did. I'd like to tell you there's -- we're very happy to see there's a lot of bar owners in the room, the Mayor has joined us in the back, there's council people here and staff from council people's offices. So know that we are listening.

I had some calls today from some elders who asked for something that I think would be very helpful now. We really do apologize for how many people are in the room. But the elders ask that we take one moment for a moment of silence so we all can get centered, ready to do the hard work that we can do and try to make solutions and good progress for our community. So if you pray, if you just want to meditate or just take a moment, let's take
a moment now.

(Pause.)

MS. LANDAU: Thank you, everyone.

There is one wireless mic in the back and I'm going
to get a second one. (Inaudible) is back there.

She's got one wireless mic. I will get another one
back there and there's a third mic up here.

The first person to speak is Gary

Hines. I'm going to call three names at a time so
you can get ready. Gary Hines, Sandy Smith, and
the next is supposed to be Michael Hinson. If he's
not here, it's Chris Bartlett. Thank you.

GARY HINES: Good evening, everybody.

Can you hear me? Hello everybody. My name is Gary
Hines. I'm a long-term community activist in
Philadelphia, not only in the LGBT community but
also in the West Philadelphia and Germantown
sections of the City. I have been a Board member
at the William Way Community Center, a co-chair of
the Liberty City LGBT Democratic Club, connected to
the Black Gay Men's Leadership Council, Philly
Black Pride and the COLOURS Organization. I
currently sit on the advisory board of Philadelphia
FIGHT and was appointed as a commissioner on the
Mayor's Commission on African American Males. So that's my background.

I was called -- I was asked to open up this dialogue today because I belong to a group called Men of All Colors Together. Men of All Colors Together has been around since 1981, and back in 1986 they created a report along with several other community organizations at the time, including the Philadelphia Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the Human Relations Commission back in that time period. And so 30 years ago, they worked on a project on this same situation we're going through right now, bar discrimination. So the Mayor's Commission on Sexual Minorities also played a role in that and my late sister was on that committee. I see some of the elders here that were on that committee, including Mr. Smith in front of me.

But anyway, what I wanted to say about this is that I want to just describe what MACT is for those of you who don't know. So Men of All Colors Together is a multi-racial, multi-cultural gay organization that fosters supportive environments and fights discrimination of all forms in the LGBTQA communities. The group started in
1981 in San Francisco and has been in existence for over 30 years here in Philadelphia. The group has various committees and has worked with city government, Human Relations Commission, all LGBT organizations in the City to fight all forms of racism, sexism, homophobia, agism, transphobia, and all the other isms in today's society.

So as I mentioned, in 1986, after several complaints given to the Human Relations Commission and other City officials, there was discrimination being documented in bars, in clubs around the City, in Center City in particular. And so this report was produced and basically it was a survey. It was a survey that they went around and basically asked the bar owners and door people what were their policies for admission, things like that. I don't happen to have a copy of the report, but it's going to be available in PDF for folks to access, I think, through the Human Relations Commission's Website and to speak more on -- actually, I wasn't part of the group back in 1986. I didn't join until the mid-90s. But Sandy Smith was actually here and helped to develop that report, so I'd like to turn it over to Sandy.
MS. LANDAU: Way to stick to the three-minute time limit.

SANDY SMITH: Thank you. I will try to keep this as brief as I can. But thank you for the introduction, Gary. My name a Sandy Smith. I have been a resident of this City for 34 years, though I'm not a native. I hail from Kansas City, Missouri. But shortly after moving here in 1983, I joined, along with my then partner, what was then known as Black and White Men Together, now Men of All Colors Together Philadelphia. It was one of about eight organizations that together formed the coalition on lesbian and gay bar policies to respond to charges of persistent discrimination at the gay and lesbian bars in what was not yet known as the Gayborhood at the time.

Anyway, basically there was a group of about, I'd say, eight to 12 people, including my partner and I, who formed the committee that did the actual study and survey. It consisted of two parts over about a two-year time span. We interviewed, or attempted to interview, either the owner or the manager of every known lesbian and gay bar in the City at the time to ascertain what their
policies were with regard to admission of patrons,
cover charges, employment, how positions were
advertised, and any other aspects of the operation
that may have pertained. Then we followed this up
by sending out teams of observers, either
singularly or in pairs to actually just attend --
go to the establishment unannounced, spend about an
hour or two there at random times and record what
the breakdown of patrons was, whether people were
asked for I.D., if so, was it being done
consistently. What the breakdown of staff were,
were there any publicly-posted policies, a dress
code, an I.D. policy. What we found -- well, first
of all, we must say, most of the bar owners,
including at least one I know who is here tonight,
cooperated with the survey. A few were holdouts.
And one of the interesting ones is that -- one of
the holdouts was the manager of the bar where
iCandy now sits. That bar changed hands while the
survey was underway, so we did not consider our
findings valid for it under new ownership.
What we found though was we -- we could
not find -- we found very few easily identifiable,
you know, definite acts of clear discrimination.
What we did find was what we call a pattern of exclusivity, which is -- this was where basically certain establishments created an atmosphere or tried to do things that, you know, made it more comfortable for some people to be there and less comfortable for others. There were some places that, for instance, inconsistently applied stated I.D. policies. One of them at the time was one of the most popular clubs in the neighborhood. There were some places that charged a cover for people with Pennsylvania driver's licenses and didn't for those with out-of-state ones.

MR. EARLE: Mr. Smith, I'm sorry, I just want to let you know, we're at three minutes. But you can wrap up.

SANDY SMITH: Yes. Anyway, one reason that it's hard sometimes to prove discrimination is you don't have a smoking gun like we have in this instance. You know, people tend to self-segregate, people tend to try to create, as I said, certain environments. But we did recommend at the time that uniform policies be adopted by all the bars, that all the bars basically, you know, encourage patronage by anybody and that community groups
avoid holding public events, meetings and the like in places that did not adopt our policies.

(Applause.)

CHRIS BARTLETT: Good evening to the community. Good evening to the commissioners. My name is Chris Bartlett and I'm the Executive Director of the William Way LGBT Community Center.

MICHAEL HINSON: Good evening. My name is Mike Hinson. I'm the founder and former Executive Director of the COLOURS organization and the City's first liaison to LGBT communities for the Mayor.

CHRIS BARTLETT: And our testimony, we want to share two key ideas from our recent history, that evolving coalitions of LGBT and allied Philadelphians have worked and will continue to work within and outside government to grow resources for our communities and to counter racial and other disparity, and we believe that there are practical actions to be taken by both government and nongovernmental entities to move us even further along in confronting racism in our communities.

MICHAEL HINSON: When I joined the
administration of then Mayor John F. Street in 2001, my role was to ensure that City services,
programs and policies were accessible and sensitive to the needs of the City's LGBT communities. I was also tasked with assembling an LGBT advisory board on which Chris served. I forgot to mention that Chris and I have been working as colleagues and friends for over 25 years. Mayor Street and others at the time gave me and members of the advisory board great leeway to tackle some of the toughest issues facing the LGBT community at the time. Because of our thoughtful selection of advisory board members, which included folks from many different geographic and cultural communities, we're able to view and tackle our work in a way that allows us to ensure long-lasting policy and program change with broad impact. One major achievement during this time was the addition of protections for gender identity into the City charter. It was our strong belief then and now that transgender individuals must be given the full acknowledgement and protection of the law. Without hesitation, Mayor Street agreed. Michael Williams wrote the charter addition and City Council, with
leadership from then Councilman DeCiccio, passed
this protection.

CHRIS BARTLETT: We also worked in
partnership with PHMC to complete the City's first
LGBT census which identified LGBT citizens in every
neighborhood of the City and pointed out the health
disparities faced by these LGBT Philadelphians, and
especially LGBT Philadelphians of color. This
census allowed us to argue for additional funding
for community-based organizations and especially
those like COLOURS, GALAEI, and ASIAC that were led
by and served LGBT people of color. Finally, we
found resources for a study of LGBT youth which
served in part to address how to create safe spaces
for these youth mainly of color, many of whom
congregated on 13th Street.

We share these two examples to make the
point that collective work and responsibility is a
shared principle. It requires us to listen to
those experiencing challenges that prevent them
from having the same protections and benefits as
any other group and together develop sustainable
solutions. Many of the voices we will hear today
are people who have strong reason to be concerned
and these concerns should and must be addressed.

MICHAEL HINSON: That leads me to share some of the ways we concretely address racism in our LGBT communities both in bars, in non-profits and elsewhere. I myself have numerous examples of facing racism even within my official role. For example, while serving the Street administration, I was out on a ride-along one evening with the then chief inspector for the police department and several individuals from City government. We met up with one bar owner in the Gayborhood and he invited us to have dinner with him at his establishment. As we entered his establishment with the owner, a white gay man, I was carded by his employee, even though I was clearly with the owner, the chief inspector and several City government officials. This unfortunately was the norm then and it is the norm now as a similar incident happened to me a couple months ago at iCandy. Sadly, overt and covert racism continues in both old and new ways. To address these issues, I have protested businesses in the Gayborhood, challenged organizations that serve people of color to hire people of color in leadership positions,
held town hall meetings with neighborhood associations, wrote articles and policies and added a law to the City Charter. It is the nature of such change that we must be ever vigilant for the successes of many years ago can easily, easily be reversed. We must count on new generations of leaders to point out the setbacks and hold us accountable for getting back on track. This is what is going on in our communities now and it is a welcomed conversation.

(Applause.)

CHRIS BARTLETT: And beyond the conversations, we need action. Given the current challenges our communities face, we offer the following recommendations as a way forward. One, that a joint statement or letter from the Human Relations Commission and the office of the Mayor be issued to businesses in the Gayborhood reminding them about the protections available to Philadelphians and our visitors as detailed in the City Charter. This letter should provide targeted and specific language about the law, the responsibilities of business owners to adhere to it and the penalties for not doing so. Training
should be offered to the Independence Business Alliance, to its members and others regarding the protections available to Philadelphians and our visitors as detailed in the City Charter. This training should specifically focus on how to implement the law from a practical viewpoint.

