

**CITY OF LOS ANGELES
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS**

**MINUTES
TUESDAY, APRIL 11, 2006 AT 9:00 A.M.**

The Special Meeting of the Board of Fire Commissioners convened Tuesday, April 11, 2006 at 1:37 p.m., African American Firefighter Museum, 1401 Central, Los Angeles 90021

1. ROLL CALL

Present: President Dalila Sotelo, Vice President Jill Furillo, Commissioners Genethia Hudley-Hayes and Andrew Friedman. Deputy City Attorney Janet Jackson and Fire Chief William Bamattre.

Absent: Commissioner Casimiro U. Tolentino

The flag salute was followed by a moment of silence in honor of past and present members of the Los Angeles City Fire Department who devote their lives to the protection of our community.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Abdul-Kareem Muhammad commented on his 911call for medical assistance of March 16, 2006, at approximately 6:15 a.m.

3. PUBLIC HEARING PERIOD REGARDING THE FIRE DEPARTMENT AUDITS

Refer to Meeting Transcript of Proceedings by Melinda Bates, Hearing Reporter, Job No. LFD9704, Court Reporters - Lynden J. and Associates, Inc. - Attachment A.

4. CONTINUED DISCUSSION RELATIVE TO THE RECENT FIRE DEPARTMENT AUDITS INCLUDING FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF THE BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS' DRAFT ACTION PLAN

Refer to Meeting Transcript of Proceedings by Melinda Bates, Hearing Reporter, Job No. LFD9704, Court Reporters - Lynden J. and Associates, Inc. - Attachment A.

[Note: Commissioner Friedman exited the meeting at 1:50 p.m. and returned at 1:55 p.m.
Commissioner Hudley-Hayes exited the room at 2:36 p.m. and returned at 2:38 p.m.]

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
April 11, 2006

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m. (Hudley-Hayes/Furillo)

ATTEST BY:

DALILA T. SOTELO, President

BLANCA GOMEZ-REVELLES
Commission Executive Assistant II

Date: June 20, 2006

Note: Actions of the Board shall become final at the expiration of the next five meeting days of the City Council during which the Council has convened in regular session, unless the Council acts within that time by two-thirds vote to bring the action before it or to waive review of the action.

3

5

6

7 In the matter of:)

8 SPECIAL MEETING)

9 _____)

10

11

12

13 TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

14 Los Angeles, California

15 Tuesday, April 11, 2006

16

17

18

19

20

21

22 Reported by:
 Melinda Bates

23 Job Number:
24 LFD9704

25

1 BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
2 SPECIAL MEETING
3 TUESDAY, APRIL 11, 2006
4 1:30 p.m.
5
6

7 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Good afternoon, everyone.
8 We're going to go ahead and start the meeting, and call
9 the meeting to order. Commissioner Friedman -- never
10 mind. Commissioner Friedman is here, welcome.

11 So, we are going to go ahead and call the
12 meeting to order, Miss Jackson, can you please open the
13 roll call.

14 JANET JACKSON: Yes. This is Tuesday, April
15 11th, 2006, Special Meeting of the Board of Fire
16 Commissioners. Roll call, Commissioner Sotelo.

17 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Present.

18 JANET JACKSON: Commissioner Furillo.

19 JILL FURILLO: Present.

20 JANET JACKSON: Commissioner Hudley-Hayes.

21 COMMISSIONER HUDLEY-HAYES: Present.

22 JANET JACKSON: Commissioner Friedman.

23 COMMISSIONER FRIEDMAN: Present.

24 JANET JACKSON: Commissioner Tolentino is
25 absent.

1 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Okay. Thank you.

2 Chief Bamattre, can you please lead us in the
3 flag solute and moment of silence.

4 (flag solute and moment of silence led by Chief
5 Bamattre)

6 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Let me first open the meeting
7 by thanking our wonderful host here, Armando Hogan, here
8 at the African-American Museum. This is a wonderful
9 venue, and we really felt it important that we hold a
10 public hearing in this venue to really, you know,
11 celebrate the legacy of African-American firefighters and
12 their contributions to the fire department.

13 So, thank you very much, Mr. Hogan. I
14 appreciate it. Oh, and thank you very much President --

15 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Brentford.

16 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you. I appreciate it.
17 Before we go onto open public comment, I just want to,
18 you know, open it with a few comments, just again
19 celebrating the contributions that African-Americans have
20 made to the fire department and to the City of
21 Los Angeles. On February 1st of this year, we actually
22 celebrated our 120th year as a fire department.

23 We started back 120 years ago with 15
24 firefighters in the City of Los Angeles, and now we've
25 grown to more than 3500 sworn officers, and more than 300

1 civilians. So this department has really grown, and
2 today is a new day. It really is. It is a very
3 different day from where we were a 120 years ago.

4 And what the Commissioners and I have spent the
5 last 60 to 70 days doing is going out and listening to
6 the various members of the department, both civilian and
7 sworn, in a whole different variety of settings. We've
8 gone to public hearings like the one here today.

9 We've had our committee meetings, and more
10 importantly, Commissioners have gone out to fire stations
11 and fire houses and really been at the table with
12 firefighters, listening directly to what they celebrate
13 about their jobs, and the opportunities for making their
14 jobs better, and we've heard it, and we heard a variety
15 of opinions that really run the spectrum, and we want you
16 to know that we are listening.

17 Today, we are going to be listening. That's
18 what we will be doing today. We want to hear directly
19 from you. The Commissioners won't respond to any of the
20 comments, but we really want to make sure that you know
21 that we're going to be able to take in what you are
22 saying, and really appreciate your candor, your honesty,
23 and your commitment to making this department the best it
24 can be.

25 So, we want to thank you for that, and with

1 that, I'll go ahead and open up our first period of
2 public comment, which is not relative to the audit, but
3 just in general. We have a public comment period that's
4 just on general items relative to the fire department.
5 And our first speaker is Abdul-Kareem Muhammad from Skid
6 Central City, East Resident.

7 Mr. Muhammad, if you could please state your
8 name for the record.

9 ABDUL-KAREEM MUHAMMAD: My name is Abdul-Kareem
10 Muhammad. With God's name, the merciful benefactor, the
11 merciful redeemer, the most gracious, the most merciful
12 master of the day of judgment.

13 Dear honorable Fire Commissioners and members
14 and Fire Chief. My name is Abdul-Kareem Muhammad. I
15 come before you and this great city of ours, Los Angeles,
16 as a first Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council
17 Leader for the residents of Central City East, better
18 known as "Skid Row."

19 I speak today of an incident with the Los
20 Angeles Fire Department and Paramedic Unit. On March the
21 16th, 2006, at approximately 6:15 a.m. hours, in the
22 morning, I, Abdul-Kareem Muhammad, residing at 905 East
23 6th Street in Los Angeles, California, called 911
24 emergency number, requesting medical help and assistance.

25 The paramedic, firemen, arrived at my front

1 door, and I said, "Come in." They, three paramedic,
2 firemen entered my room with no gurney, after I
3 complained of excessive stomach and abdominal pain. Upon
4 entering my room, they, the paramedic, asked me, "What
5 was wrong." I, Abdul-Kareem Muhammad, said, "My stomach
6 ached and was from the top of my chest to the lower
7 portion of my stomach."

8 They assisted me up after they refused to help
9 me get my cane. I requested a gurney. They, the
10 paramedics, said, "We cannot bring a gurney up here," and
11 forced me to walk down two levels of stairs with my
12 tennis shoes. I had my tennis shoes on, but my tennis
13 shoes they were tied. So I was standing with my tennis
14 shoes like this, and I had stomach pain from my chest to
15 the lower portion of my stomach.

16 Okay. They've forced me to walk with my tennis
17 shoes on my feet, but tied up. I had my cane for
18 assistance, and the firemen had one arm under my
19 shoulders. They, the paramedic firemen, forced, under
20 duress of physical, medical and mental stress and pain,
21 me, to walk down the longest hallway instead of using the
22 near, closest exit, which one of firemen had opened the
23 door, and the other fireman, said "Go this way."

24 They refused, the firemen, to lock my door, so I
25 Abdul-Kareem Muhammad, with my cane, knocked on the

1 manager's door, Jerry Hopkin's door. He came out, and I
2 said, "Lock my door, Jerry." As I struggled, limped down
3 the hallway onto the gurney awaiting me, but first --

4 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Mr. Muhammad, you have a
5 minute. I'm sorry.

6 ABDUL-KAREEM MUHAMMAD: I know, I'm almost
7 finished. But first, I had to walk down more stairs
8 before sitting on the gurney in the upright position.
9 Once in the vehicle, the ambulance, they, the firemen,
10 made my trip miserable by hitting various bumps. I
11 requested to be taken to Los Angeles Angel's Hospital,
12 but they took me to L.A. County USC Hospital.

13 They changed my gurney in the cold weather
14 outside of the emergency department, in the freezing
15 cold, before bringing me inside the emergency room. This
16 is signed by me, Abdul-Kareem Muhammad, date March the
17 23rd. I c.c. copied, a handwritten copy was delivered to
18 the Chief's office, Mr. William Bamattre's, Fire Chief,
19 LAFD.

20 Now, let me just say this in closing. As the
21 former neighborhood council leader, elected by the people
22 to represent that community, I feel like the abuse,
23 discrimination, the pain and suffering, the mental and
24 psychological anguish -- do you know what the word
25 "anguish" means?

1 JANET JACKSON: Madame Chair, we are beyond the
2 three-minute public comment limit.

3 ABDUL-KAREEM MUHAMMAD: One more second, and
4 then I'll sit down. "Anguish" means --

5 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Mr. Muhammad, I'll have to
6 ask you to stop.

7 JANET JACKSON: Thank you, Mr. Muhammad.
8 Mr. Muhammad.

9 ABDUL-KAREEM MUHAMMAD: -- physical, and
10 mental -- okay. Okay.

11 PRESIDENT SOTELO: If you could please submit
12 your letter for the record.

13 ABDUL-KAREEM MUHAMMAD: And I'm very
14 dissatisfied with the service of the Los Angeles Fire
15 Department at this time, and with their treatment to the
16 people on Skid Row. This needs to stop immediately.

