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U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

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COMMISSION ON THE SOCIAL STATUS OF
BLACK MEN AND BOYS

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BUSINESS MEETING

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TUESDAY, JUNE 27, 2023

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The Commission convened via Video-
Teleconference at 11:00 a.m. EDT, Frederica Wilson,
Chair, presiding.

PRESENT:

FREDERICA S. WILSON, Chair, Florida

REVEREND AL SHARPTON, Secretary, National
Action Network

JACK BREWER, Commissioner, The Brewer Group

JOSEPH E. MARSHALL, JR., Commissioner, Alive

&

Free Foundation

KRISTEN CLARKE, Commissioner, Department of
JusticeTHOMAS M. COLCLOUGH, Commissioner, U.S. Equal
Employment Opportunity Commission

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RICHARD CESAR, Commissioner, Department of
Labor

MARSHALL DILLARD, Commissioner, Driller to
Driller Foundation

TINALOUISE MARTIN, Commissioner U.S.
Commission on Civil Rights

STAFF PRESENT:

MAURO MORALES, USCCR, Staff Director

MARK K. SPENCER, CSSBMB, Staff Director

MONICA M. COOPER, Support Services Specialist

GERALD K. FOSTEN, Social Scientist

DAVID GANZ, Parliamentarian

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P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

(11:04 a.m.)

CHAIR WILSON: Good morning, everyone. I'm proud to see Reverend Sharpton on the meeting this morning. Welcome. And Mr. Dillard, and of course, Dr. Marshall. It's a pleasure. And Ms. Martin, Dr. Martin.

So I'd like to say good morning. I want to welcome all of you. We had a very busy week and the members of the Congressional Black Caucus are traveling now, so that's why they're not on the Zoom.

I had to pull myself away from that to come to do this important business.

We have had a very busy season since the last time we convened. We've been working as a caucus and doing a lot of work in the community. And this past week, we had a very interesting and well-attended session on fatherhood which was extremely well covered and I think we're going to make a huge difference at the Congressional Black Caucus ALC this year when we will invite all of you to come and be a part of probably three sessions that will be hosted by the Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys.

I'm going to now recognize our Director for the quorum call.

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1 MR. SPENCER: Good morning, Madam Chair,
2 Commissioners, and our varied listeners. The next
3 order of business will be to enter a quorum call so
4 that we may move forward with our business.

5 Those, upon hearing their name, please
6 signify your presence by saying here.

7 First, Chair Wilson?

8 CHAIR WILSON: Here.

9 MR. SPENCER: Secretary Sharpton?

10 REVEREND SHARPTON: Here.

11 MR. SPENCER: Commissioner Beatty? Commissioner Bowman? Commissioner Brewer?
12 Commissioner Cesar?

13 MR. CESAR: Here.

14 MR. SPENCER: Thank you. Commissioner Clarke. Commissioner Colclough?

15 MR. COLCLOUGH: Here.

16 MR. SPENCER: Commissioner Dillard? Commissioner Elder? Commissioner Martin?

17 MS. MARTIN: Here.

18 MR. SPENCER: Commissioner Horsford? Commissioner Jeffries?

19 And for the record, we spoke with Commissioner Jeffries' office and we have his proxy and
20 agreement to move forward with the meeting.

21 Commissioner Johnson? Commissioner Marshall?

22 DR. MARSHALL: Present.

23 MR. SPENCER: Thank you. Commissioner McBath? Commissioner McIver? And
24 Commissioner Holmes?

25 MS. HOLMES: Here.

1 MR. SPENCER: Thank you. It sounded like someone just logged on. Can you identify
2 yourself, please?

3 CHAIR WILSON: Looks like it's Commissioner Brewer.

4 MR. BREWER: Yes, present. How are you doing?

5 CHAIR WILSON: Okay. How are you?

6 MR. BREWER: I am blessed.

7 MR. SPENCER: Thank you, Commissioner Brewer. We note that you are present.

8 MR. BREWER: Thank you, sir. Sorry for my tardiness.

9 MR. SPENCER: No problem. That being said, I have noted at least seven, now eight
10 Commissioners present as our current number of those enrolled as Commissioners -- someone else logged in? No.
11 I will yield back to the Chairwoman noting that we have a technical quorum and we may
12 proceed with your discretion, Madam Chair, with the rest of the business.

