

MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Senator Harris, President Curtis, Vice Chair Scruggs-Leftwich. Have the conditions improved over the past 40 years? No. America has failed to deliver on its promise to black people. In fact, most social indices and, as you have heard, most of my fellow panelists have illustrated how bad it has become.

Racism has gotten worse, and although some African-Americans have broken through the glass ceiling, employment opportunities for most and the unemployment rate is higher than it was 40 years ago.

As it relates to housing, you have heard Dr. Galster talk about how just segregated this area is, the most segregated in the country. And most, unfortunately -- and you haven't heard much about this -- the quality of education has decreased to the point that there's real fear that public education is on the brink of destruction. As you have heard just now, health care is even worse. There is one, however, major philosophical difference between now and 1967. During 1967, during that rebellion, there was hope for prosperity. It was the hope -- the belief that the prosperity was here but had eluded some that forced the need for the rebellion.

Unfortunately, today, this year, the philosophy is different. As most of you have likely read, the Pew Research Center's report that was released several days ago says that African-Americans believe they're worse off than they were five years ago. There is a hopelessness that exists in this city that was not here in 1967. Now we are left with a more oppressed population in a city many people assume is composed of nothing but a permanent underclass.

That's not true, but it is assumed. As you review today's testimony, you will note that most of the speakers talked about education and its decrease; have talked about the fact that the metropolitan area is segregated; have made it clear that employment opportunities, with a few unusual exceptions, have left Detroit and in many cases have disappeared completely. The employment opportunities have disappeared completely.

There is one gory exception. The one industry which has flourished is the prison industry.

And, yes, it has become an industry. This state, Michigan, currently runs 42 prisons, 7 camps for low-level offenders, and 1 boot camp. 38 of the 42 prisons have been built since the rebellion of 1967.

During the last 15 years, this state has been averaging one brand-new prison a year. The number of individuals placed in prison has increased accordingly.

Senator Harris, in 1967 the prison population was 7,037. Ten years later it had gone to 13,000 -- I won't go through the ten-year periods -- but now in 2007, as of February 28 of this year, the prison population is 51,404. That is an increase of 730 percent. From 7,037 to 51,404. It should be noted the figures I cited only cover the number of

individuals in state prisons. They do not include those in federal prison in this state; and, more importantly, they do not include those who are in county and city jails.

Have conditions improved? Although African-Americans make up 16 percent of this state's population, 52 percent of those in state prison are African-American; 45 percent are Caucasian; 2 percent are Hispanic; and less than 1 percent is Asian, Native American or others.

Almost everyone in this room can tell you a story of someone who is close to them who has had an experience like the one I'd like to spend a couple of minutes on.

I know a family with a 25-year-old child who has been struggling ever since he has come out of prison. He was in prison because he sold marijuana.

Spent his time and came out and decided that, because he had a child, he did not want the child to be raised, Senator, the way he raised his -- the way that he would be seen if he were to continue his activities.

So he tried to raise that child, but the only help he had was from his parents. He has made many attempts to find employment. He gets a job for a few weeks; then after they do the background check, which was already on his record because he has tried not to -- he has disclosed that he had been in prison, he's fired.

The last time he tried to get a job -- he's done telemarketing, FedEx driver. He tried finally to get a job at a university as a janitor. He was also rejected after a few weeks. He had hoped to be there to improve his education because of the educational benefits. As you watch him, obviously you can tell the temptation to go back to the streets is great. He is staying straight because of the family values he has, but it's very difficult, obviously, for him to do that. And I'm sure that everybody in this audience can tell you a story similar.

I'd like to propose, also, several resolutions. First, I have pointed out some problems, and I would like to quickly suggest that it is time to reevaluate the 1994 Violent Crimes Act. It has not provided the goals intended and has proven to be just one more tool used against minorities.

I also think that you should change laws to eliminate the disparity that is created by the sentencing guidelines between crack and powdered cocaine. I am, Vice Chair Leftwich - - Scruggs-Leftwich, on the national board of the NAACP; and I know that yesterday we issued a statement that applauded the sentencing commission for addressing the disparities between crack and cocaine.

Currently a person must possess 500 grams of cocaine to be convicted for the same crime as a person possessing 5 grams of crack. Clearly, one is a user where the other is a dealer. But the disparity is worse. According to a study done for the Center for Juvenile and Criminal Justice in San Francisco, 66 percent of the users of crack are white. Only

10 percent -- I'm almost finished -- only 10 percent of those in prison are white. 85 percent are black.

I'm going to skip, and I will also give you my presentation; but I would like to say that you have -- that you, the Eisenhower Foundation, has a fellow organization in Europe called NACRO. NACRO is the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders. Last year NACRO trained 10,000 people, found housing for 3,000 ex-offenders, advised 20,000 individuals on the help line, gave another 10,000 -- assistance to another 10,000 prisoners, and worked with 11,000 youth at risk. We need in this country, in this state, in this city, a NACRO. Thank you very much.