MICHAEL HINSON: The Human Relations Commission should test businesses to gain better understanding of the extent of discrimination that may be taking place and offer remedies, including penalties for discrimination actions found. And that a non-city hotline should be made available to solicit additional information about discriminatory practices taking place in our communities. The data from this hotline can be used to shape the future training for government private organizations and businesses throughout the City.

Thank you.

CHRIS BARTLETT: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. LANDAU: Thank you very much. The next three people are Jimmi Shrode, Le Thomas, Ricky Peterson, if he's here and if not, Hazel Edwards. There are also mics in about the middle
there and in the back if you can't make your way up here. Is Jimmi Shrode here? Come on up, Hazel.

JIMMI SHRODE: Hi. My name is Jimmi Shrode and I'm on the Board of Liberty Resources and I'm also an out, proud member of the gay community and been out for 30-some years. What I wanted to tell you was back when I was a young man in my 20s, there was a lot of rampant discrimination against people with color in the bars where people were actually asked to provide several forms of I.D. to prove that they were of the age to be able to get in the bar, even though most of the people were actually very self-evidently not 18 year olds trying to sneak in and get a drink. What we did back then was, there was the Philadelphia Lesbian and Gay Task Force. Sorry, yes. And so they did a thing where a lot of people volunteered to take survey forms and to go into the bars and to begin to try to track and record incidents of racism like this. And that was something that we had done. And basically it was something like how you used to hang kind of close to the door with a drink in my hand and just kind of casually keep looking over my shoulder. Then I
had a little slip of paper which I would write
things down and then we would turn it in later. So
that's something that I just wanted to offer as a
suggestion. Mostly I'm here to listen and to learn
from a lot of people. Thank you for your time.

(Applause.)

MICAH RODRIGUEZ: Hello. My name is
Micah Rodriguez and I'm here with my colleagues.

GIANA GRAVES: My name is Giana.

HAZEL EDWARDS: And my name is Hazel.

MICAH RODRIGUEZ: Okay. So we're
standing here today representing the Justice
League, a project of the Attic Youth Center's
education and outreach department, the Bryson
Institute. The Justice League's goal is to address
the ongoing injustice faced by queer youth of color
within the systems that continue to negatively
impact our lives, which is why today we stand in
front of you not just representing ourselves, but
of the members of the much larger black and brown,
queer and trans youth community. Before we begin,
I'd like to share a quote from Agusto Boal which
goes: All human relationships should be of a
dialogic nature: Among men and women, races,
families, groups and nations. Dialogue should prevail. In reality, all dialogues have the tendency to become monologues, which create the relationship oppressors - oppressed.

I share this quote because it is extremely important to commence the conversation to dismantle, reconstruct and ultimately rebuild these systems. To actually do what they were initially intended to do through collective dialogue as we heal from centuries of monologues.

HAZEL EDWARDS: I would like to share my section of our statement as a member of the Justice League, as a member of the black and brown youth community, and also as the only out transgender youth commissioner for the City of Philadelphia.

(Applause.)

HAZEL EDWARDS: Young people have immense power, yet youth in the City of Philadelphia, and particularly within the LGBTQ community, are being taken for granted. Far too many nonprofit structures in the City rely on black and brown youth for funding and yet do not hire us.

When black and brown adults are given positions in
these nonprofits, they're often entry level, underpaid, tokenized and fired within the first few months. Even as a client, I walk into these nonprofits that claim to support me and yet the leadership doesn't reflect me. The programming options only reflect the parts of me that are well funded through the City. We receive subpar care for our physical and emotional health, yet for so long black and brown members of the LGBTQ community felt that we had to stay silent for the protection of a larger community. Far too long we have been silent about nonprofit structures built to support us that actually diminish us. We attend meetings, listening sessions and sit on panels to educate adults and youth-serving systems about our experiences and we do this all too often for free.

A few months ago I sat on a panel about LGBTQ youth homelessness. I shared my experience living on the street and navigating the shelter system as a transwoman of color. After the panel was over, I was standing outside and one of the participants jokingly said to me, I'm going to need you to get off the streets now. She was implying that me as a transwoman of color standing on the
sidewalk in Center City is unsafe, and while she is right, she never asked if I had anywhere else to be. I had just spent an hour and a half explaining my story and she still has not internalized that I was going to be sleeping on a park bench that night. She then went on to ask me for a recommendation for a good gay bar and I had also already said in my story that I'm under 21. The reality is is that one interaction sums up my entire experience in the Gayborhood. White, queer cisgender adults assume that the bars that they find are safe to be and adults ask us to speak, so rarely do they listen.

(Applause.)

GIANA GRAVES: I'd like to start off by saying even after everything that has come to light as of lately, that I don't hate you. I am not angry. Honestly, I'm hurt. Walking through my daily life as a queer transwoman of color, I experience racism, transphobia and misogyny. I go into bars and clubs in the Gayborhood to escape the danger I face in the world as a transgender person, a woman, and a person of color. Since I turned 21, I've seen popular bars such as iCandy as a place to
escape, a place to pretend that I am safe in this world, if just for a couple of hours. But lately I have seen and heard things that haven't settled well with me. I am a person of color, yes. But I am also a person of color with a light complexion. Having a light complexion doesn't give me immunity from racism, but it does give me privilege and access. For example, once when at a bar in the Gayborhood, a bartender started a conversation with me. Later he rolled his eyes when a group of visibly black queer folks began to enter the venue. He turned to me clear as day and stated great, now this riffraff. Another time a bouncer turned a blind eye to my visible track leggings, but asked a black man behind me to leave because his pants were in violation of the dress code.

The reality is that within the Gayborhood, people of color are being targeted and held to a different standard than white and white-passing people such as myself. Wealthy white gay men see the Gayborhood as a place to start a business and earn revenue, but forget that this is a place that people go to escape homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and yes, even racism, only to
discover that it's not just alive here, but thriving. Over the summer I would get excited to go to places like iCandy and see all my favorite bartenders, friends and community members. Now I dread knowing that if I was to enter one of these establishments, I would likely be thrown into a casually racist conversation from staff because they think I'm white. I dread knowing that cisgender people will likely invalidate my gender identity. I dread that because I am a transwoman of color even walking down the street in the Gayborhood is unsafe. This space was supposed to be somewhere to go to feel safe, but for many of us, the Gayborhood is not a safe space. Just simply walking down the street in the Gayborhood, I have been profiled by police for simply existing in a space that is supposed to be for me. The reality is, I'm afraid. Afraid that when I walk through the Gayborhood, I'll be aggressively misgendered by police in the Gayborhood. I have had police make sexual advances at me, assume that I was a sex worker because of my identities and because when I was frisked, I had multiple condoms on me.

MICAH RODRIGUEZ: Today, we hope to
impart that no person should be made to feel like
their lives doesn't matter within the systems that
are put in place to make us feel like we have
access to safety within the nonprofit organizations
whose mission are to support, to empower and to
protect, not to tokenize and exploit. Black and
brown queer folks should be asked to do -- I'm
sorry. Black and brown folks shouldn't be asked to
do your work for you. No person should be made to
feel like their lives do not matter at businesses
whose mission are to support LGBTQ communities, not
to marginalize LGBTQ people of color. And these
business owners should be held accountable. No
person should be made to feel like their lives do
not matter when the mission of the Philadelphia
Police Department is to demonstrate excellence in
policing by working in partnership with the
community, not to instill fear in these
communities, given by the police department
directive 4.15. Does not save black transwomen
from a deeply engrained intersection of racism and
transphobia. Once again, we hope that as we
commence this conversation it is not just more the
same but a true opportunity for dialogue, growth
and rebirth.

(Applause.)

MS. LANDAU: Are Le Thomas and Ricky Peterson here?

LE THOMAS: I'll speak from back here.

Good evening, everyone. My name is Le Thomas, President of Philadelphia Black Pride and also the newly appointed Commissioner on the Mayor's office for African American Males. I speak to you on behalf of Philadelphia Black Pride in our efforts to try to move the conversation forward from a series of town halls that we conducted in 2015. It is by no means the answer and it's not our job. We were just doing our work that we have continued to do throughout our years as an organization.

So on August 2015, Philadelphia Black Pride begun the development of a town hall series that would address the reports of racism within the LGBT social and community-based establishments of Philadelphia against black and brown individuals. Few of our published accounts in local news and community-driven petitions for action, Philadelphia Black Pride consulted with community organizers and stakeholders to develop the town hall objectives.
One, gain community insight on climate of incidents; develop a strategy of fewer incidents in inclusive spaces; and three, implement a system of accountability.

On October 14, 2015, the first town hall meeting was held at the William Way Center, gaining insight from 70-plus attendees. 85 percent of the entities were black. It was really important to the process to allow the space for the community to be heard.

On December 2, 2015, anchored by the notes from the town hall which are found on our Website at Phillyblackpride.org, Philly Black Pride facilitated the development of strategy with an attendance of 35 people, about 50 percent white stakeholders and allies. The plan components were a reporting system for incidents of racial bias or systematic bullying in the LGBTQ social and community-based establishments. A challenge for LGBTQ social and community-based establishments to pledge to operate according to the principals of equity, continuous practice of equal access, invited feedback and safety. Pledge to participate in a proposed training that will focus on the
consistent implementation of antidiscrimination rules and policy in establishments. And lastly, a practice of ongoing visibility, accountability and consequences for cooperating and noncooperative establishments that serves LGBTQ communities.

We also listed solutions or possible solutions, which I won't go into detail, which is also found on the Website in the effort of time, but you can find it there. And I also submit this in support of moving the community forward so that we don't spend another 30 years having the same conversation.

(Applause.)

MS. LANDAU: So one quick announcement before I call the next three people. There are two overflow rooms now. Even if you sound like you're yelling in this room, the louder we talk in the mics the better they can hear us in the other rooms. So talk as loud as you can and directly into the mic.