13 CHAIR WILSON: If there is no objection, we will proceed with the agenda.

14 MR. SPENCER: Yes, ma'am.

15 CHAIR WILSON: Just not take any votes at this particular time, but we have a lot of
16 business that we want to move forward with.

17 I want you to know, as I've said at the very beginning, that we are envisioning a busy, busy
18 September, so as we move forward, we will be in touch with you to register you at the CBC Annual Legislative
19 Conference.

20 I served on the CBC Foundation, so hopefully, we will have a huge town hall on police and
21 youth, Black boys, Black boys and the police. And we expect to recruit thousands of -- well hundreds, if not a
22 thousand, police officers from across the United States to convene with boys, and specifically members of the 5,000
23 Role Models of Excellence Project. And we're going to do some role playing and some exchanges because we know
24 that you can pass bills. You can talk about all kinds of laws, but there's tension between Black boys and men and the
25 police. And that tension has been there since slavery. And it is -- there has to be a way to ease that tension.

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1 And we have found a way to ease that tension through the Five Thousand Role Models
2 because there has to be understanding. You respect me and I respect you. So it's not so much about the laws, it has to
3 do about here and we know why so many -- some people go into policing from the beginning. And so we have to --
4 weed through all of that, so that's going to be one big town hall. And then you can call me Fredericka Prevention
5 Wilson because I believe in prevention.

6 When I speak or talk or move about, I don't speak about the criminal justice system or
7 returning citizens. I speak about what you can do to avoid returning citizens, to avoid the criminal justice system.
8 What can you do to uplift the Black men and the Black boys before they get to that line of demarcation between being
9 arrested and not being arrested. So we'll have a huge forum on that particular issue.

10 And you will hear in our Director's Report about Representative Clarke who wants to do
11 something on reentry. And we're going to be moving along with that.

12 We also are looking forward to take you to an HBCU, hopefully, Tennessee State
13 University, and I believe Reverend Sharpton, you're on the faculty there.

14 REVEREND SHARPTON: Yes.

15 CHAIR WILSON: In the fall to meet with stakeholders, other HBCU presidents, bringing
16 them on probably in October and to have a real forum on what role HBCUs play in the movement of our children.

17 I want you to know that I have a bill. They call it a reparation bill, but it's not really a
18 reparation bill because it only targets certain people and those people are students. So my bill specifically addresses
19 children who are descendants of slaves. If they choose, you know, when you talk about school choice, so if they
20 choose to attend an HBCU, they will be able to attend tuition free. That's all children of African descendants will be
21 able to attend an HBCU tuition free. And I'm trying to move this legislation in a way that it does not become codified
22 as reparations, but it becomes codified just how we did for the Native Americans whose children go to school tuition
23 free and nobody said a word.

24 MR. BREWER: Madam Chair?

25 CHAIR WILSON: Yes.

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1 MR. BREWER: This is Commissioner Brewer. If there's anything that I can do to lobby
2 any conservative colleagues of mine on that bill, just let me know where to be and when.

3 CHAIR WILSON: You all have to know that Commissioner Brewer is a Republican
4 appointee, so to have him say that is wonderful. We will be dependent on you, Commissioner Brewer, and we're
5 really going to be dependent on you to help us with some of our fatherhood initiatives and fatherhood bills as we go
6 forward because we know what you do in Florida. So I'm going to reach out to you once we get this bill written and
7 once we move forward.

8 I've scheduled a meeting with the Chairman of the Education Committee, Representative
9 Foxx. I don't even know if that's the right venue or how we should proceed with it or whether it needs to come out of
10 the Department of Education, but we're going to figure it out because it's time. And it's not only a way to help Black
11 children, but it's a way to help the HBCUs who we know are struggling from years of disinvestment, generations
12 when states just ignored the fact that they were supposed to give HBCUs a certain amount of money and they didn't
13 do it. They gave them a fraction of the money. And some of them have filed lawsuits. Some of them have won those
14 lawsuits and some of them have not filed lawsuits, but intend to file lawsuits. And of course, some of them are being
15 punished for filing those lawsuits, but that's what happens, you still have to fight.