17 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you, Mr. Muhammad. If
18 you could please submit your letter for public hearing,
19 that would be appreciated.

20 ABDUL-KAREEM MUHAMMAD: What was that again?

21 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Just submit your letter in
22 writing to Miss Revelles.

23 ABDUL-KAREEM MUHAMMAD: No. No. The Chief
24 already has a copy of it, okay, and I'll come to the next
25 meeting, and let you guys know about it also, okay.

1 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Great. Thank you very much.
2 Miss Revelles, do we have any more public comment cards,
3 for this item, open public comment? Okay. With that,
4 the public comment period is closed.

5 We're going to go ahead and proceed to our
6 public hearing relative to the audits, both the personnel
7 audit, and the city controller's audit. Again, let me
8 remind everybody that we do have a three-minute limit on
9 public hearing comment, but again each of the
10 commissioners are more than happy to talk you after the
11 meeting.

12 We'll all be around for another 20 minutes after
13 the meeting. And we encourage you that if you did not
14 get a chance to say anything during public comment that
15 you come to us. We have about 25 speaker cards, so we
16 are adhering to the three-minute regulation. Okay.
17 Thank you so much. Dan Hibma, please, followed by Tim
18 Holloran.

19 DAN HIBMA: Good afternoon, my name is
20 Firefighter Hibma with the Los Angeles Fire Department.
21 First of all, I just want to say thank you for allowing
22 me to come and speak today, the opportunity. I'll make
23 my statement very brief. I'm here mostly in support for
24 my friend and former Firefighter Jim Smith, who I was an
25 academy member with.

1 Jim embodies all the passion for the job, and
2 all the skills necessary to perform the job to a standard
3 that's well beyond the minimum, and I wish, in his
4 particular case, that he would be allowed to continue on
5 in that process. As far as the these hearings, I hope
6 that comments sent reign supreme. Thank you very much.

7 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you very much.

8 Can I hear from Tim Holloran, please, followed
9 by Chris Mattson.

10 TIM HOLLORAN: My name is Firefighter Tim
11 Holloran. I've been with the Los Angeles City Fire
12 Department now for almost two years. I was born in this
13 fire department, raised in it. My father was a
14 firefighter for 30 years, and he loved this great city,
15 from the people of Skid Row, to the people in the Valley,
16 to the Harbor. He loved this city, and I've grown up
17 with that same love for this city.

18 I'm also here to represent my friend of ten
19 years, Jimmy Smith. He has been a great friend to me, in
20 times of need, when my grandmother passed, through the
21 drill tower. We've lived together. We supported each
22 other.

23 And unfortunately, a little while ago, a short
24 time ago, he resigned from the fire department, because
25 of an unfortunate event that happened to him. He is

1 trying to get back on the job, and I believe that maybe
2 he was forced to resign under a little bit of duress.
3 Jimmy, like Dan said, embodies the attitudes and the
4 principles of this great fire department.

5 He served his country as a marine for over four
6 years in Iraq and truly cares for people, and not only
7 the fellow firefighters, but people of this community.

8 This fire department, when I grew up in it, I
9 think was more family-oriented, and I think we're losing
10 that. And that's sad for me, because that's one of the
11 main reasons I wanted to come on this job. I remember
12 going to the fire station, going on family trips, growing
13 up with other children of firemen, and guys really took
14 pride in each other and their job and taking care of the
15 citizens of this community. I think we're losing that.

16 I work in a community that doesn't typically
17 reflect who I am culturally, and I've learned to loved
18 that community. A captain of mine, who is here today,
19 and he's always told me that when people call 911, they
20 don't have the opportunity to choose who they get to
21 respond to them. They get who comes, whether it be a
22 black fireman, a white fireman, a female fireman, it's
23 all -- they have no choice, and when I use the term
24 fireman, I don't necessarily mean it as a
25 gender-specific.

1 It may sound kind of weird. I was always taught
2 that a fireman is somebody who takes pride in their job.
3 That could be a male, a female. It doesn't matter. A
4 firefighter is somebody who just comes to work for a
5 paycheck, and then we also have some people who don't
6 even care that much sometimes.

7 I kind of have a loss for words. I'm not much
8 of a talker. I'm sorry.

9 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Okay. Then very well.

10 TIM HOLLORAN: I think I'd like for the
11 Commission and the Chief to take a look at Jimmy's case
12 again, and think about what they've done.

13 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Okay. Mr. Holloran.

14 TIM HOLLORAN: He's a good man and just give him
15 a chance. That's all I can say. Thank you.

16 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you very much, Mr.
17 Holloran. May I have Chris Mattson, followed by Eric
18 Mattson.

19 CHRIS MATTSON: Thank you, Honorable Fire
20 Commissioners. My name is Chris Mattson. My husband
21 worked for the department for over 30 years. We have a
22 son currently on the job.

23 Laura Chick's audit makes public the fact that
24 for years the LAFD has had inconsistent training and
25 safety objectives -- directives. It refers to the

1 preventable on-duty death of Jaime Foster, the first LAFD
2 female firefighter to be killed in the line of duty. The
3 investigation revealed that the safety procedure that
4 would have saved Jaime's life, if it had been enforced,
5 had been routinely and institutionally violated for
6 years.

7 In response to this, Chief Fox is quoted in the
8 audit as saying that because it had long been the
9 informal, accepted practice of not utilizing the safety
10 strap on the tailboard, Department Management felt they
11 could not hold the supervisors accountable to the formal
12 written policy requiring the use of the safety strap.

13 Obviously, what is missing and is desperately
14 needed are protocols to ensure that accountability at
15 every level is accomplished, starting at the top and
16 including Chief Officers. The Fire Chief is responsible
17 for administering the fire department, and Bureau,
18 Division, Battalion, and Section Commanders are
19 responsible for the enforcement and application of all
20 practices and procedures and rules and regulations of the
21 Department within their command.

22 One more example, no chief officers have been
23 disciplined or otherwise held accountable for the
24 longtime informal, accepted practice of Drill Tower staff
25 fraternizing with recruits, even though the Department

1 has a formal written policy for training staff that
2 mandates a zero-tolerance no-fraternization rule.

3 This denied a countless number of recruits their
4 right to the protection of the formal written policy. It
5 created an ongoing atmosphere of indiscipline in a
6 program that is supposed to teach discipline to the
7 recruits. It continually placed recruits' graduation in
8 jeopardy. It squandered enormous sums of public funds,
9 and finally it needlessly destroyed the careers of top
10 recruits.

11 These are only two examples of the serious
12 mismanagement by Chief Bamattre. It is especially
13 outrageous when recruits and rookies are the victims.
14 They are the most vulnerable members of the Department.
15 In both cases, Management knew or should have known, that
16 for years members were being denied the protection of
17 important formal written policies.

18 Clearly, Management had ample opportunity, years
19 in fact, to address and prevent these events, as well as
20 to enforce and apply the formal policies, as is one of
21 their primary responsibilities, but they did not.

22 It is long past time for the Fire Commission,
23 the Mayor and the City Council to hold Fire Chief
24 Bamattre and the responsible chief officers accountable
25 for repeatedly --

1 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you, Mrs. Mattson.

2 CHRIS MATTSON: -- putting the safety and
3 welfare of fire department personnel at risk.

4 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you, Mrs. Mattson.

5 CHRIS MATTSON: Hold them accountable now.

6 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Miss Mattson, I have to ask
7 you to stop.

8 CHRIS MATTSON: If you don't, aggrieved members
9 will, one lawsuit at a time. Thank you.

10 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Mrs. Mattson, thank you.
11 Mr. Eric Mattson.

12 ERIC MATTSON: My name is Eric Mattson. I put
13 on over 30 years on this job. First of all, I would like
14 to give an "Atta-boy," to all the members that had a
15 backbone to get up here and speak in front of this Fire
16 Commission about the serious problems and the double
17 standards they have experienced by this administration.

18 In each of their cases the facts will speak for
19 themselves, but it is undeniable that two audits have now
20 confirmed what employees already knew.

21 Laura Chick said her audit found a Fire
22 Department that lacked strong and decisive leadership,
23 and that the decision of calling for Chief Bamattre's
24 resignation is now up to the Mayor and the City Council.

25 In his public statement in January, Mayor

1 Villaraigosa said, quote, "I commend City Controller
2 Laura Chick for her audit of the Los Angeles Fire
3 Department's management practices. The audit findings
4 shine a much-needed public light on the internal
5 structures of this important department.

6 The audit details many issues I have discussed
7 with the Fire Chief over the past six months as part of
8 an ongoing review of the department, his performance and
9 the management goals and objectives. I will continue
10 those discussions. The women and the men of the fire
11 department deserve the most effective internal management
12 and accountability structures. I have directed the Fire
13 Commission to ensure that they have them." End quote.

14 When many members have had good reason for
15 losing respect for their leaders, and are forced to do
16 their jobs under the threat of retaliation and in fear,
17 and are denied the protection of formal written policies
18 by Management, that's a sure sign that an organization is
19 in serious trouble. Chief Bamattre has run out of
20 excuses for dropping the ball that was handed to him more
21 than ten years ago.

22 In closing, I ask you to address a very
23 important issue in your Action Plan that was referred to
24 in Laura Chick's audit. The Department has a duty to
25 properly expend public funds budgeted each year. How did

1 Chief Bamattre spend the many millions of dollars of
2 public funds budgeted for human relation issues since
3 1996, that were to be monitored by the HRDC? Thank you.

4 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you, Mr. Mattson.
5 Ms. Abby Liebman, followed by Jennifer McKenna.

6 ABBY LIEBMAN: Good afternoon, I'm Abby Liebman,
7 and as you know, my colleague, Jennifer McKenna, and I
8 have spent months reviewing the work of the LAFD and that
9 of other Departments with regard to the hiring,
10 retention, and treatment of women and of minorities.

11 We want to share with you this afternoon some of
12 our initial findings and recommendations. This is our
13 opinion as to the best practices we have identified in
14 firefighting in the United States based on our more than
15 20 years of experience working to create organizational
16 cultures that are premised on inclusion and acceptance.

17 The findings of the audit are supported not only
18 by the work done by those auditors, but by the extensive
19 interviews we have conducted, our observations of the
20 implementation or failed implementation of city policies
21 and practices, and our observations of the dynamics
22 between department personnel of all ranks.