The next three are Tyrone Smith -- as long as Ricky Peterson isn't here, the next three are Tyrone Smith, Ernest Owens and Deja Lynn Alvarez.
TYRONE SMITH: Good evening. For me as an elder in this community and on a very personal level, I had to talk to my great nephew about racism in the community in which we both walk and breathe. This is insane to me. You know, we took on the challenge of AIDS and HIV and all of us, black folks, white folks, straight, all of us came together. But here in 2016, the insidiousness of racism has raised its head and I have to believe within my heart that we as a people in Philadelphia will kill this enemy. We will rebuke it. We will kill it because we're better and more than that. This Commission, the commission for gay and lesbian issues was put together by Wilson Goode when he was our mayor. So we have the vehicles to take this thing to its end. And so we have got to get more involved. You know, I'm old. I'm in my 70s, and to have to confront this again in my life when I have lived through the dog-biting days, when I have lived through the two bathrooms, I'll be damned if I want to see it again. I have faith in the youth in Philadelphia who are black and brown that this will end.

(Applause.)
ERNEST OWENS: Very powerful words.

Hello. My name is Ernest Owens. I'm here as a community member, but I have been experiencing this and covering this for over a year. Before I was a journalist in this City, I was just a student in college that used to go to Woody's because it was, you know, the teen night, the college night. And I would go there and I would see my body exploited in ways in which it was -- it was beyond. The experience of, you know, going into these spaces and being consistently asked for I.D. when I would see other people that were white go in without having I.D., being told about dress codes and all of these different things. And I hope today I'm not violating any dress code. But I say all that to say that I have been -- you know, I'm not at all someone who has been silent about this, but my voice has always been attempted to be silenced. So to those people who have not spoken up and there are today -- I salute you all, but I want to tell you as someone who has been trying to do it the right way, I was a communications fellow at City Hall voicing this to elected officials when I was in college. And time and time again it was not
glamorous enough, it was not hot enough. Talking about racism was not political enough to a lot of these people. And when I began to report on it and try to, you know, bring other people to the table, there were government agencies that called my employers and said they were concerned about my position. They found me divisive and they used these forms of intimidation to attempt to silence my voice and addressing these issues to the public. My First Amendment right was silenced in addressing these issues.

Many people who are not here today try to speak to their employers and try to speak to government agencies and they feel like they cannot because of their jobs. Representatives from the Mayor's office, from the Office of LGBT Affairs have called organizations that I have been a part of and have told them, you know, they were concerned about my placement. That they wanted to know what I was going to be saying. The National LGBTQ Task Force did a Racial Justice Institute here in Philadelphia. Okay. I mean, other groups have been addressing racism in our City at a capacity that surpasses what we're doing right now.
This is 2016. We should not be having these kind of forums. Why are they taking place now when this issue has been going on for 30 years? It was never on the agenda. Okay. People have been speaking and their voices have been silenced and intimidated. But I was very fortunate to work in a position where the First Amendment right is the only right I get to have. And in many cases, whether there was protestors or there were people demonstrating, there has been intimidation from law enforcement, from government agencies to stop these people from talking.

When I did the Racial Justice Institute, I did a workshop to bring government agencies together. NAACP came, Philadelphia Gay Pride, Black Pride came, the Philadelphia Commissioner's office came, a lot of other people came. The Office of LGBT Affairs did not come. In fact, someone from their office called that organization the day before complaining about my placement there as a way to try to intimidate me from being able to exercise my First Amendment right to speak. These forms of intimidation happen in these government agencies on a regular basis,
the continual calling of employees. Organizations
I'm a part of. I'm a part of the Board of Equality
of Pennsylvania. A government agency called that
organization about me in a capacity because I was
speaking about racism in the LGBT community.

MR. EARLE: Mr. Owens, just letting you
know, we're at three minutes. Take a moment.

ERNEST OWENS: I'll be quick. In a
nutshell, understand that the bars are not the only
problem. They're not the only problem. There are
government agencies in place, individuals in place
that are also part of the system. Their campaign
dollars and contributions go to support these
elected officials. It is not just the bar owners.
They're only one slice of the problem. There is a
nonprofit industrial complex that goes to this
Gayborhood and beyond this Gayborhood. Government
agencies in place that are meant to silence
vulnerable people of color. I'm privileged to be a
Penn student, a Penn grad with a nice education,
but there's not many people like this or look like
me that have the ability and the courage to speak.
So understand that those who are not speaking are
not speaking because they don't have a story to
tell but are scared to lose other needs. So those in positions of power of color and otherwise that know these issues are taking place, hold these people accountable. Thank you.

(Applause.)

DEJA LYNN ALVAREZ: I'm Deja Lynn Alvarez. I am a former sex worker, an addict and now a very proud transwoman and the director of the first and only LGBT-specific shelter and recovery facility in this state. It took me a very long time to get to the point where I could proudly say all of that to myself, let alone in a room full of people. I have been in the community of Philadelphia for 25-plus years, and the racism in that Gayborhood and the discrimination in that Gayborhood has been going on since the first day I touched down in Philadelphia at about 15 years old. I experienced it in different ways. Although I am of mixed heritage, Mexican, Serbian, German and Irish and I am proud of every single one of those heritages, I experienced it as a transwoman. I experienced it as a transwoman that was hanging out in the Gayborhood downtown. I experienced it in the bars, but even worse, I experienced it from the
police. I was beat up, jailed, harassed, called
tnames, chased, locked up for absolutely no reason
for years and I was afraid to fight back.

In 1995, going into 1996, I finally
fought back and I stood up and I sued the City of
Philadelphia and I won. One of my biggest
perpetrators is in this room now still carrying a
badge and gun, but I'm no longer afraid. I am no
longer afraid because in this City now there are
some laws that protect transwomen. For the first
time in history, transwomen have been put to the
forefront, particularly transwomen of color. We
have been granted rights, equality and protections.
For the very first time, we no longer walk behind
the rest of the LGB community. We now stand
alongside of them.

It's been a long, hard journey for a
lot of us, a whole lot of us, and there's still a
lot going on, 25-plus years later and we're up here
talking about this still. I still get complaints
from members of the trans community of the
disrespect and the harassment from some police
officers. Again, the difference is now we have an
avenue we can take and we need to start taking
advantage of some of these avenues, like the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations. We need to start stepping up. We have to start filing our complaints and letting them know we're not going to take this no more, because as long as we continue to be silent and not tell our individual stories, we're playing into these systems that are set up to keep us down. And as long as we do that, then we start fighting with each other. And as long as we're fighting with each other, we're expending all of our energy, all of it fighting each other instead of fighting those that want to keep us where we have always been. We can't do that anymore. We can't. We now need to start fighting back. We have got some momentum here. Let's all take full advantage of that. Let's take full advantage of this hearing as being the first step to finally changing all the shit that needs to be changed, not just in the Gayborhood but in the City of Philadelphia and the surrounding counties, because guess what, in the State of Pennsylvania outside of these Philadelphia walls, we still aren't safe. We still don't have policies and protections in place. When I get phone calls from
transwomen from Delaware County, there's nothing we can do because there's no law there to protect them. So let's stop fighting each other, get going on this fight, come together, take advantage of people like Rue Landau and Nelly and Mayor Jim Kenney who have been progressive when it comes to LGBT rights. I'm not saying they're getting everything right, but I know for me, for me as a transwoman, I know for the first time that when I see a police officer -- when I have to call them, when they're coming into that shelter that I am now the director of, I'm not afraid when they come in. And when they come in with an attitude, I straighten their ass out. And when they don't straighten it out, I let them know I'll call the Mayor, I'll call your deputy commissioner, I'll call your commissioner. Hell, I'll call your lieutenant because I do the roll calls now.

MR. EARLE: Ms. Alvarez, your three minutes has passed. If you could just take another moment to wrap up. Thank you.

DEJA LYNN ALVAREZ: Sure. So again, I just stress, we have got to come together. We can disagree on shit all day long. It's okay to
disagree. But at the end of the day, all of our missions should still be the same. All of our missions are the same. It is to end discrimination in every form. Whether it's racial, whether it's sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, whatever the discrimination is, we have got to band together, and until we do that, we're not going to be able to end this.

(Applause.)

RICK WHITE: Wow, to come after those three speakers. Wow. That's incredible. My name is Rick White. I'm not an activist. I'm not a healthcare worker or anything like that. I am a, quote unquote, down-low bisexual gay male. All right. So this is major for me to step in front of this mic in front of this audience and say I am a down-low bisexual gay male.

So first and foremost, I want to compliment the Commission for being here, for the Mayor who I see is still here listening to everybody's voices. That's rare. I mean, he'll send his deputies, but he's still here listening. So we have to give him -- and for the press that is -- the reason why I'm here is what, maybe three
weeks ago I was watching Channel 3 or -- Channel 29
it was, and I saw them disrupting the house
meeting. I'm like wow, that's what's up. The
young people, young bucks are taking over. They're
doing something that I wished I could do, you know.
But I'm an old head, so I'm not about to be out
there disrupting no City Council meeting. But I
felt all of what they were saying, you know what I
mean. Being an old head going through Woody's and
feeling uncomfortable being in there so you don't
go anymore. The only place I felt really safe was
Key West. So I digress. So I gave the props to
the press, because if I didn't see the news thing,
I wouldn't feel activated. I wouldn't be motivated
to actually come here, to call Rue's office and ask
could I speak and come out and be out here like
this. So I have to compliment the Black and Brown
Workers Coalition for -- I have to compliment --
acknowledge you. Acknowledge you. Elders, I'm old
head, elders, acknowledge what you're doing, how
you're doing it. Maybe not all the ways that
you're coming to the public about it, but that
you're protesting, that you're being active, being
proactive. And I want to remind you, just like in
any movement, this is a movement, Martin Luther King had a philosophy and that's the philosophy we want to take, not the Malcom X way. We want to do it in a peaceful dialogue way. So I just want to remind black and brown collective to be at the table, be at the table not so proactive and not protesting that way, but bring God into the space. All right.

So that's the reason why I came to kind of voice my opinion and to share that the reason why I don't go out to the bars, to Woody's and other places like that is from years of experience being uncomfortable in them. So I stopped coming out. So that's why I felt it's so important that the bar owners and for the bar owners that are here -- could the bar owners stand up that are here that are representing? Come on. You can -- because they are here at the table. They're listening to the dialogue. So we have to recognize them for even taking that step. Okay? All right? So now that they know our grievances, now that they know what's up, we have to acknowledge that. All right. So hopefully they're listening.

