

**MR. WHEELER:** Thank you to the Eisenhower Foundation.

Forty years later we've arrived at a place where issues have become severely racialized.

If I say "immigration, " many of us will think of our citizen brothers in the Mexican community. If I say "terrorism, " many of us think of our sisters and brothers in the Arab community. If I say "affirmative action, " we think of black people. If I say "poverty, " we think of black people. And that is so untrue.

Last year here in the state of Michigan -- Michigan, seven out of ten whites and nearly 65 percent of Michigan voted to reject our longstanding, so-called commitment to fairness and commitment.

Michigan has also cemented its place as No. 3 -- affirmative action, yes, sir -- Michigan has also cemented its place as No. 3 in hate crimes. Racism continues to have many faces.

Most of us understand institutionalized racism as the protection and preservation of white privilege. Most people of color, most women know, when you join the corporate experience, that the best you can expect is possibly a vice president position.

Individualized racism is pervasive here in Michigan, and that contributes to the segregation and the separation. Individualized racism really are those feelings that many people suffer when they think that they're better than you. They suffer feelings of superiority. Oftentimes those people become police officers, and oftentimes they join terrorist organizations like the KKK. That is very, very pervasive here in Michigan. Very, very pervasive here in this southeast Michigan region where the city of Detroit exists.

The fact that many African-Americans and people of color won't travel, won't navigate suburban communities after dark unless they have all of their paperwork in order is the reflection of the impact of individualized racism.

Spacial racism is that racism which we've talked about today. I'm not sure if we've given it that particular title, but when public policy decisions separate people from opportunities by space and race, that is in fact spacial racism. Two out of every three jobs that have come to this region in the last 30 years are in those places beyond the suburbs. We call them the ex-urbs. We have no commitment to a transportation system that will connect people to opportunities.

Exclusionary zoning laws. I think you heard Dr. Karl Gregory explain that earlier. Many of the suburban communities that benefit from our tax dollars -- they benefit by implementing exclusionary zoning laws. Many of the tax dollars that we pay when we buy fuel supports public transportation. Road builders and home builders use those tax dollars to build roads and sewers and bridges into communities where African-Americans are met with hostility or African-Americans simply can't afford.

The last racism is internalized racism, and that's some of the self-hatred, some of the residual impact of all those other racisms that I've just described.

Let me give you a couple quick facts about race and home ownership, housing, and transportation. Michigan is the most segregated. I'm sure you've heard that many times today, but five of the nation's 25 most racially segregated metropolitan regions are right here in Michigan: Detroit, Saginaw, Flint, Benton Harbor, and Muskegon. The next closest state is New York with four of those communities.

Two more of Michigan's metropolitan regions, Grand Rapids and Jackson, also make up the top 25. Throughout the state of Michigan one of every seven residents is African-American. In Detroit eight of every ten residents are African-American. Michigan has the most segregated public school system. For example, there are some 600,000-plus students that attend public education in 83 school districts in three counties: Wayne, Macomb and Oakland. Nearly 200,000 of those students are black. 82 percent of the black students are enrolled in three districts. That's Detroit, Highland Park and Inkster. 90 percent of white students in that same area, more than 500,000 of those students, are enrolled in Detroit area schools where fewer than 10 percent of the students are black. Almost all of the state's black residents -- 96 percent of blacks of the nearly one and a half million blacks in the state of Michigan live in 11 metropolitan regions.

That also means that 70 percent of the 83 counties here in the state of Michigan are overwhelmingly white. While we talk about Detroit being racially segregated, the fact is Livonia is more white than Detroit is black, but nobody calls Livonia a segregated community. So it's time for us to change the language.

On the issue of transportation, one out of every three Detroiters -- I'm sure you heard this -- do not have access to an automobile. So much of the testimony you heard today about that space disconnection is the reality some 40 years later.

Since 1976, residents have waited for the arrival of a promised regional rapid transit system.

In the meantime, some \$600 million in federal funds dedicated to the development of a transit system have been lost. The last point on transit is the fact that Michigan spends barely 200 million of 2 billion on transportation -- of a transportation budget on transit. African-American dollars are being spent -- African-American tax dollars that go to support transportation are being spent elsewhere and not on the primary transportation need that we have, which is transit.

On the issue of housing, the city's many abandoned buildings, according to the 2000 U.S. Census, ranked second only to crime as Detroit's top neighborhood problem. In a recent survey, Detroiters -- 61 percent of Detroiters said -- of those who responded, said there is a vacant building within walking distance of their neighborhood.

Among Michigan's 10 million residents, 10 and a half percent have incomes below the federal poverty line. In Detroit the percentage of residents living in poverty more than double the state figure.

Nearly 30 percent or nearly a quarter of a million of Detroit's residents live at or below the poverty line, and at least a third of those poor residents are children.

Some of those solutions: just historically speaking, 1954, Brown versus Board of Education; 1964, Civil Rights Act; 1965, Voting Rights Act; 1968, Fair Housing Act. Today the premiere issues are education, civil rights, voting rights, and housing challenges. So we call upon this commission to please include in your recommendations the need to enforce fair housing laws, the need to end predatory lending, the need to implement a regional transportation system, stop racial profiling, end lending discrimination, stop insurance redlining, and develop strong antihate crime laws among so many other recommendations that you heard today.

Michigan is currently experiencing a single-state recession; and, in many ways, Michigan is, in fact, the Mississippi of the north. Until we commit to a sustained vigilance around equity and fairness, everybody in Michigan loses. I believe, 40 years later, today the conditions here in Southeast Michigan are just as ripe for protest and demonstration and possibly all those other negative things as they were 40 years later.

You need not look too far to see Jena, Louisianas and all of the other challenges. No justice, no peace.