16 Okay, now I'm going to turn it over to our Director, who now has a report.

17 MR. SPENCER: Madame Chair, to the Commissioners, in your package of information
18 that our Support Specialist, Monica Cooper, provided to each of you, there's a full Director's Report. It is some nine
19 pages. And so I'm not going to repeat that. Please view it at your opportunity and I will just point to some of the
20 highlights, some of which the Chair has already spoken about.

21 So as Chairwoman Wilson talked about, we had a conversation, very positive, with
22 Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke, who has identified some issues with regard to criminal justice and has
23 tasked us with looking at the phenomenon of reentry, the obstacles that Black men and Black youth who are detained
24 face, making that transition from incarceration to community. And as the Chairwoman said, we have begun that
25 work and we will continue that collaboration.

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1 During the period, as I've laid out, from March to April, we engaged a number of
2 academics and education researchers to begin with the NCEED project at Morgan State University which is creating a
3 top tier research effort led by Dr. Glenda Prime who is the Chair of the Department of Education and Urban Studies
4 at Morgan State and this will be one of the first efforts of this kind in the nation to explore issues of equity and
5 education, specifically targeting how to create greater opportunity for Black men and boys, but also Black children
6 and focusing on things like expanding the pipeline of Black people and students into the teaching profession, but
7 particularly Black men, expanding that pipeline of Black men into the teaching profession.

8 And with that, we engaged a number of entities, community-based organizations. One that
9 I'd like to mention is Youth About Business in Nashville, Tennessee. You'll see a link for what Youth About Business
10 is doing. They are a great mentoring program preparing Black youth for opportunities in areas like STEM, but
11 opening a transition and a pathway for Black youth into corporate America.

12 We had an open discussion suggested by Commissioner Horsford and others to look at
13 labor and employment and economic empowerment. That was a very dynamic discussion and you will see in my
14 notes some of the participants and links to some of the initiatives that were discussed during that discussion.

15 A few administrative notes, during this time, we -- the staff worked on our continued media
16 efforts and expanding our media platforms including updating our Twitter and Facebook accounts. Again, we
17 communicated with Senator McConnell about the need to appoint a successor for resigned Commissioner Oleka.
18 We have now, out on the street at present, a scope of work and request for proposals for a web developer and that
19 follows our hiring of a social media specialist, Ms. Diamond Newman, who we're happy to have with us now.

20 We also brought on and we're happy to have the assistance of two MSDS Fellows, Dr.
21 Barbara Williams-Skinner's organization, a Master Series for Distinguished Leaders; Zach Aplin of the Coca-Cola
22 Company; Tiffany James, who has her own media consultancy, joined us and helped us to draft a comprehensive
23 media strategy which we are hoping to roll out in full in August.

24 We also began to develop the position description for an administrative officer and that
25 person is now on board in the person of Ransom Washington who came to us from the District of Columbia

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1 Government with great experience. And he's really helping us to organize things like our travel, our administrative
2 responsibilities that we are required by federal law to comply with.

3 One of the groups I'd like to point out to the Commissioners is a project that we were
4 introduced to called Never Whisper Justice. And Never Whisper Justice calls itself a justice-centered media company
5 that fuses bold storytelling and concrete social impact. They produced a full-length movie called Black Boys. And
6 I've included the link and please take the opportunity to learn more about Never Whisper Justice. They're really
7 dynamic, led by some dynamic, young Black men and we're happy to have them as a partner.

8 I'd also like to point out and thank our continuing partnership with Michael Duvall who is
9 the National Director of the National YMCA's Young Men of Color Initiative. And we've been talking to their youth
10 leaders from across the country and talking about their mentoring program and initiatives.

11 Later on, I would also like to just point out that because of our continued work on our
12 media strategy, we had to apply and we have been granted our own dedicated web domain named CSSBMB.gov and
13 that has allowed us the opportunity to be assigned our own web-hosting service by the Government and we are
14 hoping that that will happen in a matter of weeks.