Last but not least, Ernest Owens for
writing that wonderful piece two years ago in the
Metro that put the bars on point. I mean, I was
like yeah, I experienced that. And for my elder,
Mr. Tyrone Smith, for going to church and reminding
us that we're not supposed to go through this now
in 2016. But if it wasn't for the coalition,
bringing this -- being so active, being so public
that this Commission and this meeting with all
these people is happening. So bar owners, thank
you for being here, for acknowledging and listening
to our complaints, listening to what we have
experienced throughout the years and be willing to
change and to do something better. We have to give
you props for that. So thank you all. Thank you
very much.

MR. EARLE: Thank you, Mr. White.

(Applause.)

MS. LANDAU: Next up, Asa Khalif, who
is speaking on behalf of Black Lives Matter and
then speaking on behalf of three young people who
could not get off of work. Freddy Shelley, if you
are in the house, and Jarrod King, if you are in
the house. If not, Prentice Bush is next.

ASA KHALIF: Thank you, Rue. And thank
you for all your hard work, my friend. I truly appreciate it. You're the only City official, very rare, that can calm me down. We love you, Rue.

Thank you for your service.

MR. EARLE: Asa, real quick, just because you're speaking for, I believe, three other people, you'll have at least nine minutes. Six minutes?

MS. LANDAU: Well --

MR. EARLE: Three minutes per person, so you got time.

ASA KHALIF: I appreciate it. Thank you. And that will be Prentice Bush next and this gentleman here, Pedro. I'm sorry, Pedro. I'm getting old too. All right. Thank you very much.

Good evening, everyone. My name is Asa Khalif and I am head of Black Lives Matter, Pennsylvania Chapter here in Philadelphia. I first would like to -- because I know that my brother who just spoke quoted Martin Luther King and said we didn't need Malcom X, but I'm a follower of my dear teacher Malcom X and I am unapologetically proud to say that. I would like to say in his quote, nobody can give you freedom. Nobody can give you equality
or justice or anything. If you're a man, you just take it. Malcom X.

Now that we honored our ancestors, let's get to it. First of all, the bar owners didn't do us any justice by coming. They were subpoenaed to come. Okay. So let's not have a kumbaya moment. Let's just keep it fucking real. You got here because you were subpoenaed by this woman's office. Okay. And I know half of you racist motherfuckers don't even want to be here. So we call you out for what it is. And we're going to shut you down again if you don't change your wicked ways.

Secondly, I would like to take this time because we have a lot of individuals who are no longer with us. A lot of individuals who we have lost by illness, murder, homelessness, mental illness. We want to honor them today, but I want to specifically talk on one individual in 2014. His name was Prince. We called him Prince X lovingly. He was a man among men and he truly was a humble, humble soul in his lifestyle. Prince had an illness that unfortunately took him out. And I got a call from him. He had been sick for several
times, for a long time, and he got a kick start and
he was doing well physically. He called me and I'd
just got out of jail for some damn protest we were
doing up in Atlanta. But he called me and he says
are you out. I said yeah, I'm out. I said you
sound good, you sound real good. He says I feel
good, Brother Asa. He said I feel good, my friend.
I said we got to celebrate, you know. I said where
do you want to go. So we called the crew up, you
know, our college -- we were all Temple alumni. So
we called everybody up. Hey, Prince is feeling
well, let's go and celebrate. And we said well,
where do you want to go. And he says well, you
know, I'm a Woody's kid. And we were all kind of
like oh, my God, because we already knew.
So we said okay, Prince, this is your
day, you're feeling well. We picked him up. We
brought him to Woody's where he wanted to be. He
wasn't drinking. Just wanted to be in the
atmosphere. That was his spot. We respected it.
Prior to going inside the club you felt it. We
already experienced it. Where's your I.D.? Here's
our I.D. These I.D.s look fake. Okay. Do you
have a machine where we can run it? Yeah, but it
still looks fake. Okay. Are you sure you are who you are. You don't look like this person. One of my friends said, you know, I was in drag when I took it. And he wasn't in drag. It was just, you know, we were trying to lighten it for Prince because we could have set it off, you know. But we didn't want to do that because -- yeah, you know how it go. We could have set it off easily. But it wasn't about us, it was about our friend who needed our support. He wanted to go to Woody's. 35 minutes waiting for his fruit punch by a rude bartender who felt that he could disrespect black and brown people simply because we were black and brown people. And to see Prince's levels of enthusiasm and levels of joy diminish as he was diminished as a person of color by policies that were set up by Woody's with a history, generational history of racism and prejudice and discrimination towards black and brown people in this community. Well, he finally got his fruit punch, and long story short, we took him home and he said it was the best night he had and we were happy for that. He called me a few hours later in tears and said I don't know physically if I'm ever going to be able
to go out and hang with you guys like that again. And it's pretty sad that on this night where I was feeling so good, a racist type of atmosphere reminded me just how much hate and bigotry is in the community that I'm supposed to be safe at. So three months later, Prince passed away and he is in the room -- excuse me, he's in the room, his spirit is in the room definitely. We called on him now. I feel his spirit all around me. As I told Rue, I wanted to make sure that his story was told. He's not here to see this. But his name will go on record because his life mattered. As a black man of color, his life mattered. Prince's life mattered and we speak his name, we say his name and we celebrate his name, and I want my brother to know that you have now been vindicated and you have been validated.

Black lives matter. And if you need any type of reassurance of that, listen to the testimonies. I can talk to you, brothers. I love black and brown people. Doesn't mean I hate white people. Doesn't mean that. But I love our people and I love the fact that we can disagree among each other, but yet we can come together in a united
front because we are magic. And just like Prince
was magic. Just like he was magic. So I offer
this testimony in his name and again, I want to
thank my friend Rue for setting this up.

I want to put you racist bigots on
notice. iCandy, you already should pack. We are
going to hit you economically. We are going to hit
you -- you've seen the video. You know damn well
we don't care about going up into your space. You
said you didn't want any niggers? Well, the
niggers are coming and we're going to continue to
boycott you, we're going to continue to protest you
until you pack your shit and get the hell out of
our community.

So, again, I thank you. I thank you
all. Thank you for allowing me to speak. Let's
come together, people. Let's come together.
Regardless how you identify, this should always be
a safe space for us and our allies. I love you
black and brown people. I love all of my white
allies who came out. I see some of you here
smiling, standing in solidarity. I love you too.
And we're going to have a shot on all of us after
this thing is over because I think we're all going
to need it. So thank you so much. Black lives matter and let's remember Prince. God bless you.

(Applause.)

PRENTICE BUSH: Hi. I kind of wrote things down because I have a million thoughts, but I'm going to start by saying that the anger that came in your direction is just righteous anger from a place that I live in. I just cried tears that I haven't felt in a long time because it's 2016, and when I was 16 this man took me in and taught me how to be an activist. And at 41, almost 42, I'm still having to be an activist in a place that should be open and loving to me because I am open and I love it.

Let me just start by saying I have been made both the villain and a hero of my LGBT story. I am a threat to the bars but I am a gold mine to the nonprofits. We forget that we are a community of many and that many have varied looks and lives. Today is about how race affects us and breaks it apart. We black and brown people are marginalized for being gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans. We walk into a community meant to embrace and enrich us as LGBT people, only to find that we still are
just black, just colored, or as a recording
announced, just niggers. How can we command
respect and acceptance for the world if we can't
extend it to each other. Are we all often -- we
are all often lumped together. Well, today is
about race and my race is black.

Racism in the LGBT community affects me
disproportionately. The many isms are inhumane and
need attention. We often lose focus by trying to
lump them all together. Today I speak with the
hope of a singular message. That black people will
no longer be demonized, criminalized or just
ignored by the LGBT community at large. This is
not a rejection to anyone or of any cause or
denouncement. This is however about race and the
racial divide and racism that affects LGBT folk.
If we organize and facedown each ism as the whole
and separate monster that each are, we can be
effective. If we continue to be unfocused and
scattered, we will continue to be marginalized. It
is a masterful trick of an oppressor to use
division among the marginalized and oppressed.
Yes, united we stand, but united with our
singularity and clarity and focus we will stand --
we will -- I'm sorry, yes, united we stand, but
united without singularity and clarity and focus we
still fall.

My best friend Anthony Alfie McCullough
was murdered for being gay and black. Killed by
two white men in the Gayborhood and he laid dead in
the street for hours uncovered, uncared for. I
have been ignored, over sexualized, accused of
criminal behavior such as tip stealing and other
petty annoyances because I am black. Ignored by
bartenders and accosted by doormen and security.
These things happen to me and continue to happen to
young men to come behind me. I have heard this
uproar met with concerns for women and the concerns
of people with disabilities and the recovery
community. Well, the sober community has many LGBT
t folk events and support. Could there be more?
Yeah. LGBT people of color will fall into folk
with disabilities and folk that identify as addicts
or alcoholics or just folk who choose sobriety. I
know that many people have agendas and needs and
concerns, but this is about racial inequalities and
disenfranchisement and marginalization. It is --

MR. EARLE: You're at your three
minutes. Please take a few more moments.

PRENTICE BUSH: Gotcha. Okay. Thank you. It is time to own the movement and the social ill and needs to be addressed, not in spite of but also not in kind with other movements. We have to stand as black and brown people together. We have to stand as gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans and questioning people of color together. We have to move together, speak together, and we have to put our money where our mouth is because I will end with this. There is nothing that the owner of iCandy can do, say, give or be to me. There is nothing that he can say, do, be or give to me. He can be gone. Not a cent.

(Applause.)

PEDRO SANTIAGO: Hello, everyone. I just wanted to say that my name is Pedro Santiago and I am a gay individual who is not only a gay individual but a gay individual living with HIV in this community. And it's very hard every day to go out in community and see that many people put us down not only for just being gay but being for those who are in our HIV community who live every day, because not only am I HIV, but I am also HIV
and still surviving the many other things of just
not only being HIV but also being a homeless HIV
individual in this gay community. And I just feel
as though that many organizations in our community
are not always here to help us because they say
they're helping us, but they're not.

