

SENATOR HARRIS: Thank you very much, Vice President Hollins.

I'm Fred Harris, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, which is the private sector follow-on for the Eisenhower Violence Commission and the Kerner Commission, on which I served. The Kerner Commission was appointed -- actually, called The President's National Advisory Commission on Civic Disorders -- by President Johnson after the terrible disorders which occurred in the central cities, most of the major cities of the country, including, as you know, of course, Detroit. President Johnson asked us to answer three questions: What happened? Why did it happen? And what can we do to prevent it happening again and again? You remember that in that report probably the most famous words were "America is moving toward two societies: one white, one black, separate and unequal." Today I think we would say "one white, one black and Hispanic, separate and unequal." The idea of this hearing -- and we're having additional hearings on December the 1st in Newark, where there were also a tragic and terrible set of disasters, disorders. The idea is to update, 40 years later, the Kerner Report. That's what the Eisenhower Foundation is up to, and we start with this hearing. We've also commissioned a large number of academic studies, and we'll be walking around the country some ourselves, particularly in areas where the disorders earlier occurred.

We know some things already. For example, we know that today there are more people in poverty by 11 million than was true 40 years ago.

Then there were 25 and a half million people who were poor. Today there's 36 and a half million people poor. We know from published census and other statistics that poor people today are poorer than they were. Forty-three percent of poor people today are living in what's called deep poverty. That is, their incomes are less than 50 percent of the poverty level.

And that poverty is more concentrated than it was before.

We know that the problems of -- the intertwined problems of race and poverty are still with us. For example, the poverty rate among African-Americans and Hispanics is triple that for nonwhite Hispanics -- or for white nonHispanics; and that of African-Americans and Hispanics who are living in deep poverty, they are twice -- that's twice the rate as for nonHispanic whites. We've seen a study that shows that Detroit has lost about a third of its population in the last 40 years and that those left behind here are poorer than they were then.

The white population, as you know, in Detroit, the study shows, is only a fraction of what it was 40 years ago. Then the poverty rate for white people living in Detroit was 8 percent. Today it's something like a third. And then the poverty rate for 40 years ago for African-Americans living in Detroit was about a fourth, 25 percent. Today it's something like a third.

We're here to -- we want to know what happened to those people who left? Where are they? And how are they doing? And we particularly want to know what about those people who still live here? How are they doing? What we hope to do with these hearings and with our eventual report next spring is to dispel the kind of myth that grew up, beginning with the Reagan Administration, I think, that everything government tried failed. The truth is that nearly everything we tried worked. We just quit trying it, or we didn't try hard enough. We made progress on virtually every aspect of race and poverty for the decade after the report of the Kerner Commission; but then, particularly with the advent of the Reagan-Bush Administrations, that 12 years, the progress stopped, and in many ways it began to reverse. It made progress again during the eight years of Kerner -- of the Clinton Administration; and then with the present Administration, we see the second kind of reversal. The other thing we want to do is to try to remind people that -- a lot of people, I think, that don't realize this -- that the problems -- the intertwined problems of race and poverty are still with us in this country. I think a lot of people think, well, we solved all that some time ago. We didn't.

And, as I said, in many ways things are getting worse. And we want to talk about how we can generate the will to again act on these problems. We know what works, and we know that we have the money to do what needs to be done, and we hope to cover those subjects and those with recommendations in our spring report.

Now I would like to call on the President and CEO of the Eisenhower Foundation, who was a very important member of the staff of the Eisenhower Violence Commission, Dr. Alan Curtis.