23 The failure of the controllers' auditors to
24 survey the entire department is a serious failing, but it
25 neither undermines nor diminishes the experiences of

1 those who were surveyed. In fact, it is our belief that
2 among those not surveyed, there are likely to be many who
3 have witnessed racism, sexism, or homophobia; thus,
4 increasing the percentage reporting such experiences. In
5 fact, we have interviewed several of them.

6 It is just as clear to us that there are
7 department personnel of all races and both genders for
8 whom it is a priority that this department move away from
9 a culture that is rife with suspicion, distrust, and
10 disfunction to one that exemplifies the best of those in
11 the LAFD of integrity, acceptance, and professionalism.

12 This city has framed it's firefighting culture
13 as paramilitary, a description that is both inaccurate
14 and is at the root of what much of the many firefighters
15 we talked to loath about their treatment in the LAFD.

16 According to Websters, "paramilitary" means
17 designating of, or having to do with forces, working
18 alongside of, or in place of a regular military
19 organization, usually as a semi-official often secret
20 auxiliary, hardly a description of a fire department.

21 Simply using this descriptor, which I heard at
22 the drill tower by recruits on their very first day of
23 training does nothing but begin a process and approach to
24 this work that is quite simply at odds with the mission
25 of a fire department.

1 No one disputes that there is a need to follow a
2 command structure and the importance of following orders
3 in an emergency, but we contend and other departments
4 have succeeded in achieving such goals without the
5 extraordinary overemphasis on the rigidity of the
6 military embraced by the LAFD. This drill tower is not
7 about training, teaching or mentoring. It is about
8 screening people out.

9 Among the immediate changes that can be adopted
10 are:

11 All trainers, all training materials, all
12 preceptors should cease to use the term paramilitary when
13 describing the LAFD.

14 All trainers, in particular all preceptors
15 should be told that their role is that of teaching and
16 mentoring, helping recruits to succeed.

17 All training materials should emphasize that the
18 LAFD is teaching and mentoring rookies, not only in tone
19 but an actual approach.

20 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Miss Liebman.

21 ABBEY LIEBMAN: I know. Stop using the word
22 "preceptors," call them mentors. I have extensive
23 written testimony, because I knew I would never get this
24 out in three minutes, which I will leave with your staff.

25 PRESIDENT SOTELO: I appreciate it. Thank you

1 very much. Miss Jennifer McKenna.

2 JENNIFER MCKENNA: Thank you. My name is
3 Jennifer McKenna. Thank you, Members of the Commission,
4 Chief Bamattre, for this opportunity to appear before
5 you.

6 I'm going to pick up where Abbey left off and
7 say that in addition to the recommendations that she
8 articulated, we found that there is not a fire department
9 in the country that has successfully moved to a culture
10 of inclusiveness in an authentic way, in a systematic
11 way, without the vigorous commitment of -- to such
12 principles on the part of leadership, at every level.

13 We know the auditors placed a great deal of
14 emphasis here, and we want to agree with you that it must
15 be so. We also would like to suggest ways to make it so.
16 Certainly this starts with the Chief. He or she must
17 clearly articulate that inclusiveness and professionalism
18 are his and here core values, as well as those of the
19 Department's.

20 The Chief must be the messenger or the highly
21 visible and continuous messenger of these values.
22 Department's that have succeeded in diversifying their
23 workforces have very active -- have to have Chiefs
24 playing a very active role in this way. They are visible
25 in recruit school. They are visible in promotion

1 process. They are visible in the field in
2 re-articulating the values of the Department over and
3 over again, and in connecting those words with deeds.

4 This is what it means to realize the values of
5 this Department, and you will be held accountable too,
6 for realizing those values. It is not enough, however,
7 for the Chief to embrace these values. All leaders in
8 the Department must do so, whether they are leaders by
9 virtue of rank or by virtue of their relationship with
10 their peers.

11 It is axiomatic that a good leader is one that
12 sets goals and values and lives by them, and most
13 importantly holds others accountable to them. There is
14 no accountability in this department for failure to live
15 by their values.

16 Like it or not, captains must embrace these
17 values and be held to them. Leadership means taking
18 responsibility, as well as meting out discipline to
19 others. We've believe that all leaders, beginning with
20 captains, should be evaluated based on their demonstrated
21 commitment to the values of inclusiveness and
22 professionalism that this department should be
23 professing.

24 Third, there is no one that we have met in this
25 department who has any confidence in the discipline

1 system. It must be changed. In fact, it needs to be
2 completely changed. We will propose model systems that
3 can be considered at a later date, but the new system
4 must be one that meets the following criteria:

5 Independence, expertise, consistency,
6 credibility, clarity, responsiveness, effectiveness,
7 predictability; it must be a progressive system.

8 Departments that have succeeded in creating
9 discipline systems that seem to work are departments
10 that have been inclusive in the process in which they
11 have developed that system. Stakeholders have been at
12 the table and involved in developing the system.

13 Fourth, the workplace and its relationship to
14 family responsibilities employees at all levels has
15 evolved over the last 20 years, so that virtually all
16 employers in all sectors of our society now underscore
17 the need, address the needs to working parents,
18 individuals who must care for aging parents and alike.

19 The fire department stands out as one among a
20 handful of employers that has not involved in this way.

21 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you.

22 JENNIFER MCKENNA: This is key. Child care
23 center. Re-visiting the child care center --

24 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you, Miss McKenna.

25 If I can please have you submit your comments in

1 writing. Thank you. Julie Wolfe followed by Bassanio
2 Peters, followed by Gary Mellinger.

3 JULIE WOLFE: Good afternoon. You're going to
4 see very shortly that I'm not a public speaker, but I
5 speak from the heart. My name is Julie Wolfe. I've been
6 a member of this fire department for 19 years.

7 I currently hold assignment of engineer. I've
8 been an engineer for eight years. To tell you a little
9 bit about myself, I've spent 11 years as a firefighter in
10 Battalion 11, which is in the Metro Area, promoted in as
11 an engineer. I worked in South L.A., Hollywood and now
12 Venice. So I have worked around the Department, and
13 please don't cut me off, three minutes.

14 If there is just two things that I want to make
15 sure you hear before I leave that door, and this is not
16 to insult anybody in this building, but you need to know
17 that the Sirens, they are not the voice of every woman on
18 this department. Okay, that's the first thing.

19 The second thing that is very important for you
20 to know is that I am so dang proud to be a member of this
21 fire department. This has been 19 years of just a great
22 experience. With those two things said, I want to start
23 by apologizing to Chief Bamattre and to the members of
24 the fire department, because I boycotted the audit.

25 I have a philosophy that I have lived by, and I

1 hope you understand it. I'm not a female firefighter. I
2 don't consider myself a female fireman. I consider
3 myself a firefighter that just happens to be female. I'm
4 not sure if you understand that, but I'm just a member of
5 this fire department family, period, and that's one of
6 reasons why I did not participate in the audit.

7 Personally, I'm not going to participate in
8 anything that singles me out because I'm a woman. I
9 didn't think that the audit was going to be fair in the
10 first place, because you are not getting representation
11 from the entire fire department.

12 And the day that the audit was due, the
13 deadline, Captain Villanueva worked an overtime day at
14 Fire Station 63 with me, and I expressed to him my mixed
15 feelings about the audit, how I felt guilty for not
16 participating in it, and he gave me a phone number of the
17 people that were running the audit.

18 "Give them a call. Let them know how you feel,
19 from the heart, what you felt, and your experiences of
20 the 19 years." So, I called them, and they didn't want
21 to hear what I had to say. They just wanted this piece
22 of paper with numbers on it. So that's why I'm here
23 today, to tell you, from the heart, what I feel about
24 this fire department.

25 And I know that you, the Fire Commission, so

1 far, have been different than previous Fire
2 Commissioners, and I thank you for that. I know that you
3 have gone out to the field and talked to members at the
4 fire stations. I know that you have -- you're making
5 things happen, that you're forming committees, and we,
6 the members, appreciate that.

7 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Before you move on, I'm
8 sorry, your three minutes is up.

9 JULIE WOLFE: No way. Are you kidding me?

10 PRESIDENT SOTELO: So, if you have something in
11 writing that you would want to submit, and like I said,
12 we'll be here afterwards.

13 JULIE WOLFE: I stayed up all night working on
14 this.

15 PRESIDENT SOTELO: And you can come at our next
16 Fire Commission meeting. Everyone can come at our next
17 Fire Commission meeting during public comment. We just
18 have a lot to get through. I'm sorry, Miss Wolfe.
19 Bassanio Peters, please.

20 BASSANIO PETERS: Hello, Members of the Board of
21 Fire Commissioners, Fire Chief Bamattre. My name is
22 Bassanio Peters, Jr. I've been a member of the
23 Department for 28 years. I'm a task force commander at
24 Fire Station 94. I've been a captain for 17 years. I've
25 been a Captain II for seven years. I want to talk about

1 the disciplinary process, or lack of.

2 I can speak on two issues that I'm very well
3 acquainted with. In the past, ten years ago, I testified
4 before the Personnel Committee, and a letter was
5 supposedly put in my file, preventing retaliation against
6 me. Obviously, that letter isn't around anymore, but I
7 will have a copy of it for you a little later.

8 One issue was, I'm just going to talk about the
9 differential treatment. I had a member who was asleep at
10 the station. The lights come on. We're on radio watch.
11 Someone puts a radio in his ear. He pushes the radio
12 away, and that same member comes up and then pushes his
13 legs out of the bed, and tells him, "Hey, you need to get
14 up."

15 Now, most of us would think of that as, you
16 know, kind of stupid, stupidity, rather than anything
17 else. But if I also preface that by saying that the
18 member that was in bed was African-American and that
19 earlier in that day he had a conversation with this other
20 individual.

21 The other individual said, "Hey, there's no
22 reason for a Stentorian organizations. What do you guys
23 do anyway?" And they had a little dialogue, and he
24 basically, the other member, basically said, "You know
25 what. I'm going to start my own white firefighters

1 organization."