Here it is, we have Philadelphia FIGHT,
one of the organizations on our front who are
supposed to be supportive of those who are HIV and
supportive individuals, but here it is they just
use us and they use us in many ways. They use as
being volunteers for these programs. They use us
for doing so many things, but you're not seeing the
fear of living as this individual that I am. I'm
22 in this community, and I think that there is so
much more that can be done in this community if you
really put your mind to it. And what I mean by
putting your mind towards it is that if you really
think about what people say, you will actually see
that they're more than just this individual that
you decide to put down. But they're also an
individual that is very positive minded, they're
also someone who is still trying to go to school,
surviving with this every day.
I found out that I was HIV positive when I was 19 and I found this out by going out there and getting an HIV test every month because of the fact that most of these HIV organizations, they say oh, your -- the test is coming back positive, it's coming back negative, it's coming back positive, it's coming back negative. But here it is, you're not actually asking me what is it that you need to make sure that you're doing what you need to do. All you say is take your medicine, take this, take this. But at the end of the day, I feel as though if you really want to know what we need to do, is we need to let -- you need to ask us and not only ask us, but educate us as a community that HIV is still something that people live with. And not only do I live with it, but I'm pretty sure there's many of us out here that live with it. And here it is, it's hard for to us to overcome it because you don't ask us what we need in this community. You just demand that we do it.

(Fapplause.)

FREDDY SHELLEY: Hello, everyone. My name is Freddy Shelley. I'm here to read a statement from Jeff Sotland who couldn't be with us.
tonight. Jeff Sotland is one of the co-owners of Tabu. And for the record, this is Jeff's wording, so if this goes longer than three minutes, I'll submit the written statement.

I apologize that I cannot be here to speak for Tabu on the issues facing our community. Having attended both the town hall meeting at William Way Community Center and meeting at the African American Museum, I really want to be a part of this discussion. I have asked Freddy Shelley, who was once the first general manager of Tabu whose efforts and outreach and branding helped to set a tone of inclusivity at Tabu and helped to develop it into the space it is today.

I had to sit and think for some quite sometime about what I wanted to say because I'm not a fan of revisiting history and deciding how to move forward. However, I think it would be disrespectful to the entire community if I and Tabu as a whole did not acknowledge the unacceptable conduct that has been going on in our city and within our community, not just in recent events but for sometime. Before I begin, I'd like to point out that the non-working staff of Tabu is here
tonight, as well as some of our performers and promoters. They have read these words and have been active with questions and comments. I believe it is safe to say that they support this statement in its entirety. As a lawyer, community board member and co-owner of Tabu Lounge and Sports Bar, I hope my words are accepted as not only a statement of my thoughts, but those of the entire Tabu family as we call for more education, communication and change. I do not speak for other bars, restaurants or business, but my hope is that they endorse and support this statement.

While I have heard statements such as this is not my fight, I believe it is time for everyone to speak out to eradicate this problem and to open the door to dialogue. So what do we do? We must all come to the table working together with any individual or organization such as GALAEI, Black Pride, Black and Brown Workers Collective or any of the other organizations that want to effectuate change. Everyone must be willing to work together to embrace this idea.

The LGBT community has been a marginalized community that has seen great advances
over the last few years, but we need to dedicate
energy and resources toward demanding that all
members of the LGBT community be given equality
amongst ourselves and in the allied community.
Queer people of color should feel comfortable
looking to their brethren who may not be a color
and rely on their support. By no means am I
proposing that QPOC need their non-QPOC brethren to
make progress, but I am stating without
qualification that debate and advocacy is stronger
when we work together as a whole.

Over the last several weeks I have
watched people threaten violence, defend racial
discrimination and racist comments and even promote
criminal actions to members of our community.
This cannot continue or be allowed. We need to
come together and bring all our resources to bear.
Some people here refute this idea and suggest some
members of the community need to get out of the way
and allow for immediate change, whether it's in
City government, Gayborhood stakeholdership or
those who should sit at the table. To those
individuals, I would like to say we are stronger
together than we are apart. I am by no means using
words such as relax or patience or wait. I think
those three words have been used, exhibited and
lived for many years. The words I am using are
community, now, and impact. We as a community need
to come together now and make an impact.

MR. EARLE: Freddy, your three minutes
are elapsed. Take a moment. I don't want to kill
the statement, but just take a few moments to wrap
up.

FREDDY SHELLEY: Absolutely. Thank you
so much. So I'm going to skip to Jeff's four
points rules. One, let's sit and talk instead of
mandate and set realistic demands. Two, put a
realistic timeline in place. Three, six, nine,
twelve months for different demands. Instant
gratification, while not realistic, we should be
able to and we can develop a system to follow up
and confirm that changes are really occurring and
that this is not just window dressing. Set
standards of conduct for businesses, nonprofits,
dress codes or representation. Push for better
representation of board people and leadership. Go
public with unanimous support and the assistance of
the Philadelphia Human Relations commissioner for
enforcement and the Office of LGBT Affairs for advocacy. What I promise for myself on behalf of Tabu, we will never suggest we understand what it's like to be in your shoes. We will never suggest that we understand how you feel by the actions of others. But we will always stand by our commitment to the community to provide a safe and fun space, welcoming to everyone. We will work with you to make our community stronger, more inclusive, happier and vibrant. We are here and we are not going anywhere.

(Applause.)

MS. LANDAU: Thank you. Next up, Jarrod King, if you're here, Malcolm Kenyatta, Julie Chovanes and Antoine Johnson.

MALCOLM KENYATTA: It's very good to see everybody, but obviously not for this reason. Today feels really good. And it feels really good because people that have been enduring this type of discrimination finally get a chance to say something, but my fear is that when I look across this room I see folks in the choir. I see folks that understand and know and that are allies for so many of these issues. It feels good right now that
we're in here. We're venting. That so many people can finally say I wasn't making this up. This is real. This ain't Santa Claus. Racism is real.

It's happening. It's happening every single day and as an LGBT community, as a community that understands what it means to be marginalized, we have a profound and unique responsibility to never inflict that same marginalization upon others.

From Stonewall, to the civil rights movement, to the Black and Brown Workers Coalition, you look at a moment of historic change and a black LGBT person was right there. When it was time to fight the epidemic of HIV and AIDS, black people were standing right there. And now it's time. I sat on Facebook right after this happened, I'm not going to any more forums. I make an exception tonight. But a part of the reason I said that is black people don't need a forum. I don't need a forum. I don't need bias training. It's for more my white friends.

The next step of this is not necessarily filing something with the Human Relations Commission, though we should. But what do I file? What do I file about the hundred cuts
of subtle racism that we have to endure every single day? What do I file when I go to the bar and the bartender looks at me and goes to someone else? What do I file? And so the onus in my view is that A, we have to walk forward with the spirit of honesty. And the honest thing is, what we heard on that video, there are folks that heard him say that before. And I think the fear is that there are some white folks in this room that are saying I might have said that before. And so if he is a racist, if he is a bigot, what am I? And that fear, that fear can immobilize us. But if you are here and you are a person that has privilege, does not mean that everything in your life is right, but privilege means that you can look on T.V. and readily see a representation of yourself. Privilege is the fact that none of the bars in the Gayborhood are owned by a person of color. Not one. That's privilege. And so I don't hate you for your privilege, but I judge you on how you use it. And so what I ask and what I care about is not what happens in this room, it's not what happens in this room, because the real fight is what happens when the T.V. cameras are off and when we go home.
The real fights are in our living room with our friends, with our family who we know says things just like we heard on that video every single day and we love them and we hold them close and we say oh, he's not that bad. So for every white person, the next step is on you. Thank you.

(Applause.)

ANTOINE JOHNSON: My name is Antoine Johnson and I have been part of this community for 15 years. I have experienced the police walking on the street. But for me there's a way in my mind that I need to be part of the establishment. So I'm going to come from a black person that was in the establishment understands how this all worked. I dated the right people. I attended the right events. I got on the boards. I met people. This one right here saved my life. My first time ever in Center City living at 10th and Spruce walking down the street. She's like boy, you need help. And from that day, we became friends. And up until last year, we were connected when we were putting together a homeless shelter for the LGBT youth. Okay. So that right here is a perfect example of what it's like to grow up in the community, strive,
thrive and help others. But that didn't stop the
cops from stopping me the next time. Okay. And I
understand what it's like to be a black person in
this City, but I also understand what it's like to
be on the other side of it. And so what I see is
the black people who are angry and upset. There
are programs and there are people that we can talk
to, but if we continue to yell and scream and curse
and trap white people against the wall, whether
cops have to be called to help them out, when we go
up to protests at meetings, it's not helping us any
bit because next thing you know we are just a
hashtag on the Internet. That's a real fact. You
may not like it. You may disagree with me 110
percent, but we can't do that. Being a hashtag is
not good for our families. It's not good for our
friends. And what has it gotten us in this country
thus far? More protests and more black lives down
and out.

So I'm asking, if we communicate with
Nelly and Rue and all these people, we can get
things done. Kemar is a perfect example of someone
who has communicated and they're helping. Am I
wrong or am I right? I hate to single you out, but
this is something that I know to be a fact. And what we need to do is change the language that is in our media. That is the most important thing. Not all black people are criminals. Not all black people are poor. Not all black people live in the city. Not all black people don't go to college. That is not the truth. And not all black people are angry and not all black people are out to hurt you. When we realize that and we talk about this stuff, things will definitely change. I have to say this, this is very important. Nelly is a very good friend of mine, and the attacks that have been put upon Nelly as a person who came to this office are outrageous. This woman is for this community, everyone in this community. She runs to help us. You may not see it, but she's working. If you believe in God, you may pray every day, but your blessings are happening in his time and he's doing the work, but you may not see the work being done. And I think she is 100 percent behind closed doors working for this community.

And the last point that I have to make. There are people in this room who are afraid to speak out and speak to the black and brown people
because they're afraid to be called racist. You cannot have a conversation about race if you intimidate people to have the conversation about race. When people call -- I mean, this is not a conversation for discussion. What I'm saying is if black people and white people can speak without fear, this will get fixed.

(Applause.)