15 In June, we traveled to St. Louis, Missouri to participate in a program called Home Grown
16 St. Louis which operates under the umbrella of the University of Washington at St. Louis and led by Professor Sean
17 Joe. And we traveled there to see what we believe is an outstanding template that brings together many different
18 community-based initiatives. Home Grown St. Louis was a response to the tragic killing of Michael Brown in
19 Ferguson, Missouri. And it is meant to coordinate community-based efforts focusing on all aspects of social and
20 economic life and particularly, the economic uplift of Black men and boys which Home Grown St. Louis is a chief
21 barometer of the social and economic health of a region.

22 I've included the link to that organization and I hope that you will take an opportunity to
23 read what Home Grown St. Louis is doing.

24 We also met with Forward Through Ferguson that drafted the Ferguson Commission
25 Report after the killing of Michael Brown, a very energetic and dynamic community activist, who are focused on

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1 created alternatives and intervention and prevention, particularly for young Black men as an alternative to
2 incarceration. I've included a link to some of their activities and the Ferguson Commission Report. And I would
3 suggest that to you as well.

4 Thank you to Commissioner McKeever for having a discussion with us focusing on
5 healthcare disparities in the African American community and pointing out specific things for us to develop, focusing
6 on healthcare delivery, mental health, and also mental health for Black men who are incarcerated and making that
7 transition from incarceration back to community.

8 Lastly, from an Administrator's standpoint, we have Mr. Ransom Washington who was
9 hired as our Administrator Officer, and he is here, as I mentioned. Dr. Gerald Fosten, our Social Scientist, has
10 developed a time line for our annual report which is ongoing. And we are pleased with our progress in that area.

11 Last, but not least, I'd like to announce our Act Now Summit which we are sponsoring on
12 July 24th at the National Press Club Building which is intended to bring together our Commissioners, the many
13 partners that I mentioned in my report, so that we can kind of energize our discussions in the policy areas to work
14 and coordinate what vision the Commissioners have with the actual experts in the field and to help give our staff
15 greater direction in how we develop these research initiatives and policy recommendations for the Commission.

16 I'll wrap by saying that we're very thankful and grateful for Dr. Gregory Hutchings, Jr.,
17 who is leading our education, our Roundtable of Education Scholars who are working on a White Paper of
18 recommendations to address inequities in public education and to identify issues of mentoring and other things that
19 are meant to uplift Black boys in the education process.

20 And with that, that wraps my report. Again, I have a much more detailed report that's in
21 your package and I'm happy to answer any questions.

22 CHAIR WILSON: Thank you, Mr. Director. Are there any comments, questions of the
23 Director?

24 If not, we're going to open discussion now. Any comments from you? Any suggestions
25 that you want to share with us, ways that you think we can strengthen the Commission?

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1 We have gone through a pandemic. We were unable to meet in-person. Now we have
2 passed the pandemic and we will begin to have events in-person which will require many of you to come to
3 Washington and many of you to meet us in other parts of the country. So do you have anything to share with us?

4 REVEREND SHARPTON: Madam Chair?

5 CHAIR WILSON: Yes.

6 REVEREND SHARPTON: Let me thank you for opening up and thank the Director for
7 their report. I'm going to step off early because of another commitment, but I wanted to express how honored I am to
8 be a part of this and how important this is and will make in-person meetings.

9 I also wanted to stress, as I heard the Director's report, and will be looking at any of the
10 links that you, as Chair and he as Director, should feel free when you come on projects that some of my media
11 platforms from television and radio can give exposure to some of these programs. I think it would be good because I
12 was very involved in Ferguson. I did the eulogy at Michael Brown's funeral. I did not know about this project that he
13 talked about and they ought to be on television.

14 So I think that one of the things that each of your Commissioners can do is use whatever
15 outlets and access we have to deal with illuminating and amplifying some of the work and some of the studies that we
16 get as Commissioners.

17 CHAIR WILSON: Well, I thank you, Reverend Sharpton for that. And I was scheduled to
18 come on your show Sunday about the whole Fatherhood Initiative and of course, we had the Russian debacle.

19 But I'm glad you said that. When I established the Commission, I envisioned the
20 Commission being a national think tank. You know how we know that what happens in these think tanks, the
21 results don't happen overnight, but it's bringing together people who are like-minded, who are moving forward on
22 this issue, Black men and boys.