2 So now, does that make this a little different
3 later on, when this incident occurs that same day? To me
4 it does. And the bottom line was, the member who had
5 been assaulted, basically, said the only thing he wanted
6 to happen was the member to move on and be transferred
7 out of the station. Well, according to our department,
8 unwritten policy, if you move one, you need to move both
9 members. So, that's one issue I want to talk about.

10 Second issue, I was charged with using profanity
11 in a fire station, and allowing the member of my crew to
12 use profanity in the fire station. Basically, the
13 initial charges were unfounded by their own
14 investigators. So then they got another group to
15 investigate the investigation again, and they came up
16 with charges.

17 Now, I went to a Board of Rights, and every
18 chief officer, which was eight, that came through and
19 testified stated that they had used profanity in the fire
20 station, and they have heard profanity in the fire
21 station and did nothing about it. So I'm just wondering
22 why I am held accountable to a different standard than
23 the Chief Officer's Association.

24 I have a copy of a letter that was written by my
25 defense rep, given to the Fire Chief, and it says that

1 under oath, eight chief officers stated that they have
2 used profanity and heard profanity in the department and
3 they did nothing about it. So I have a copy of these
4 letters for all of you, and I want to know why the Fire
5 Chief hasn't acted on it. Thank you.

6 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you, Mr. Peters, and if
7 you could please give those to Blanca. Thank you. Gary
8 Mellinger followed by Tom Hoegh, and thank you, again,
9 everyone for your patience.

10 GARY MELLINGER: My name is Gary Mellinger. I'm
11 a 30-year firefighter with the City of Los Angeles, and
12 recently retired. This is quite a significant meeting
13 here at this location, the African-American Firefighters
14 Museum. My grandfather was on this job in 1927, when
15 racism was prominent and prevalent in this city, and
16 there were two fire stations where African-Americans were
17 housed because they were segregated. So I do feel it's
18 quite significant.

19 I want to let you and the African-American
20 community know that racism is rampant on this job, not
21 only is it rampant, but it's also supported by our chief
22 officers. The three top officers in the City of Los
23 Angeles, Chief Bamattre, Chief Rueda, Chief Fox.

24 I worked at a fire station, a lily-white
25 community in the fire station, where my fire station was

1 located. It was in Chatsworth, California. It was
2 lily-white for many years. It had a lot of actors there
3 throughout the years.

4 However, we had a firefighter come into our
5 station. Her name is Brenda Lee. She's the first
6 African-American firefighter assigned to that station,
7 first female firefighter assigned to that station, in its
8 inception, except for rookies.

9 At that station, I saw my commanders at that
10 station, race -- I saw racism propagated against Brenda
11 Lee and when my captain, Captain Bressler, reported it
12 and I reported it, I was retaliated against and forced
13 off this job by Andy Fox and Mario Rueda, and I assume
14 that it's promoted by William Bamattre, the chief of this
15 department.

16 We are in a lawsuit right now. I want to let
17 you know that just recently, as we speak right now, there
18 are three more lawsuits being filed right now, two of
19 them addressing Mario Rueda, and also Andy Fox.

20 Also, we are contacted by three other
21 firefighters this last weekend, two other firefighters,
22 I'm sorry, and they are also interested in filing a
23 lawsuit because of retaliation promoted by Andy Fox and
24 Mario Rueda. I think it is significant we are here. I
25 feel the African-American community also ought to be

1 incensed that these Chiefs are here in this room, and
2 they do promote racism. I think it's wrong that they are
3 here. I think they ought to be ashamed to be here.

4 Also the African-American chiefs who did not
5 step up to Brenda's aid in this, I feel that that is
6 wrong, absolutely wrong. And I feel that they shouldn't
7 even be -- they ought to be repulsed to be in this
8 building also. The African-American community needs to
9 speak up and address this situation of these white and
10 black chief officers. Thank you.

11 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you, Mr. Mellinger.
12 Tom Hoegh, please, followed by David Raya.

13 TOM HOEGH: Good afternoon. Thank you. I'm an
14 attorney. I represent Gary Mellinger, and Brenda Lee,
15 Steve Bressler. I also represent the Mattson son, and I
16 also, I represent Jaime Foster.

17 To some degree they stole my thunder tonight,
18 this afternoon, but what I'd like to say is that in the
19 case of Brenda Lee, she was assigned to Fire Station 96.
20 Many of the problems that were raised in the audit were
21 ongoing at Fire Station 96, and she was put under the
22 command of a captain who was coming off a suspension,
23 ten-day suspension, for being racially insensitive toward
24 African-Americans.

25 She was put under his command, and when Steve

1 Bressler and Gary Mellinger said the treatment that she
2 was receiving, the outright racist treatment that she was
3 receiving was inappropriate and reported it. The
4 investigation that ensued cleared everyone at Fire
5 Station 96, but Gary Mellinger and Steve Bressler were
6 then recommended to be suspended without pay for 30 days
7 for having made the complaint, and I find that
8 outrageous, quite frankly.

9 In the case of Jaime Foster, she was a rookie.
10 She was working a SOD day. It was the second day she had
11 worked. She was run over by a fire engine at an incident
12 scene. When they did the autopsy of her, they found she
13 had nothing to eat for virtually 36 hours. She was --

14 The investigation was just not even done. To
15 this day, we don't know who the driver was of the engine.
16 We don't know what happened. We don't know anything.
17 And yet, people complain that lawsuits are being filed,
18 but how else are we going to find the truth? How is the
19 Department going to take responsibility for what's
20 occurred here?

21 There really is no other way to do this, but
22 through the legal means that we're entitled to bring as
23 members of this community. But I would just like to say
24 that the Department has some serious problems ahead of
25 it. It needs to address these problems. I support the

1 Commission. I support the the public discourse.

2 The legal system is one avenue to resolve these
3 issues, but it's important that we get to the bottom of
4 this, we sort this out, and that we make improvements.
5 Thank you.

6 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you. Mr. David Raya
7 followed by Steve Ruda -- Stephen Ruda, sorry.

8 DAVID RAYA: Thank you, Honorable Commissioners
9 for allowing us to speak today. Thank you, Fire
10 Department Staff. My name is David Raya. I'm a
11 firefighter/paramedic assigned to Fire Station 44 on the
12 B-Platoon, which is in the Cypress Park Mount Washington
13 area of Los Angeles. I've been a paramedic and a
14 firefighter for over 25 years.

15 My roots run deep in this department. I have
16 two brothers on the job, and my father was a 30-year
17 firefighter, spending all of his career in East Los
18 Angeles, Downtown, and El Sereno.

19 I came to this job as a single-function
20 paramedic. You see, my mother was a nurse, so I liked
21 medicine, and entering the LAFD to follow my father's
22 footsteps was a dream come true. But reality soon set
23 in. I had run-ins with firefighters who called me
24 "parapuke," and also racial slurs because of my Latino
25 heritage, but I was prepared.

1 My father told me when he was a rookie, an
2 old-timer told him, "You may have been a captain and a
3 B-24 bomber pilot in World War II, but here, you're not
4 even dog feces." I cleaned it up. But he loved this
5 job, and he had a satisfying 30-year career with L.A.
6 City's greatest.

7 As for our recent past, single-function
8 paramedics fund fought and have won relative respect
9 within the Department, but I'm not here to talk about the
10 past. I'm here to talk about the future of the LAFD.
11 Ours is a great department. We've come a long way, even
12 since the earlier 1990's.

13 A fire fighter once told me, "A firefighter is a
14 jack of all trades, and a master of none." Meaning he
15 knew about construction, electrical work, mechanic,
16 plumber, so he could mitigate an emergency at hand.
17 Well, the same is true today, but also specialties have
18 evolved, such as arson, aircraft rescue, firefighting,
19 hazardous material emergencies, Swift Water Rescue Teams,
20 emergency paramedicine, and now mass disaster and
21 chemical biological terrorism.

22 Our Department is on the cutting edge of
23 firefighting and firefighting technology. As a young
24 paramedic a bull engineer once told me -- he left me with
25 a -- we were talking, and he left me with a bit of

1 advise. "Dave, make it a goal every day at work to leave
2 the place you're working at a little bit better than it
3 was before." I tried to do that and tried to live by
4 those words my whole career. Today you have that
5 opportunity to make the LAFD better than it is now.

6 I'm asking, as a ranking fellow firefighter,
7 that when a firefighter candidate goes to the drill
8 tower, that the drill tower staff be given the authority
9 to fire unsafe and bellow-standard candidates, as needed,
10 and not sent to the field, so that when the rookies hit
11 the field, we are able to mold them into firefighters and
12 not have to continue training him on the way it should
13 have been done in the drill tower. Give us the tools for
14 a better fire department.

15 In turn, the ranking fellow firefighter will
16 know this rookie made the field on his record, not
17 gender, not ethnicity, not a paramedic, or not --

18 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Mr. Raya, I'm sorry. Your
19 time is up.

20 DAVID RAYA: Thank you for your time.

21 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you very much, Mr.
22 Raya. And we have Firefighter of the Year, Stephen Ruda.

23 STEPHEN RUDA: Thank you, Commissioners, Chief,
24 brother and sister firefighters. I'm a station commander
25 in one of the finest cities in this nation. Fire Station

1 27, Hollywood. It is an honor to be in this room as
2 well, because these are hollowed walls where men of
3 color, regardless of their adversities still took the
4 oath to serve and serve well.

5 I think members of our job have forgotten our
6 oath to serve and have exchanged it to a demand of "to be
7 served." I have just left the bed side of one of our
8 finer captains, Lane Kepper, who is going to be suffering
9 from cancer. He has never forgotten his oath to serve,
10 and to serve others well.

11 I am here to support our young firefighters,
12 Jimmy Smith in particular. In 14 months, a greater
13 number of our officers that are in this room will be
14 leaving this job. They will be retiring, and who will
15 take their place? Young firefighters who have an example
16 to look up to me as a fire captain, to our chiefs -- and
17 I believe that -- would I have Jimmy Smith in my fire
18 company? Absolutely. Would I have Jimmy Smith as a
19 former marine officer in my platoon? Absolutely.

20 If he had an opportunity to do it over again,
21 I'm sure Jimmy would do it, but we all make mistakes, and
22 we need to reemphasize the fact that we have duties and
23 responsibilities and not privileges that we need to just
24 cash in on. We have duties and responsibilities, not
25 rights and privileges.