JULIE CHOVANES: Hi. My name is Julie Chovanes. I am a resident of the City and I have lost where I am in my notes. Sorry. I have lived in the Philadelphia area all my life and I reside in the Mt. Airy/Chestnut Hill area now. I am also Executive Director and Legal Program Director of Trans-Help, a nonprofit whose mission is to pursue basic civil rights and social services for trans people, as well as LGB people through federal litigation, education and outreach. I was asked by some clients and other LGBT people of color to relate their experiences to the Commission. They can't come here. They can't come here because they're afraid of repercussions. Some of them are gay black males who work and visit the Gayborhood bars -- work in and visit the Gayborhood bars.
Others of them -- and this is our most challenged population in Philadelphia are the transwomen of color who work, used to work, or clients or patients of even the nonprofits in the City. Each of their experiences has been bad. These aren't my experiences. I'm a privileged white woman from the suburbs. These aren't my experiences. But they asked me here because they're too fearful to be here in this room that's supposed to be one of support, in a room that's supposed to one about solving the issues, but the issues are too real for them even to show up. It's subtle and blatant racism and I would be a bad lawyer, I would be a really bad lawyer to try to convey in public in three minutes what they have told me because I found it really hard. I found it really hard as a person and as a lawyer to convey the humiliation and harm that occurs every day, every day to LGB people of color in our community. I also find it sad that those who underwent humiliation and harm themselves back when I was young in the early years, now turn around and inflict it on those who need their help and concern and respect.

When I was first asked to do this, I
almost refused. I don't like to take cases I know I'm going to lose. I know some of the bars and business owners here in the Gayborhood, I have been told that some of them showed up in response to subpoenas and they all may have sent people. But the best we can do for some of those people is to have the brave ones here and the other ones hide. That's not good either. And the system is not working if that's the best we can do. Racism has been rampant here. Racism has been rampant as long as there has been a Gayborhood or even before that. And I'm older than some of you in this room and was in the Philadelphia community back then. In fact, I Googled it and one of the first hits was a Philly Gay News article in 1986 about racism in the gay community. And it's not a cultural difference. It's not my music is different than a black person's music or my way of behaving. We all know how to behave with basic human consideration, love. And the only cultural difference I see is that the white people are on the inside looking out and the people of color are on the outside looking in from the streets in the Gayborhood and many other places in our City. Although Mayor Kenny, Jim --
MR. EARLE: Julie, your three minutes have lapsed, but please take a few more moments.

JULIE CHOVA NES: Okay. Sorry, my back is towards you guys. Although Mayor Kenny and Nelly and others in the administration are keenly aware of the issue, and in Mayor Kenny's case I know has worked for years, and Nelly's case more recently has also worked for years. They can only do so much. They can't change it overnight. And there are simple solutions, like finally releasing the police records of our sister Nizah who died in Philadelphia 12 years ago. This Commission or the legal system can't change this system either. With all due respect, there are too many stories, too much injustice for the system to cope. It's not here, it's not going away. To change, we need to bring in these new voices. Those young, those still idealistic enough to know how to change the world. I see some of them in the Gayborhood. I certainly have heard some of them tonight among the most inspired people I have ever heard. We need those young people. We need them to call the situation to hand. We need them to call each of us to solve the situation, otherwise in 35 years
Philly Gay News or, God forbid, Ernest Owens will be writing about this again. Thank you.

MS. LANDAU: Next up is Kemar Jewel, Terrell Green and Sappho. And there are microphones in the back, yes.

KEMAR JEWEL: Good evening, everyone.

So my name is Kemar Jewel. And the reason why I'm here is because I love the Philadelphia Gayborhood. When I was 15 years old, my parents put me out on the street and they Attic Youth Center and the Philadelphia Gayborhood took me in. Because of the Philadelphia Gayborhood, I have been able to get my first apartment, I have been able to graduate high school, I have been able to graduate college, I have been able to tour around the world. I have been able to do so many thing because of the Philadelphia Gayborhood and I will always show up for the Philadelphia Gayborhood.

So I wanted to say that in today's society when we hear the word racism, our minds usually default to extreme measures such as lynching, KKK members and bar owners screaming nigger across the room. Although those are definitely forms of racism, there are more common
ones that happen right in front of our eyes almost
every day. I'm talking about covert racism.

Covert racism is a form of discrimination that is
disguised and subtle. It is concealed in the
fabric of society and hurts individuals through
often unnoticed and passive methods. To me,
pleasing how people of color look, act, feel and
say is covert racism. On Saturday, September 17,
2016, I became another victim of covert racism in
the Philadelphia Gayborhood. I tried to gain
entrance to Woody's and I was denied entry because
I was wearing sweatpants and sneakers, and I was
told that I was not in dress code according to the
bouncer who was white. When I asked since when has
there been a dress code, he responded by saying for
a long time. Which is clearly a lie because I have
been going to Woody's for seven years since I was
18 going to college night. I have always been in
similar attire and I have never had that issue.
When I asked another bouncer who was black what was
actually going on, that bouncer told me that
they're actually being strict and refusing certain
people because the owner who was white was actually
in the building that night.
When I think back that to tonight, two things come to mind. One, honestly, Woody's is not even that fab to even have a dress code. Number two -- it's not. I live in New York. I go to fab bars. Woody's is not a fab bar. Number two, why are venues that are supposed to be inclusive and create safe spaces for queer and marginalized people now trying to regulate what people, especially people of color, can and cannot wear.

In 2016, sweatpants, track pants and other athletic attire have become everyday attire for folks. For me, athletic wear has become engrained in my style, my presentation and how I express gender identity, and also let us be clear, God created black people and black people created style. And I just feel like trying to police queer people is just going against what these spaces were originally for and it needs to stop now.

To the queer leaders of color in the room, thank you. Thank you for showing up again and again and again and again physically, emotionally and mentally to fight for what is right. To the Mayor, Congress people, commissioners, bar owners, organizational leaders
and other high-ups in the room, please know that queer people of color are sick and tired of being sick and tired, and I ask that you use your powers and your privilege to end this cycle and also listen to what queer people of color need in this community. To end, I want to leave you with a quote which is one of my favorite quotes. It is from Archbishop Desmond Tutu and it goes, if you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have already chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality. Thank you.

(Applause.)

TERRELL GREEN: Hello, everyone. Hi. You look wonderful. My name is Terrell Green and I personally want to thank Nelly for reaching out to me and, you know, really encouraging me to share my story today. I am a Philadelphia native, educated in Philly public schools. I now work at Philly public schools as an arts educator with arts organizations in the City and I work with PHMC programs.

Growing up, my mother repeated two
things -- repeated to me all the time that I had
two strikes against me, that I was black and a man.
So when came out at 17, she said and now you have
your third. Mom said it and the world showed it.
I don't want to spend this crucial time rehashing
the past, going down a laundry list of traumatic
racist events, though they are very important to go
down when the trauma is already set. Or I could
talk about a time when I ordered a medium rare
burger at Tabu and my white waiter turned to me and
said I thought you people liked your meat well
done. Or I could talk about solutions. So I want
to talk about solutions. First by saying equality
isn't a political practice but a human practice.
So in knowing I'm human, remove your invisible and
irrational fear of me and one other thing, please
stop clutching your purses when we make eye contact
on the street and smile instead. I'm going to
smile back, I promise. Now, here's a laundry list
of solutions. Create legislation that questions
employers on their lack of trans people of color on
their staff. Sanction LGBTQ businesses that have
no trans people of color on their staff. We have
done it to discuss the gap in pay amongst genders,
we can do it for race too. A health and literacy
center providing mental and physical health
services, literacy enrichment programs and job
training and placement for LGBTQ people of color.
Employing LGBTQ people of color in leadership roles
at organizations receiving state and local grant
funding to provide services for the LGBTQ community
of color. Provide funding for LGBTQ artists of
color to produce, teach and perform art to heal --
to help break and heal our community. Lastly, I
work in the Philadelphia schools and the charter
schools and I -- this conversation will be
happening in 25 years if we do not have an LGBTQ
inclusivity training program in all public and
charter schools in Philadelphia. Thank you.

(Applause.)

SAPPHO FULTON: Hi, I'm Sappho. How
are you? I'm a lesbian identified woman of color
and I don't think you see a lot of us up here
tonight. Anyway so, yeah, we get nervous, we get
nervous in these spaces sometimes because we feel
like our voices don't matter. Sometimes we are
actually invisible in the Gayborhood, the lesbian
piece of it. So I want to introduce myself. I am
one of the larger promoters in the women of color spaces. We have in existence in the City of Philadelphia, everything that is here in the Gayborhood we have that outside of Center City.

Like for years I want to just say this -- first of all, I want to say that I came up from Petey Girls, the Swan Club, the Olympic Ballroom, old school. So -- Olympic Ballroom, Mademoiselles, and when we came to the -- Sisters and Hepburns, and Hepburns. And when we came to Sisters, we needed membership, we needed membership to get into Sisters. So we didn't argue too much about marginalization and separation. We didn't feel comfortable and we wanted to dance. All we wanted to do was just dance and be free. And be safe and feel safe in those spaces. So we created spaces outside of this Gayborhood or Center City area. Williams Way, William, if you don't know, look in Williams Way desk and look at the history of what it was created here by white male privilege. It was a space created to find homes and resources for gay white men. We have created a space around that and the racism is entrenched in the thread of this area. Listen. We don't -- women do not have a -- we have
never owned a bar down here. Never. When we come
in these spaces, they overcharge us to come in
these spaces. Listen. And then they don't show
up. This is what we look like now. I let her come
up here with me because I love Philly. I do. When
we go in Woody's, when we go in Woody's, they have
white men dancing with panties on. I like to see
women of color or women dancing. They don't even
invite us in. When we come from systems and ask
for money, we don't even have -- we don't even get
-- we are not even offered support for things that
we have. We're not. I ask permission to have an
event here during Pride weekend. Because we know
our place. We have respect. We do. It is what it
is, you know, and we were given that. We don't
think -- I think maybe 75 -- maybe 50 people showed
up on a Pride weekend night. So we don't even get
the support when we get here. So I am an owner of
a nonprofit, but also now that I have told you that
I'm a lesbian, an old lesbian, you know, I'm also
doing my work. As Audre Lorde would say, are you
doing your work. You all know of me and you all
have seen me because I have made my presence known
because my silence will not protect me. And I hold
my collective accountable and make them speak up
and I say stand up and own your space. We
shouldn't be having this conversation in 2016.
Susan, I thank you. Nelly, I thank you. For the
Brown Women's -- Nelly, I thank you. Franny, I
thank you. I thank you for doing your work, women.
Listen. If the Brown Women's Collective hadn't
jumped up in City Hall that day, we wouldn't even
have probably been here. I apologize, Nelly, if
you caught the brunt end of it, but I thank God
that Nelly had a backbone that can handle that
shit.