23 It's the only thing in this whole Government that gives us the authority to actually say
24 Black men and boys. You know we have to say Black and Brown or boys of color, but this gives us the authority to say
25 the words Black men and boys.

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1 So this think tank would come together in the way that the Federal Government has its
2 funding, something like Never Whisper Justice would just stay in that particular facility, Just Wish for Justice. How
3 do we get Just Wish for Justice across these United States? That's what this think tank is all about. How do we get the
4 5000 Role Models of Excellence Prevention Program across these United States? And that's what we're going to have
5 to work on.

6 How do we activate this think tank? Very quietly? Very succinctly? And making sure that
7 when we finish, we have a product because this Commission does not expire. Some commissions, most commissions,
8 all commissions who are not important, well, I guess not important as our Commission because to me, the most
9 important bill that was passed is the Civil Rights Movement. So we've got to use this as a tool to change the thinking
10 and the mindset of the percept of people across this country how they perceive Black men and boys, that's number
11 one. So thank you for that.

12 Any other suggestions or Representative or Commissioner Clarke, I see that you have
13 joined us. We did mention your reentry project and what you would like for us to move forward with. Do you have
14 any comments for us?

15 MS. CLARKE: No. Pardon my lateness, but dealing with various reentry I think is an
16 important part of the work that we have to do, find more opportunity for Black men and Black boys. So I look
17 forward to developing that body of work through the Commission.

18 Also looking forward to figuring out work that we can do on the front end, how do we
19 prevent people, how do we prevent people from becoming entangled in the criminal justice system in the first place.
20 And a lot of that work involves dealing with schools, the school-to-prison pipeline, the over disciplining of students
21 along lines of race. So looking forward to tackling all of these issues in the road ahead.

22 CHAIR WILSON: Thank you. We also have some statistics that we're dealing with in this
23 whole Commission caucus about Black teachers. Teacher pay rates, how do we recruit Black male teachers, doctors.
24 We are just about in trouble with Black doctors and it shows us that Black doctors save Black lives. So there are
25 programs -B there's a program right here in D.C. called Young Doctors, and Young Doctors should be a national

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1 program. So this is what our think tank, Dr. Spencer, helps us to do. We come together with our experts and we
2 figure out, through this federal budget, how do we make these programs national.

3 You know, it's one thing to save children in one part of the country or one state or one city,
4 but how do we do it across the United States? How do we spread Never Whisper Justice in every community? How
5 do we put the Young Doctors in every community? That's the only way we're going to save if we're making progress,
6 not just to highlight this in our communities, but how do we spread it across? How do we make the police
7 accountable and ease that tension the way that it happens in some cities, but not others? It's through the work of this
8 Commission, through this think tank, in the dark of night sometimes when nobody is watching, and nobody is
9 listening but us. That's the way it happens in Washington. That's what a think tank does. So this is what I envision
10 and this is what we're hoping to achieve with this Commission. We're going to think. We're going to talk. We're
11 going to collaborate and share and break down this whole -- all of the bureaucracy that has kept us silent for
12 generations.

13 Okay, any other suggestions? Yes?

14 MR. SPENCER: Madam Chair, just to interrupt, I've just gotten an administrative note
15 just to remind the Commissioners in order for us to enable your travel for BMB events, please complete those EFT
16 forms that allow us to register you with the government offices so that we may pay for your travel and thank you very
17 much.

18 CHAIR WILSON: Okay, we'll move forward and just let you know that our next business
19 meeting will be determined. We will, of course, be in touch with you for the September ALC where we're hoping
20 many of you -- some of you are already in D.C., but others will travel to be with us. We'll have, of course, a chance to
21 see each other, some for the first time. I can hardly wait to give all of you a hug. And you will receive an email
22 reminder including all correspondence related to the business meetings from the Director.

23 In the interim, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me and my number is
24 202-904-0194.

25 At this time, I want to thank each one of you for your continued service to the Commission

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1 and without objection, I move to adjourn.

2 MR. SPENCER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

3 CHAIR WILSON: Thank you. Thank you, everyone.

4 MS. MARTIN: Thank you.

5 MR. SPENCER: Thank you. And with that, that's the close of our business. Thank you
6 much and we look forward to hearing from you very soon. Thank you.

7 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 11:38 a.m.)



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