1 So I believe that we, as captains, the first
2 level of management have a responsibility to work, to
3 understand our young people, to understand our seasoned
4 firefighters, to work with them, to understand their
5 needs, and I look for the leadership in our department to
6 help me as a captain, to give me the training and
7 necessary responsibility, so that I can pass it along
8 when our fire chiefs are gone, when our administration
9 are gone.

10 We have a duty and a responsibility, and I think
11 sometimes our firefighters, when they get disgruntled and
12 angry, they feel that they have rights and privileges.

13 The firefighters that took oaths and served in
14 this fire station now, and all the fire stations across
15 the city, just like Lane Kepper, who believed that he had
16 duties and responsibilities. And as your captain that
17 worked for you in your fire station, that's how my
18 command is in Hollywood. We work together as a team of
19 all races, of all genders, and I don't always see
20 everything that's being spoken here.

21 So as a firefighter, that's my duties and
22 responsibilities, to be committed to this Department, to
23 the firefighters, and the bottom line is, when people
24 call me, we respond in the best way with the tools and
25 equipment that we have.

1 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you.

2 Can I please have Mr. Bill Finn followed by John
3 Hagerman, and Donald Jones.

4 BILL FINN: Commissioners, Chief. My name is
5 Bill Finn. I'm a captain at Fire Station 14, which is
6 right up the street here, at 34th and Central. I've been
7 on the fire department since 1962, and been at my present
8 assignment my for 25 years. I worked in Battalion 3 for
9 over 40.

10 I attended a commission meetings a couple of
11 weeks ago and chose not to stand and speak, but later I
12 regretted the fact that I didn't. The articles in the
13 Times and the Daily News and what I heard here two weeks
14 ago doesn't represent the fire department I know.

15 I've come in contact over the years with
16 hundreds of firefighters. I want to tell you that
17 harassment and hazing is not rampant on this fire
18 department. Those articles have tarnished reputations,
19 and worse than that, many of us haven't come forward to
20 defend our positions.

21 The people that I have worked around deserve
22 better than that. They're hardworking, provide a service
23 to our community that is outstanding. I came here today
24 to tell you that race, gender, bias, or retaliation is
25 not what this department is all about.

1 This is my personal opinion that race -- it is
2 my personal opinion that race and gender does not make a
3 difference to most of us. If the person is hardworking,
4 trainable, and possesses a good attitude, then that will
5 work just fine for us.

6 On the other hand, if that person doesn't have
7 these qualities, they don't belong on the fire
8 department, and we cannot keep unqualified people on this
9 job. The firefighter's job can be dangerous at times.
10 It's paramount that we have confidence in each other, and
11 know that we have the support of one another on the fire
12 ground and in the station.

13 What I would be interested to know is the
14 results of the audit of the people that didn't turn them
15 in, and those of us who didn't get them. I think it
16 would tell a much different story. Thanks for your time,
17 and anytime you want a free meal, conversation, come to
18 14's.

19 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you. And he's right.
20 On Friday, I was at Station 14, and they were great.
21 Thank you very much for the free meal.

22 JOHN HAGERMAN: John Hagerman, 26 years. Once
23 again, there's a man I truly love, Bill Finn. He was
24 burned in a fire when I had three weeks on the job,
25 unfortunately. It was a backdraft, and I happened to be

1 inside that fire.

2 The reason why that man can stand up here and
3 honestly tell you that he has never seen racism, he has
4 never seen disrespect, is because that man there is a
5 leader, and he never accepted it, and his men knew it.
6 He would not allow that anywhere around him, which speaks
7 to the heart of this whole thing.

8 It's -- we've torn the house down, how can we
9 rebuild it? The Commission has one hell of a stack of
10 bricks it's got to rebuild from. I admire your job.
11 Good luck. I'm sure you're going to be able to do it. I
12 think what will pull this family together, it seems as
13 though we all have a need for proper investigation as to
14 what transpires inside our home.

15 I've lived with an investigator. I grew up with
16 one. My dad was in the FBI. My best friend reports
17 directly to the head of the FBI. Firemen are different
18 people. Don't expect them to investigate properly.
19 Straighten that aspect out, so things can be addressed in
20 the home quickly, and we won't have all this emotion. We
21 won't have the court cases we have. Good luck.

22 JOHN HAGERMAN: Thank you, Mr. Hagerman. Donald
23 Jones, followed by Jerry Thomas.

24 DONALD JONES: Duties and responsibilities,
25 interesting. My name is Donald Jones, and my effective

1 date of retirement was February 2003. I retired after
2 having my second back surgery due to injuries sustained
3 on the job during my 21 years with the City of
4 Los Angeles.

5 I'm a recipient of a Medal of Valor for my
6 actions during the '92 riots and numerous accommodations.
7 My dedication to the job and to the people of Los Angeles
8 goes without question. As I stand here, I'm reminded of
9 my first house. My Captain I was Robert Hoffman. I
10 remember him very clearly. He was, without a doubt, the
11 best man that I ever worked with on the job.

12 He told me, as a first-house rookie, "to learn
13 the job, work hard and be the first in and the last out."
14 He took a few minutes out of his day, every day, to talk
15 to me about a piece of equipment. Not just how to
16 operate it, but how it worked inside.

17 I never got a chance to let him know what that
18 meant to me. He did a great job preparing me for the
19 physical side of the fire department. What he could not
20 prepare me for was the mental side of the fire
21 department. This is, without a doubt, one of the racist,
22 bigoted, and sexist, discriminating organizations I have
23 ever been a part of.

24 This organization will allow a white member to
25 refer to a black member as a "nigger," and then receive a

1 suspension three days for that. It will allow a member's
2 mouth wash to be replaced with urine in an effort to have
3 him drink it, and then retaliate against him and prevent
4 him from saying anything about it by threatening his
5 livelihood.

6 This brotherhood, if you will, is the only
7 organization that will place dog food on the plate of a
8 black firefighter and allow him to eat it and then call
9 it a joke, and I will read the rest very fast, because I
10 want to complete.

11 I was always amused when I used to hear the
12 phrase -- the phrase -- when I used to hear phrases like
13 you people, those people over there, or the service
14 provided for that white community versus the black
15 community.

16 I know I can hear right now some heart-felt
17 white person out there ready to stand up and say that,
18 that's not what happened at my fire station, or that's
19 not what happened on my shift. This attitude is
20 pervasive throughout the fire department and is getting
21 worse, and I'm reminded of the '94 hearing, where the
22 City Council provided a vehicle for members of this
23 department to be heard on these same issues I spoke.

24 A few lawsuits came from that, some new manuals.
25 A little over ten years later, we are revisiting these

1 very same issues. I don't blame these sick, twisted
2 little people on this job, who only have a sense of power
3 from holding their position over others. I blame people
4 like you, this Board, who have, right now, today, an
5 opportunity to do something about this, as they did in
6 '94.

7 I also place some blame on black members of this
8 department for not stepping up and revealing what is
9 really going on behind this facade for fear of losing the
10 crumbs that they've been handed.

11 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Mr. Jones.

12 DONALD JONES: You are willing to continue to
13 sell out not not only yourself but your race.

14 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Can I please ask you to
15 submit your testimony in writing to us. Again, you can
16 also come to our public meeting on Tuesday.

17 DONALD JONES: No. I'm going to finish.

18 JANET JACKSON: Sir, excuse me. Your time is us
19 up.

20 DONALD JONES: You're willing to sell yourself
21 out --

22 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Mr. Jones.

23 (Inaudible discussion)

24 JANET JACKSON: Call the next speaker card.

25 PRESIDENT SOTELO: I'm sorry?

1 JANET JACKSON: Mr. Jones, if Mr. Thomas would
2 like to give his time to Mr. Jones to finish.

3 JERRY THOMAS: I'll give him a minute of my
4 time.

5 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Okay. Well, give a minute --
6 Mr. Jones, hold on. We'll give you a minute of
7 Mr. Thomas' time so you can finish up, and then
8 Mr. Thomas will have two minutes, okay.

9 DONALD JONES: Thank you. Stentorians, as for
10 you, as far back as I can remember, individuals have been
11 using this organization as a stepping stone to captain,
12 chief and higher positions. It used to stand for
13 something. Now, well I don't know what to say. I hear
14 you give great parties though.

15 Has the current President of the Stentorians
16 spoken on behave of black firefighters regarding any of
17 the issues before you today? Probably not. Got to
18 protect that position on the Chief's list. I can sit
19 here and rehash all the racist and discriminating things
20 that happened to me throughout my career on this
21 department, like being suspended for looking at a white
22 chief with the intent to intimidate, because I would not
23 change my answer during a hearing. Yes, that's how it
24 read, but what I want -- excuse me. But I don't have
25 enough time to do that.

1 You knew exactly what's going on here inside
2 this department. My sincere hope is that the individuals
3 continue to follow through with their law suits against
4 the city, the fire department, and the individuals that
5 are practicing and allowing this racist, sexist, and
6 discriminatory behavior --

7 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Okay. Mr. Jones --

8 DONALD JONES: -- and atmosphere --

9 PRESIDENT SOTELO: -- that was a minute.

10 DONALD JONES: -- to exist with the Los Angeles
11 City Fire Department --

12 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Mr. Jones, to be fair --

13 DONALD JONES: -- so they may have some
14 resolution.

15 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you, Mr. Jones.

16 Mr. Thomas, you have two minutes.

17 JERRY THOMAS: Two minutes?

18 Commission, Fire Chief, as you can see in this
19 room, it's a lot of pain in this room, very indelible
20 pain that -- he was on the job for 21 years. I knew him
21 when he was a rookie. We've got retired members here.
22 We've got people of the community that didn't have time
23 to address the Commission today. I hope they will have
24 time later on. We have the CEO and President of the
25 Urban League.

1 The Los Angeles City Urban League is here.
2 We've got a representative from NAACP. It's a lot of
3 pain, but what I want to tell the Commission, because
4 I've commented every time that we've had a session that,
5 stay diligent, stay focused.