MR. EARLE: Sappho, your three minutes
have lapsed, but take a few moments to wrap up.
Thank you.

SAPPHO FULTON: So I just want to say
that I'm asking that you all open up some space for
us and I ask that you hold us accountable. And
don't discriminate if we don't always articulate or
sound like your white constituents, because some of
us talk with a slur. We become afraid. We don't
admit it because we ain't no chumps. But we become
afraid, we become afraid to always speak up in
these spaces. I'm trembling. But I do want to say
that I am doing my work. I'm going to, you know, tell a little story. One of my bosses is back there where I intern at for two days a week. I work in Philadelphia, FIGHT. I'm interning there. And I'm also the clinical director. The clinical director, you heard that part, at the new LGBTQ Home For Hope. I'm in the background. You all ain't seen me. I'm in the background having those private, personal conversations and nurturing those souls that you all have tore up. I'm also there when we have these brown transwomen that come down the stairs and want to come to Mazzoni and can't come in Mazzoni because we're afraid that they're not going to be safe when they come in Mazzoni Center. They're not going to be safe. That's what they're told. They're not feeling the part of welcome by the clinical staff in Mazzoni. They can come get T shots, they can come get estrogen, but they don't feel safe in the background. They told me to get off the mic. All right. Look me up on Facebook, Sappho Fulton. Drop the mic.

(Applause.)

MS. LANDAU: Lou Berrios, Chris Stro Kyle and Naomi Leapheart.
LOU BERRIOS: How is everybody doing today? So it's crazy because just today I found out that I was only going to have three minutes to speak. I couldn't write up on paper with so much that I have to say not only -- I hear everybody speaking about clubs, but not that, but nonprofit. Nobody understands the power nonprofits have in Gayborhood. Because you can work there, you can do the work and be their token person and when they're done, they don't let you go. They go around telling people why they shouldn't hire you and it stops brown people from getting new jobs. You know, like I said, there's so much I want to speak on, but there's a larger issue that I have to speak on because I have some participants where I worked at, formerly was working at, who wanted to step up and speak, right, but like we know, we have -- as people, as black and brown people, we have depression, anxiety, on top of it, we are intimidated, right. So they were all for it. They want to come up here and tell their story about a gentleman who works at a nonprofit. Who pays these young girls who are homeless and all they know is sex work. Pays them young girls small dollars, 10,
$15.00, a pack of cigarettes to have sex. And not only do I sit there and I talk to them and say I got your back -- I don't have to work at a nonprofit to do the work I know I'm supposed to do. I don't have to sit in nobody's job to sit out there in Center City and have lunch with my youth. I don't. And I still do this every single day.

I'm on 15th Street. You will see me on 15th and Market, right, because I'm with my friends. I'm with my people, my family, my community. And to go back to this, I have these young women come up and speak to people who sit in high-end places, sit in their job and they go and they say yeah, this individual did this, this individual takes me to the basement. They get rid of him and bring him back. How do you expect our people to stand up and speak if you all do stuff like this? So yeah, I do want to talk about racism in Gayborhood, but also more in nonprofit. And there's so many nonprofits in Center City that do the same thing. You heard it, they don't feel safe. Our people do not feel safe. Gayborhood is a place that you can come and feel safe because your neighborhood does not accept you because you are a person of color, you are gay,
lesbian, trans. So why can't you come to this neighborhood and feel safe? And, you know, I have my stories about Woody's, iCandy, but I just don't go there because I'm the type of person, I don't care. I don't need an army to tell you you doing wrong because that's who I am. And I fell back for a long time, I did. For the past couple months I did fall back and didn't say anything. But when I went past the Youth Health and Empowerment Project and seen that this gentleman was still working there after one of my youth came to me and confided in me to protect them, I just don't know what to say. And it's -- I bring this here today because it has a lot to do about racism, you know. I say not a thing. Young black women, trans, straight, there's no protection for young black women. For black women period, there's no protection. And when they step up to tell their story, there's no protection. Because here goes this multi-billion dollar organization making money and I don't care if you know that I'm talking about you. You can run and tell that, you know what I mean? No, no, no. I'm not done. I'm not done. I'm not done.

MR. EARLE: Your three minutes have
LOU BERRIOS: All right. Yeah. First of all --

MR. EARLE: Not to silence you --

LOU BERRIOS: Like I was saying. Like I was saying. Like I was saying. I'm here because I'm here to say Philadelphia FIGHT knowing this information, people in this community knowing this information has yet to do anything. You know, I know that my youth escaped these organizations to go to these bars and deal with the same shit and it's wrong. It is so wrong. I am a person that I have -- I have the privilege to actually stand up here and speak and don't care about no three minutes because I don't. Because I'm a person who's from Philadelphia, born and raised here, born and raised here. I'm a gay man who in front of my house, I got you, in front of my house got beat up by the Philadelphia Police Department because I was gay. Because my partner was gay. He's put in the hospital. I come -- I'm going to be honest to these people, to Human Relations, I got nothing. I lost my case. With all the evidence out there, I lost my case. How is that? I'm glad you won,
baby. I'm glad. I didn't win. And it's crazy because I didn't want your money. I don't want the City's money. I want them to see what happened to me and what happens to a lot of people and they're not able to get up and speak. So yeah, again, I'm going to be in front of this commission because I'm taking this job to court. I'm taking this job straight. You did me dirty. You did me wrong. You violated me and now I got to sit in front of the same people to tell my story and I just -- I don't care about his three minutes, but I don't care about that. Somebody going to hear me and I hope that everybody in this room is able to get up and speak. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. EARLE: Thank you. Folks, we're approaching 8:00, but we're going to go a few minutes beyond it because we got off to a little bit of a late start. So we're going to try to get through as many people as possible over the next five to 10 minutes. So please try to keep it to three minutes. I know it's difficult, but we want to give a chance to people to speak.

CHRISTOPHER KYLE: How you all doing?
My name is Christopher Kyle. I go by Stro Kyle. Some of you all know me on social media. I'm speaking on behalf of what Lou just mentioned, which is there's a much broader problem outside of the Gayborhood. There's also an issue with nonprofit and the connection between nonprofit and the Gayborhood.

So I want to start off with my name is Christopher Kyle. I've worked as a community activist and promoter in Philadelphia for about seven years now. I have observed and have been exhausted by politics in both nonprofit and nightlife. There is a problematic relationship with the two who have created an uncomfortable and even dehumanizing environment for queer people of color. This realization began with working at Mazzoni Center starting in 2009. From day one I expressed my concerns over the way Mazzoni exploits queer people of color to receive HIV prevention funding and testing. As a department, there were no actual community engagement, no real outreach efforts, no real interest in supporting or helping the lives of queer people of color living with HIV. I have many confrontations with Mazzoni's
management regarding the disrespectful, racist, 
hostile attitude towards myself and other people of 
color. I was constantly and unfairly subjected to 
harassment, ridicule, and threats of termination. 
A number of supervisions led to fierce shouting 
matches that the entire floor of the department 
could hear. I was told that I needed this job and 
that I can't afford to lose it. With this being my 
first real job I felt extremely vulnerable. 
Considering I was an integral part of connecting 
the Afro-queer community to Mazzoni Center and 
exceeding my work expectations on numerous 
occasions, no other person was subjected to this 
type of treatment. I fought and speak up on a 
constant basis for Mazzoni to engage the queer 
people of color community and to be more culturally 
sensitive and to rectify this toxic work 
environment. With virtually nothing being done, in 
my final year I have filed a formal complaint of 
racism, intimidation and threats made by 
management. HR did a thorough investigation, 
interviewing everyone in my department who all 
confirmed that they have witnessed this harassment. 
Nothing was done. There was no disciplinary
action. And at this point work became traumatized and emotionally draining. After being burned out, I decided to leave and was taken by open arms to the Attic Youth Center. What I came to realize is that nightlife has a very similar view towards black and brown people. We are simply commodities for profit. We are not allowed to celebrate our identities or our culture within the Gayborhood.

One example would be a time when I reached out to Franny Price. Requesting through Mazzonie Center I put together an event coinciding with Outfest that celebrates Afro-queer culture and diversity. I was told that not only would she not allow it, but that I should consider not thinking divisively but coming up with events that wouldn't make everyone uncomfortable. In other words, I heard no black events. She also stated that we already have gay pride and that was enough. I was living with her ability to tell me how and when to celebrate my culture. She also stated that if I took my events outside of the blocks of the Gayborhood, it would not be supported. The reason being, it would take money away from the bars and clubs in the Gayborhood. Which in my opinion is highly
problematic considering most queer people of color venture away from the Gayborhood due to the ongoing racism and cannot take part in profit. The biggest LGBT community (inaudible). I later went on to promote at Tabu where my first event was Beards N Queers Celebration. This was my own personal event and I didn't have any affiliations with Mazzoni or anything else. This was my own personal event. Once this event began to generate buzz, I began receiving racist direct messages by white people calling my event a nigger party and all sorts of accusations of being ghetto and every other stereotype that you can think of. I was bombarded for weeks leading up to this event, none of which I paid attention to. This is a community that the Gayborhood continues to breed. There is a deeply-rooted issue beyond just racism but actual dilution. The fact that it's taken 40 years to even get to this hearing proves that. If the Gayborhood gave queer people of color the opportunity, they would realize just how strong and resilient we are, how much volume we bring outside of what's in our wallets, our pants and our blood samples.
(Applause.)

MR. EARLE: Chris, you're at three minutes, but take a few more moments, please.

CHRIS KYLE: My experiences of being in this community have been traumatizing, to say the least. Not only for myself but for many people that I truly love and care about. But I continue to fight until I get to the epicenter of what influences change. This needs to be the last generation of young black queers having to a fight within the community that should be welcoming and safe to them. Thank you.

(Applause.)

NAOMI LEAPHEART: Good evening. I know it's late so I won't be long. My name is Naomi Leapheart and I work for the National LGBTQ Task Force. I'm proud to be here as a part of the task force. We had earlier this fall the Queer and Racial Justice Institute, whereby we named what has not been named in this room and that's whiteness. It is the disease of whiteness. And one of the things that we talked about in that room was how whiteness is not cut or diluted by queerness. So much of the narrative has been well, because I
experienced as a white queer person discrimination and prejudice in this nation that is hostile to LGBTQ people, that I am not responsible to do the work of dismantling white supremacy. This is not -- the burden of this is not on people of color, as has been said before. Our labor is exploited. Our blood samples are exploited. Our dollars are exploited and I'm tired of being in rooms where our pain is on display. It is a violence. It is a violence to us to parade our pain around like porn. That's what it is. It's voyeuristic. The stories have been told. The books have been written. The studies have shown. The research has suggested. The town halls have been convened. I'm tired as an out queer black minister of being in a space where the moral responsibility of this City, of this Commission is refused. You have a moral responsibility. Don't take the job, don't run the nonprofit, don't manage the budget, don't sign your name, don't get the liquor license if you're not willing to take moral -- I'm talking about moral responsibility. Not just political responsibility. Not just economic responsibility, because we can't be bought either. But moral responsibility to do
what is right by people. Don't be on the wrong side of history. When the story gets told, don't be on the wrong side of history because our blood runs through the streets. The blood as my sacred text says cries up from the ground. And you can't unring a bell and you can't unsee what you have seen here tonight. You cannot say you didn't hear. It will be tweeted, it will be Facebooked. You cannot say you did not hear. And that means that we have a moral responsibility. I want to say that on behalf of the task force. I want to be the liaison to the resources that the task force is for the continued organizing in our community. I live in Philadelphia. I have been in Philadelphia for 17 years. And I am committed to using my role in this national organization to support the organizing work that is done on the ground here. So please use us, please use the task force as a resource. None of us is free until all of us are free. None of us is protected until all of us are protected. Let's not be on the wrong side of history. Good night.

(Applause.)

MR. EARLE: Thank you, Naomi.
Rue, who do we have next?


DOMINIQUE LONDON: Good evening. My name is Dominique London. I am the co-founder -- excuse me, the proud co-founder of the Black and Brown Workers Collective. The Black and Brown Workers Collective formed as a response to the racism and other forms of oppression that exists within the Gayborhood. We were founded in February of 2016. Our existence frames our testimony today. Currently there is no business in the Gayborhood owned by a person of color. Every bar is owned by a white gay cisman. This is a clear indicator of severely entrenched systematic racism. On several occasions, members of our collective have been profiled at the door and inside of these establishments in the following ways. Profiled for fitting the description by police officers in the establishment, particularly iCandy. One member was taken outside and harassed when they asked why they were being asked to produce I.D. after already being let into the bar. Standing at the bar for incredible lengths of time to be served a drink as
white LGBT that arrived to the counter after were served. The no Tims policy at iCandy is another clear indicator of a racialized antiblack policy that disproportionately impacts black and brown LGBTQ people. Not being able to enter these establishments because of a restricted and racialized dress code is discrimination and maintains a hostile and unsafe environment towards black and brown LGBTQ people. Being in the presence of white LGBTQ people who feel it is acceptable to appropriate black and brown culture for fun and entertainment is also micro-aggressive subtle forms of racism that impact overall wellness for LGBTQ people of color in the Gayborhood.

The BBWC has been organizing against racism in the Gayborhood since February of this year. We know that systematic racism is not just restricted to the bars, but also extends to the workplaces of black and brown LGBTQ folk. Often after these long work days and racist micro-aggressions in the workplace, happy hour happens in these racist bar establishments. Our call to action frames the issues of systematic racism in workplaces for LGBTQ black and brown
people in the Gayborhood.

The following data has been collected over the course of the past six months through one-on-one in-depth interviews with LGBTQ people of color. For the protection of these community members, we have omitted the names and any identifiers. One worker notes the economic disparities in the HIV AIDS fields located in the Gayborhood and this is a quote. There's obviously something I have that you need. Why aren't you compensating me for this, and the way that you are dealing with these white people to the degree where they are able to put down a payment on a house. I'm still living in an apartment. That can put into perspective for you when I say these things about unequal pay, I don't mean a couple of dollars. I mean literally a down payment for a house versus an apartment.

Here goes another one. An elder speaks of their experiences in the Gayborhood when they first started working here. This is a quote. I had a youth helping me with the research with my research, and at night the organization gave him prevention materials and he would go out to the
bars and club and pass them out and talk about
things. The organization said that they would pay
him. That was my understanding, that this kid was
going to be paid. I waited four weeks. It turned
into six. It turned into eight and into 12.

This is another. A bilingual worker
speaks to the difficulty of being bilingual in the
HIV AIDS sector. This is a quote. My ability to
speak Spanish as a native speaker and not having
learned it in school, having culture attached to my
language, it was difficult because that did not --
they didn't take my experience as something
credible because I did not go to a university.

Here's another. A black man speaks to
his experiences. When I have to be there as a
brother, they don't like the type of rapport, the
type of interaction. They see it as a threat to
them. They see it as militant or as something that
they should be afraid of. So they use these terms,
this paperwork in these instances that they deem to
be something to get me fired.

And this is the last one. A worker
speaks. One white manager started as a supervisor
for the staff after that and then she became a
director of a department under this grant mostly --
   most recently. I am still in the same position
that I have been in for years. She started after
me.

MR. EARLE: Done Dominique, your three
minutes are elapsed, but take a few moments to wrap
up, please.

DOMINIQUE LONDON: Yes, please.

MR. EARLE: Thank you.

DOMINIQUE LONDON: When we realize that
we must manifest requires tools that we create
instead of those imposed on us by white supremacist
cis patriarchal capitalist systems, there is an
internal dying that is required so that what is
necessary to birth becomes possible. Destruction
equals rebirth. Allow what no longer serves you to
destroy itself. The rebirth will follow. The
rebirth will follow.

(Applause.)

MR. EARLE: Thank you, Dominique.

We'll have one last speaker and then we'll have a
couple closing remarks and some words of thanks
from Rue.

EARL FOWLKES: My name is Earl Fowlkes
and I am the present CEO of the Center for Black Equity. I'm also the chair of the Human Rights Commission in Washington D.C. and a native Philadelphian who was born a few blocks from where we're standing today. The racism that caused me to leave has brought me back here again tonight and I'm not going to repeat. When I first went to bars in the Gayborhood I had a passport with me, not because I was going abroad, because I needed two I.D.s to get into the bar, and sometimes my student I.D. and my driver's licenses wasn't enough. But we fast forward. The same discussions that I had with my friends many years ago are still taking place. And as opposed to rehashing experiences of racism which we have all heard, we all know, I want to offer some solutions based on my experience working with -- especially when I was here with COLOURS as an administrator and working with Philadelphia Black Pride and my connections to the City and what I have seen around the country. There's several things I want to recommend. First of all, that bars and businesses that have patterns of discrimination should have their license suspended and their license taken
away from them. That includes their partners, whether they're active or not. You have to hit people economically and I encourage people to boycott from the outside, but the City has a responsibility and government has a responsibility to fight racial discrimination. Number one.

Number two, very few businesses in the Gayborhood. The City of Philadelphia needs to use the economic power and the economic development to encourage and to walk people of color who are business people, want to open a business in Center City to help them out and that includes loans at low interest, that includes technical assistance. Those are things so that we can have something in Center City.

The other part of it is dealing with nonprofits. The City of Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania gives out millions of dollars to nonprofit. First of all, some of that money needs to be directed to nonprofits of color so that they can continue to provide valuable services to LGBT people of color in this town.

Number two, those who do receive money, the larger organizations, if they don't have
appropriate levels of leadership of color, they should have their funding reduced.

And the final thing I want to recommend is that the Commission and the Mayor's LGBT office launch a City-wide campaign to instruct people and to educate people how when things -- some of the things that have taken place today, how people address them and how they go through the system to make complaints so they can have support, including free legal support, so they can have their claims heard and so they can actually have them addressed.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. EARLE: Folks, I'd like, just for the record, and I would really like to extend a huge applause to this court reporter who has been working nonstop over the past two-and-a-half years. But the Commission in preparation for this hearing did issue 11 subpoenas to all of the bars in the Gayborhood and all -- there are eight owners of those 11 bars and all eight owners did attend the hearing. And we're appreciative of their compliance with the subpoena. And we will be reviewing their policies, their dress codes,
antidiscrimination policies as part of our report.

All of the testimony that we gathered here today will be reviewed, along with the transcript. And as Rue would like to point out, we don't -- we can't keep going all night, but we will continue for the next week to accept testimony at the Commission. You can stop by the office or visit our Website or call and/or mail in your testimony so that it's counted.

A question in the back.

SPEAKER: I have a question. These instructions, are they available in Spanish?

SPEAKER: And also, can you guys -- don't forget your documented youth, queer people that are in the City, and don't forget the Latinos that are in the City that are also queer and also have to work and speak up. Nobody could talk on behalf of them.

SPEAKER: Now, why wasn't this available to the Latino community in Spanish? How are you guys inclusive when you're excluding a large segment of the City population?

MR. EARLE: Rue, would you --

SPEAKER: I didn't see it in Spanish.
MS. LANDAU: Right. I would appreciate that. All of our information that we have from our office is in Spanish. We have many Spanish speakers as well.

SPEAKER: You should have publicized it in Spanish. I don't give a fuck how many people in your office speak Spanish.

MS. LANDAU: Heard. Thank you very much. I hear it.

SPEAKER: You better implement it too.

MR. EARLE: All of our materials are available in Spanish and several other languages. So please take advantage of them. And I want to thank everybody for your cooperation and please have a good evening.

(Hearing concluded 8:25 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the proceedings, evidence and objections noted, are contained fully and accurately in the notes taken by me on the hearing of this matter, and that this copy is a correct transcript of the same.

________________________________________
SUSAN A. HURREY, R.P.R.
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