6 You know, I'm not going to speak relative to the
7 audits, because we know what the audits have indicated.
8 We have to have radical change, because these people are
9 feeling it. We need closure. Even people in retirement
10 need closure, but you have a responsibility.

11 You've been mandated, and just like Bill Finn, I
12 was a rookie under Bill Finn. But you know, Bill Finn,
13 you couldn't protect me 24/7, because where I was
14 assigned, you weren't there, Bill, and I did and have
15 experienced racism and discrimination, but he is a good
16 man.

17 But stay focused. You know, we have a job to
18 do, and let's do it. With my help and your help, I'm
19 here to solicit my assistance, if you want, but let's
20 stay focused. We do a good job in emergency operations;
21 we're not talking about that. We're talking about civil
22 rights, human resources, responsibilities, and that's why
23 we have to have radical and substantive change. Thanks
24 for your time.

25 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thanks, Mr. Thomas. May I

1 have Ricky Terrell, please, followed by Melissa Kelley.

2 RICKY TERRELL: Good afternoon to the Board of
3 Fire Commissioners, to the Chief, everybody at hand. Let
4 me just give you a little bit of my background. Before
5 coming on to the fire department, I have worked for three
6 years as a school teacher in education. Five years with
7 the private sector for AT&T, then 20 years with LAFD.

8 The fire department is the worse in terms of how
9 management allows supervisors to treat its employees.
10 There is bias and there is bigotry in the disciplinary
11 process and in the promotional process, along with the
12 day-to-day routines that firefighters have to go through.

13 I have documentation to support my comments.
14 You're welcome to contact me at any time, and I'm glad to
15 share with you my experiences. This is a reminder that
16 the audit is definitive. I don't have to defend the
17 audit. The audit has spoken.

18 As far as people saying that we have disgruntled
19 employees, things like that, I'll just say for myself,
20 I'll just put my resume, my stability up against those
21 who oppose my comments at any time. And to the
22 Commissioners, it's a reminder that you are charged to
23 run the Department. The Department does not run you.

24 One of the problems that I see with the
25 discrimination and retaliation that goes on in the

1 Department is that when it happens, these supervisors
2 think that these things happen in a vacuum, and they
3 don't. When it occurs, it goes home with the members and
4 their families. They discuss it. They discuss things
5 that take place with their neighbors, and whoever their
6 neighbors may be.

7 It hurts the Department in terms of recruitment.
8 Because when we take these problems home, and we discuss
9 them with people, we have others and young people that
10 hear this, they don't want to become -- qualified people
11 don't want to become a part of this type of family, and
12 I'd just like to say to you that, keep doing what you are
13 doing. Don't let anybody persuade you to get off of
14 course. And again, I'll leave my card with you, because
15 I have pounds of documentation to support my comments.
16 That is all. Thank you.

17 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you, Mr. Terrell.

18 You can just give it to Miss Revelles.

19 Melissa Kelley -- oh, there you are, followed by
20 Alicia Mathis.

21 MELISSA KELLEY: I just wanted to say that, at
22 the beginning, that I love this department as well, and
23 my heart is beating so fast with so much love for this
24 Department. As you said, my name is Melissa Kelley. I'm
25 a firefighter with Los Angeles City.

1 I have faithfully served this City of
2 Los Angeles for five years, and served five years with
3 the California Department of Forestry in preparation for
4 this job, along with the attending numerous academies,
5 classes and certifications, as many of us on this fine
6 career have done.

7 I've always taken my duties extremely seriously
8 and consider things like a solid work ethic, integrity
9 and loyalty to my teammates, the cornerstones of our
10 important career.

11 The years I spent preparing were to ensure that
12 I was able to perform my duties as a Los Angeles
13 firefighter. I knew what to expect. I was fully aware
14 of the duties of this career and the challenges I might
15 face. I was aware of the dangers involved and that I
16 might be injured. I did not expect to be injured the way
17 I was on June 19, 2004.

18 On the morning of June 19, two captains from
19 another shift were scheduled to work with me and my crew.
20 I heard about the extreme drilling taking place on their
21 shift. I had heard detailed accounts of a drill called,
22 by others, "the humiliator."

23 The proposed purpose of which was for only four
24 of us to engage in a successive firefighting operation
25 drill, in full firefighting gear, including breathing air

1 from an SCBA, our breathing apparatus, until you puke.

2 During the drill, I was the only one who was
3 ordered to perform the specific tasks, the first of which
4 was to throw the top member position of our largest
5 wooden ladder, the 35 foot extension, weighing 180
6 pounds, a ladder I've successfully thrown numerous times
7 in the past.

8 As I raced to push the ladder over my head and
9 put it into position, I lost the ladder, and it came
10 crashing down on top of me. My head and my helmet was
11 pinned. My chin pressed forcefully into my chest. The
12 mask of my SCBA askew and leaking air, as all eight named
13 safety members of my crew watched and did nothing.

14 I later found out that when a few members of my
15 crew saw me struggling and attempted to come to my aid,
16 they were ordered by the captains in charge to, "leave
17 it." In the weeks and months that followed, I became
18 involved in a version of an investigation in which I
19 received phone calls telling me to watch my back. I was
20 questioned at 10:00 o'clock at night, and was eventually
21 involved in a Board of Rights, our version of the
22 disciplinary hearing.

23 During the proceedings, I was forced to sit with
24 the very people directly involved in my ordeal, as I
25 waited for three days to testify. During my testimony, I

1 was scrutinized and openly ridiculed. In this manner, I
2 felt the Department let me down a second time. The
3 members involved were given, virtually, no punishment,
4 which sent a message to the field personnel that you
5 could literally violate the number one rule of safety and
6 receive no appropriate disciplinary action.

7 My grandfather is a retired officer with the
8 Los Angeles County Fire Department. I grew up with and
9 around the fire service. I was exposed to the family
10 atmosphere that people speak of. I was witnessed to
11 weekends spent to helping each other move, building
12 garages, and enjoying family softball games. But most
13 importantly, I saw teamwork with each visit to my
14 grandfather's station.

15 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Ms. Kelley.

16 MELISSA KELLEY: This is a wonderful career that
17 I dreamed about for many years and worked vigorously --

18 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Ms. Kelley.

19 MELISSA KELLEY -- to make myself an asset. If
20 I could just finish my last sentence. Someone recently
21 asked me about the audit, and specifically what I wanted
22 to come out of it.

23 PRESIDENT SOTELO: I'm sorry. Can you please
24 submit your testimony in writing, or that last portion.
25 Thank you very much, Ms. Kelley.

1 ALICIA MATHIS: Good afternoon. My name is
2 Alicia Mathis. I'm a 16-year member of the LAFD. I
3 cannot express how disappointed I have been with this
4 Department's lack of integrity. What happened to Melissa
5 is appalling. Unfortunately what happened to her is not
6 unusual. As a members of this department, our main focus
7 is safety for ourselves and for our co-workers.

8 It is outrageous to me that a captain would
9 jeopardize a firefighter's safety. I had an opportunity
10 to hear Colin Powell speak last night. He spoke of
11 entire nations changing with the right leadership. By
12 providing vision and leadership, we can transform this
13 Department's past history of abuse.

14 By putting collaboration and teamwork first, we
15 we can set priorities for firefighters. By creating a
16 system of discipline with justice and consistency, we can
17 rid the Department of the lack of accountability that now
18 plagues us.

19 Firefighter injuries have sky-rocketed over the
20 last couple of years. Let's not injure another
21 firefighter with our lack of respect for members on our
22 own team. We must stop this cycle of abuse. Thank you.

23 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you, Ms. Mathis.
24 Mr. Pat McOsker and Mr. Tennie Pierce followed by Blair
25 Taylor.

1 PAT MC OSKER: Thank you, Madame President and
2 Members of the Commission. I just want to start by
3 complementing all the speakers that have come to the
4 microphone today. As you know, in most Fire Commission
5 Meetings, I'm the only ranking firefighter that goes to
6 the microphone, and it's good to heard from others, other
7 than just me today, and I know it takes a lot of courage
8 by the way. It really does.

9 I can remember the first few times I went to the
10 microphone. It's not easy, and especially the issues
11 that they're talking about. These are hot-button issues.
12 People are talking about things that really cut to the
13 core of all of us, and I compliment. It takes courage.
14 We all love the fire department by the way, too. I heard
15 a couple speakers say, "I really love this fire
16 department.

17 I think everybody that has come to this
18 microphone, everybody that's in the room that's involved
19 with the fire department, all the men and women taking
20 risks every day, risking their necks, you know, love the
21 fire department. So I don't think that is an issue.

22 We come from different places and have different
23 perspectives about all these issues. I think everyone's
24 opinion is valid. Everyone walks in a different set of
25 shoes. So, I think that's important to say. I wasn't

1 going to come to microphone today, because I've said so
2 much on these issues already at previous fire commission
3 meetings and in committee hearings.

4 One thing that I heard though, and I think as a
5 housekeeping measure needs to be said. A couple of
6 speakers talked about the Jaime Foster tragedy, about her
7 death, being run over by a fire truck, and that was in
8 the audit. I just want to point out that nobody was
9 responsible for that. Nobody should be taken attest.
10 Nobody should feel -- go way from what they heard today,
11 or the audit that they are responsible for that.

12 You know that was a policy, yes. That was
13 universally not enforced. Nobody on the fire department
14 followed that policy, and when that's the case, no
15 mid-level supervisor -- low-level, mid-level should ever
16 be held accountable. If you're going to hold anybody
17 accountable, it would be at the very top. But that's
18 such a heavy thing to put on anybody.

19 I think that's kind of a bad example to use, but
20 I do want to say something. The audit finds a lot of
21 failings, whether you agree with them or not. I tend to
22 not invalidate, you know, what the audit found. I
23 believe that we do have problem, and we can improve our
24 fire department. But if you read both audits, they find
25 fault with management about policies that aren't enforced

1 and lack of accountability, and those kinds of things.

2 What they don't find fault with, necessarily, is
3 individual firefighters, rank and fellow firefighters.
4 So far, in the months since the audit, the only thing
5 that's changed in the fire department is that rank and
6 fellow fire fighters are feeling the heat, if you will.

7 Discipline has been ratcheted up, you know, in a
8 politically correct way. There has been a knee-jerk
9 reaction, and the people on the bottom right now are
10 feeling the pain. They are being pitted one against
11 another. The audit is being represented by supervisors
12 out to the field in the wrong way, portrayed in the
13 negative light, I believe, and those things are
14 happening.

15 And again, once again, just like I feared, the
16 outfall of this, the outcome of this is the people on the
17 bottom are paying a price for a failing at the top. So I
18 just urge you to continue to do what you've been doing,
19 and that is to get to the root of this and that is to
20 come up with real solutions to get that action plan to
21 the Mayor on time, and I hope that the action plan, at
22 the end of the day includes a whole lot of fact finding
23 and meeting of consensus building among the stakeholders,
24 so that we come up with the proper way of fixing our fire
25 department. Thank you.

1 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you, Mr. McOsker. Mr.
2 Tennie Pierce followed by Blair Taylor, and if there is
3 anybody else that would like to submit a public speaker
4 card, we're happy to do that.

5 Also, it's unconventional, but we are probably
6 not going to go until the very end, so if there is
7 anybody that wants to finish up their statements that
8 they made and were cut off, we can go ahead and open
9 another minute for that if you want to submit you public
10 speaker card for that, okay.

11 TENNIE PIERCE: Thank you for having me come up
12 here, Fire Commission and Chief Bamattre. Basically, and
13 I kind of agree with Captain Finn. He's a strong leader.
14 I've heard a lot of things about him, and what he said is
15 true. A lot of people said that if it happened in his
16 station, it wouldn't have happened.

17 Years ago I was at Fire Station 61, where
18 possibly the biggest race fight was going on, and it was
19 so bad where the engineers and the firemen were fighting,
20 and it got to the point that the chief wasn't doing
21 anything about it, up Downtown wasn't doing anything
22 about it.

23 So I had to write a letter to the advocates,
24 stating that if they didn't come in and do something
25 about it that I would send a letter to the Urban League,

1 to NAACP, to CBS, and three days later three advocates
2 came in and emptied out the whole station.

3 And I believe, with my incident, it's
4 unfortunate but it happened. Coming from outside, eat
5 like all members, a plate of dog food made for me, guys
6 laughing. Family knows about it now. My daughter knows
7 about it. It's just time for the Commission and the
8 Mayor to get it straight. My name has been abused.

9 I love this department. I went to Foshay Junior
10 High School, Crenshaw, Northridge University. I've been
11 in this city all my life, love this city, love this
12 Department, great department, greatest department. If
13 you want to get certified firemen, I mean, it's here for
14 you. I just think that it's time that the Commission
15 takes, and the Mayor, take a look at this and hold these
16 guys accountable for what they do. That's all I want to
17 say.

18 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you, Mr. Pierce.

19 Blair Taylor.

20 BLAIR TAYLOR: Members of the Commission, my
21 name is Blair Taylor, President of Urban League. To the
22 wonderful esteemed firefighters of this city, I just want
23 to say, thank you. We appreciate you and the hard work
24 that you do. Thank you very much, on behalf of the Urban
25 League. I will just stand up here today and momentarily

1 quote one of my favorite scriptures, which says "That a
2 house divided against itself cannot stand."

3 And I think there is a great deal of dissension
4 in this room. There is a great deal of different
5 perspectives on issues that have happened in this
6 department, and I just want to make it clear that this
7 City has come a long way over the last many years, in
8 terms of race relations.

9 We clearly have a long way to go. I think the
10 incidents that are outlined in the audit need to be taken
11 incredibly seriously, and I know they will be by this
12 Commission, and we appreciate that. They are disturbing,
13 and there is a great quote in one of the documents that I
14 have, and it says, "It is simply unacceptable that racism
15 and sexism remain, and retaliation remain in the Los
16 Angeles Fire Department," and I would extend that to
17 remain in this city at all.

18 And I am confident that you will take this as
19 seriously as we need you to take at this point, and also
20 look for an opportunity for public involvement and public
21 oversight in the process, as you get into your solutions.

22 To the firefighters in this room, I will just
23 tell you, you are the face of this city to many people,
24 all of you, not some of you, all of you, particularly
25 true in the post-911 era, and we are very proud of what

1 you have done and what you do everyday, in terms of
2 putting your lives on the line.

3 This is not an us-versus-them theme, and
4 diversity in any organization, and I've been in many over
5 the course of my career, is a strength, not a weakness.
6 It always strengthens an organization, and I would just
7 encourage those of you in this department to embrace that
8 concept, and I think we will all be the better.

9 The Urban League stands ready to support the
10 fire department, the Chief, the firefighters in ferreting
11 out racism and doing our part to help you find solutions
12 that are meaningful, and I thank you today for your hard
13 work.

14 I know sometimes that it's a thankless job to
15 sit up there, and I thank you for the work that you are
16 doing in making certain that we address the issues that
17 have been brought forth in these reports. Thank you.

18 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you, Mr. Taylor.

19 Mr. Armando Hogan followed by Willis Edwards,
20 and Jorge Espinoza.

21 ARMANDO HOGAN: Madame President, and Honorable
22 Members of the Fire Commission, Fire Chief, and the
23 Staff, and the City Attorney's Office. My name is
24 Armando Hogan, I'm the President of the Stentorian, and
25 first of all, I'd like to thank you all for being here at

1 this historical facility. More importantly, I do want to
2 stress one issue, the issue of leadership.

3 The Stentorians have, will, and will continue to
4 be always in a leadership position. There is a gentleman
5 on this wall here, if you look all the way in the back,
6 his name is Bob Craig. He was the first President of the
7 Stentorians, because upstairs in the dorm, in 1953, is
8 where they began to speak about it.

9 In 1954, the Stentorians came into existence,
10 and I had the honor of speaking with him on more than one
11 occasion when I was a young member on the board, once
12 again in a leadership position, and he told me, "Never be
13 guilty of what you accuse." The best way to deal with
14 that is always educate folks around you so they
15 understand how to treat you, and how you want to be
16 treated.

17 As I said earlier, the Stentorians will always
18 be in a leadership position. We appreciate what we have
19 been able to work with and accomplish thus far, even
20 though we know it's a long road ahead.

21 I'm proud to be here. I'm proud of the work
22 that we are doing now, and due to the complexity and the
23 nature of the issues that we're facing, look forward to
24 coming up with a suitable resolution. Thank you.

25 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you, Mr. Hogan.

1 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Mr. Edwards.

2 THE WITNESS: Fire Commissioners, Chief, my name
3 is Willis Edwards, and I'm with the NAACP. First of all,
4 before I get started, I want to acknowledge someone here
5 who is part of us and about us, and who has fought racism
6 all these years in the fire department and the City of
7 Los Angeles and that Mr. Arnette Heartsfield, and I just
8 want him to stand here, because this is the reason why we
9 have this fire station.

10 Well, I chose to be last, because I wanted to
11 say a few things. I am just a citizen of this city, and
12 I am in pain now, a lot of pain, because all of you are
13 in pain, those for, those against. So how do we solve
14 this problem? What I'd like to know from the Fire
15 Commission, how many of these people who spoke up today
16 will be protected, so we can get to the root of a
17 problem? The problem is like a cancer. We got to do
18 something so everybody will feel like they're safe.

19 Chief Finn, I think Finn is his name, I thought
20 he was excellent today. I thought he was very good
21 today, and I think that maybe there could be a committee
22 of community people and firemen to come together, to see
23 how we could help solve some of these problems, because
24 no one likes racism. Nobody like to be discriminated
25 against, but we are here to fight for it.

1 I got involved, the NAACP got involved because
2 there was a young man named Johnny Green who was charged
3 with something that he did not do, and we fought very
4 hard until the charges were dropped, because we did the
5 investigation. We made sure that there was an
6 investigation.

7 But what appalled me was that once the charges
8 were dropped by the District Attorney, then he got
9 charged by the Department and had to go -- got some
10 disciplinary action, and I never understood that, and
11 maybe somebody can explain that to me one day.

12 The other thing is that the young man, when we
13 heard about the young man who had dog food put in his
14 spaghetti and was bought by the captain, I just couldn't
15 understand that. I didn't understand why that happened.
16 Somebody needs to explain why that happened, and if
17 people in that type of position, that are captains, and
18 are putting dog food in spaghetti should not be in the
19 department, period.

20 The issue is, how do we solve all of this? The
21 Chief can't solve it all by himself. Everybody else
22 can't solve it. But when the troops are in pain, all the
23 way through, and feel that they are not being treated
24 fairly, somebody, somebody has got to step up and say, we
25 are going to solve this, and all of them that don't want

1 to solve got to go, because it's a common sense thing.
2 It's a community thing.

3 We in the community, all we look for is if the
4 fire department is coming to my house to put the fire
5 out, period. We didn't think you all had any of these
6 other problems, about dog food in spaghetti, or this and
7 that. We thought you all were our super heroes. I mean,
8 my little niece and nephew say, "Here come the firemen."
9 The fire's going to be put out.

10 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Mr. Edwards --

11 WILLIS EDWARDS: So, let's put this fire out.
12 Let's put this fire out and come back together as a
13 family. Thank you very much.

14 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you.

15 Mr. Jorge Espinoza followed by Miss Brenda Lee
16 and Mr. Steve Bressler.

17 JORGE ESPINOZA: Good afternoon, Members of the
18 Board, Chief, Fire Department Family. I'm Firefighter
19 Jorge Espinoza. I'm from Fire Station 39 B-Platoon in
20 Van Nuys. I'm here today to bring to your attention that
21 I'm not a minority on this Department.

22 I'm in the majority, actually. I'm not speaking
23 of race, gender, or creed. I'm speaking of a group of
24 people that come to work everyday, to risk their lives
25 for the lives of others; one who shows compassion toward

1 the community in their time of need; one who considers
2 his or her co-workers, not only somebody they have to
3 hang around a few hours a day, but as family; one who
4 takes pride in their work, their character, their
5 appearance, and their reputation; one who acknowledges
6 that I am fortunate to have been trained and mentored by
7 some of the city's finest firefighters, who themselves
8 were guided by generations of tradition.

9 In closing, I'm not a minority. I'm the LAFD.
10 I'm simply a member who would like to keep the LAFD where
11 it belongs, and that's one of the Nation's elite fire
12 departments. Thank you for your time.

13 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you, Mr. Espinoza.
14 Miss Brenda Lee.

15 BRENDA LEE: Good afternoon. I'd like to say
16 that yeah, the fire department is a great job. It's a
17 wonderful opportunity to help those people who need the
18 help, and that's what most of us love about our job.

19 But on the other hand, we have to deal with that
20 monster that exists in the fire department; that might be
21 that captain; that might be that chief; that individual
22 who wants to pass on their own feelings about someone
23 else, and just because they are in their high rank, they
24 feel that they have a right to treat you one way or the
25 other.

1 When you are in a fire station, and the captain
2 says to you, "Yeah, that's right. They're after your
3 black ass." Okay. Everybody substitute white ass.
4 Everybody substitute Asian ass. Everybody substitute
5 that. How does that make you feel? He's a supervisor
6 talking to you, telling you that. How does that make you
7 feel.

8 On the other hand, does that member have a right
9 to be a supervisor and be on the L.A. City Fire
10 Department? I don't think that's a person that I want to
11 deal with, that I want to see, and that's not a person
12 that I want my family to see, most of all when they are
13 hurting, when they are sick, because why? Because I
14 don't know how they are going to treat them.

15 I want people who are going to come out there
16 and help people, not people that are going to make
17 judgements on how someone looks, how someone talks, how
18 someone walks. I want compassionate people. I believe
19 in the fire department. I believe in helping a
20 community. But right now, I believe in you
21 Commissioners.

22 I know that you have a difficult road ahead of
23 you, and I wish that I could help you. Once again that's
24 the helper in me wanting to come out. So to you I say
25 please force forward. Thank you.

1 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you, Ms. Lee.

2 Steve Bressler followed by Wilson Davis.

3 STEVE BRESSLER: My name is Steve Bressler,
4 retired captain for 36 years. I have seen the racism and
5 the retaliation and the hostile working conditions and so
6 many people said that people should stand up and make a
7 statement, so here I am. I think the solutions are, you
8 need discipline to be handled by a civilian board with
9 absolutely no ties to the fire department.

10 You also need the three-hole score done away
11 with, because that is used to subvert the selection
12 process for promotions. I think what we have here is a
13 dysfunctional family, and we got the father beating some
14 of the kids. Of course, the ones he doesn't beat, they
15 love it, but the ones that do get a beating, when they
16 can go nowhere else for help, they either go to the
17 newspapers, or they go to attorneys, and you probably
18 noticed that a lot of them are going to attorneys.

19 The most hazardous situation police find
20 themselves in is going to dysfunctional family events.
21 That's where people shoot each other, and a lot of times
22 they shoot the policemen. So if things are not
23 corrected, this organization is prime for a big event.
24 Thank you.

25 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you, Mr. Bressler. And

1 I'm sorry, it was Dilisa Davis. Is Miss Dilisa Davis
2 here?

3 DILISA DAVIS: Good morning -- afternoon rather.
4 My name is Dilisa Davis. I've been on this department
5 for 21 and a half years, and like a lot of the other
6 speakers, I truly do love and believe in this fire
7 department.

8 We are a premier fire department, and the only
9 ugliness that comes out is when we have some of the --
10 some of our participants in the fire department or
11 employees that do not abide by the rules. And that ugly
12 had -- because they do something stupid surfaces, and
13 they'll have a black eye on our premier image, and I
14 think that is what destroys the anti-workings of the fire
15 department.

16 Julie, thanks, I really appreciate it. Sirens
17 is not the voice of the females on this department. I've
18 said it several times, and I hope you hear me and believe
19 me, because they are not our voice. You have to speak to
20 the ladies individually.

21 We have been so spread out, where we don't even
22 trust each other. So you have to speak to them
23 individually to get a real feel of what's going on in
24 this department.

25 A lot of employees, every time you hear it is

1 always, I think is the catch word, catch phrase, angry,
2 disgruntled, it's not. We're tired, we're dissolutioned,
3 we're disappointed, because we're not treated fairly.
4 Discipline is totality -- we don't even want to go there,
5 okay. Ask me. I've been disciplined several times, and
6 a lot of times it's for speaking up for someone else, and
7 that's our discipline process.

8 It's not the perpetrators that get disciplined,
9 it's the person who speaks up. You're hammered,
10 crucified, fried, died and the whole thing. But what I
11 want to say is that we used to have a family atmosphere
12 here. We actually really had a family atmosphere, and
13 that has been totality destroyed.

14 A lot of the leaders that were instilling that
15 concept in us when we were coming on, when I came on,
16 they're gone. And now, the only people that you have
17 here now are the ones that are bucking for promotions,
18 that will sell their souls for a gold badge, and for
19 anyone that will lie and deny, and as someone so
20 eloquently stated, you know, this is a paramilitary
21 organization, which is a bunch of bull shit, to be pretty
22 frank.

23 I'm prior military, and the only thing that is
24 even closely similar to being military is our chain of
25 command, and that's it. Everything else is a total

1 force, but we do have strong and decisive leadership. It
2 doesn't matter what the audit says, but they forgot to
3 add retaliatory, biased, and vindictive, very vindictive,
4 especially if you don't follow the rules, or play by the
5 games, or any of the catch phrases that are around the
6 department.

7 But like I truly said, I love this department.
8 I gave up a uterus and two knees for it. That's how much
9 I love the Department.

10 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you, Miss Davis.

11 And again I'd like to offer that anybody who
12 didn't get a chance to finish their statement, you can
13 submit a public speaker card for an additional minute.
14 We're going to go ahead and go to two individuals that
15 didn't finish their statements, but if there is anybody
16 else that would like to speak, please give your card over
17 to Miss Revelles.

18 Miss Julie Wolfe followed by Miss Melissa
19 Kelley, so you can finish up.

20 Miss Wolfe, you have one additional minute.

21 JULIE WOLFE: Okay. Thank you.

22 I'm going to ad lib this now, please continue
23 doing what you're doing, going and visiting the fire
24 stations. Do your own audit, not just from a small
25 minority of people, and I think what you will find that

1 there is just a small percentage of this fire department
2 family that aren't happy. That's truly what my belief
3 is.

4 Why am I so different from any other female on
5 the job? I'd like to say it's because I've proven
6 myself. I've been accepted. I was accepted as a rookie
7 on this job. Once you show the fire department, the
8 members that you work with, that you are capable of doing
9 the job, you are accepted.

10 Unfortunately, there is a small group of people
11 that are yelling the loudest, and that's what we are
12 listening to, and I just want to ask you "not to let the
13 tail wag the dog."

14 Some of the cases, where people are suing, don't
15 take their word for face value. Please check up on their
16 files, and you will see that -- what you are going to
17 find are employees that weren't star employees in the
18 first place.

19 PRESIDENT SOTELO: I'm sorry, Miss Wolfe.

20 JULIE WOLFE: Thank you.

21 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Miss Melissa Kelley.

22 MELISSA KELLEY: I wanted to finish my
23 statements, because it really does mean a lot to me to be
24 up here, and it was difficult to do in the first place,
25 and I just wanted a quick finish.

1 As I was saying, my grandfather was a retired
2 officer. I was exposed to the family atmosphere that
3 people speak of. I was witnessed to weekends spent,
4 helping each other move, building garages and enjoying
5 family softball games, and most importantly, I saw
6 teamwork with each visit to my grandfather's station.

7 This is a wonderful career. One that I had
8 dreamed about for many years, and worked vigorously to
9 make myself an asset to the citizens of the City of Los
10 Angeles.

11 As a firefighter, we are public servants. I
12 think that's important to remember. When someone calls
13 us, we do whatever is necessary to mitigate the emergency
14 at hand. We rescue homeless. We rescue animals. We
15 rescue regardless of race or creed or gender. We rescue
16 each other, because it's our job to do so. That's why it
17 is unacceptable to me that on June 19, 2004, I was
18 involved in a training drill that taught me nothing about
19 firefighting.

20 On June 19, 2004, I needed help and no one came,
21 and that is unacceptable to me. On June 19, I believed
22 that the department that I dedicated my life to would
23 uphold the standards of discipline, and I feel like they
24 did not.

25 Someone recently asked me about the audit, and

1 specifically what I wanted to come out of it all, and
2 after a quick introspection, I wishfully answered that I
3 want the Department that I thought I joined.

4 I'm asking you today to give that to all of us,
5 to see this through to the end, to give us the mission,
6 the purpose, and the vision that we all crave, to set
7 boundaries, and to enforce discipline, to restore our
8 trust and most of all, to keep us all safe.

9 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you, Miss Kelley.

10 Okay. With that, we have no more public speaker
11 cards. What I'd like to do is go ahead and conclude the
12 public comment period for this particular item on the
13 audit. I did want to thank every single one of you for
14 being here today, for listening, for really hearing what
15 was said by everyone in this room.

16 We've had so many various opinions that run the
17 spectrum within the Department, and it's only through
18 these public hearings, and the one-on-one interactions
19 that we've had that really enable us to make an informed
20 decision as we move forward.

21 So we want to really, sincerely, appreciate all
22 those first-time speakers, and all those repeat speakers.
23 It helps to make our process a lot more informed and
24 moved along.

25 So with that, I do want to let you know that we

1 will have a commission meeting, in which we will be
2 discussing the audit at length at our next Commission
3 meeting on Tuesday.

4 We meet at the 18th Floor City Hall East, and
5 our Commission Meetings run from 3:00 to 5:00 o'clock,
6 and we will be focused on the audit at our next meeting,
7 with anticipation that our final draft of the Action Plan
8 will be published on April 25th.

9 So again we want to hear from every single one
10 of you. If you feel more comfortable talking
11 individually, you can contact our Commission Staff and
12 speak to any one of us, and also you can come to our
13 committee meetings and our public hearings. Thank you
14 very much, and this concludes Item Number 3 and Number 4
15 of our agenda, and if I could have a motion to adjourn,
16 if there is nothing else.

17 COMMISSIONER HUDLEY-HAYES: So moved.

18 PRESIDENT SOTELO: Thank you. This meeting is
19 adjourned, and I appreciate all your help.

20 (Meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.)
21
22
23
24
25