PART ONE OF TOWN HALL MEETING WITH COMMISSIONERS COPPS AND ADELSTEIN IN OAKLAND, CA—OCTOBER 27, 2006.

MEETING WITH NAACP LEADERSHIP

RON HASSON, NAACP:

Good afternoon. I'm glad that those of you that are here are present, and we have additional people that will be coming as they come out of their sessions. First of all, I'd like to welcome our Commissioners and welcome our panelists and folks for this FCC Town Hall Meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to have an opportunity for our two Commissioners to come and visit with the NAACP local leadership that gathered here in the State of California for our state conference here in Oakland, CA. So first of all, I'd like to thank our two Commissioners for coming to Oakland and spending time with the NAACP. Gentlemen, thank you very much, both of you.

The next thing as we move in to the program, we have some folks that I'd like to introduce you to. We are very fortunate that in our state conference we have some leadership of our national office, so we will have an opportunity to introduce you to some of these folks. But how have we set this up? In dialogue with the Commissioners, the Commissioners were very interested in spending some time with the NAACP and to really have an opportunity to hear from some of the leadership from the NAACP. So we are very fortunate that in our state conference we have leaders from across the State of California, and a number of them have asked to come forward and give their testimony as well as ask some questions of the Commissioners in terms of areas of interest regarding ownership and other things within the FCC affairs. So what we are going to do today in this panel of distinguished folks that we have up here is to then have each of them have an opportunity to make some comments and to ask some questions of the Commissioners in terms of how things are flowing and moving in their area in relationship to their awareness and their constituents' awareness in terms of what is happening with the FCC.

I would be very remiss without bringing our leader, the lady who

makes the NAACP in the State of California work and work to perfection. All of us have grown to lover her and know her as our fearless leader, and I would very much like to introduce to the Commissioners our State Conference President, Ms. Alice Huffman.

ALICE HUFFMAN, NAACP:

Thank you to the Commissioners and our leadership within the NAACP. Commissioners, I have to tell you that we are trying to walk and chew gum at the same time with the [Town Hall Meeting and the NAACP] Convention. Now we once had a time when it was clear that all our members could be here, but that worked to the disadvantage of the community, who also wanted to be here, so we have some workshops and things that are going on, so there is a whole overlap, and believe me, they are not going to fare well from this because there are so many people that want to be here right now, but they have jobs that they are doing in other parts of the [NAACP] Convention, but I hope some of them will get here before the evening goes by.

I want to thank Ron Hasson and Willis Edwards for working so closely together to make this happen. This is so significant for us, that you would come to the NAACP to listen to our members in our community about our airwaves. We call them our airwaves, even though we don't own them anymore, even though there's just one point of view in the airwaves, even though we believe that the airwaves are supposed to be somehow reflective of our communities. It ain't happening. There's one point of view in the airwaves, and you know which. There's a monopoly. I'm not opposed to monopolies if the monopoly were mine… but it's not, and it works to our disadvantage. And so, to have you here…

I'll give you a little story. Some of us have been paying attention to the airwaves for a long time. I'm a community activist, a political activist. I'm not an expert in the media. But many many years ago in Sacramento there was a gentleman who was on the airwaves and who was very racist. And we organized the community, and we got him off the airwaves. Never do it again. Guess what we got for that? Rush Limbaugh. Rush Limbaugh is a star in Sacramento. We finally wised up and quit calling the radio station because we

were nothing but pawns in the audience. He waited for us to call, so he could make his points to his audience. So we left him the airwaves completely because we were tried to being the people used as the props for him to do his propaganda. Now that would not be so bad had we had a counter station that people could tune in to, but in Sacramento we lost talk radio for many many years because we did not want to feed into that right wing conservative show.

And I want to tell you, watching TV, which I hardly watch anymore, listening to the news, which I can stand to listen to anymore—you don't get a balanced picture in America anymore. America has changed. They are not willing to understand that America has changed, and they are not willing to do what it takes to serve our community. I don't like all that network stuff; they don't talk about anything in my community; it doesn't help us out in our community. A little bit of that is OK. But we have a constant, perpetual dose. Now they told me I was not supposed to give a speech. I'm not going to give a speech, but I just want to let you know how full we are about what is happening on our airwaves. It's like water. It's like so many things in America that should be free and available to everybody, but there is a fee for it, and somebody can buy it, and somebody can own it, and therefore a whole section of the population is disadvantaged because of that. So you can see I have very very very strong feelings about the direction that we are going on in America. I don't want to talk about ownership and all of that because we have a lot of experts up here [that will be] talking about that. But I'm just talking as a political activist. I can't have my voice heard. I can't have my point of view heard. I remember when there was 'equal time.' If you put one side on the air, you had to put the other side on. That's not there anymore. I remember when there was 'public service.' The public service announcements, you cannot get them anymore. When they put them on, they put them on at three o'clock in the morning. So as a political activist, I hope you will hear more people talk about this. I wish you were the majority. We thank you very much for being here, and maybe one of these days we'll see a change in the FCC, because I have watched it go to two or three Commissioners, and I have watched it, and I'm sad to say, but Ward Connelly. Do you know who Ward Connelly is? Do you know the guy that put you online and got rid of affirmative action? I'm sad

to say that at the Commission, we had our own Ward Connelly, who did away with so much. You know whom I'm talking about, because my guys don't want me to say too much up here… Wait a minute. I ain't finished. I got carried away. I was emotional. I hope that with all of our members in the community, that we will provide you with the kind of feedback that you need. And I want to make a commitment that this is not a one-time deal for us, that we will be with you, we will work with you, we will do whatever it takes to get our airwaves back. Thank you.

RON HASSON, NAACP:

More to come, ladies and gentlemen. Another one of our officers within the NAACP who is out here visiting us and attending our conference, who we are certainly proud to have him here, and I know he has some good things to say to the Commissioners as well as to the rest of you from a national perspective of the NAACP: Our own Reverend Nelson Rivers, the Third.

NELSON RIVERS III, NAACP:

Good afternoon. First I want to commend the California State [NAACP] Conference for breaking new ground. This is a tremendous idea. It is one that ought to be replicated all over the country, because as opposed to throwing and fighting and pitching in the darkness, we are now trying to shed some light. And so having the Commissioners come and having them accept the invitation makes a strong statement about how we can respond in terms of what is a vexing problem in our communities all across the country. So let me commend Alice Huffman, Ron Hasson, Willis Edwards, and everyone involved for making this possible. Give them a round of applause. I do want to commend the Commissioners for a lot of things but primarily for having the good sense of hiring Rudy Brioché to be one of your legal counsels. He is an excellent former NAACP staff person. He had the good sense and wisdom to wear the NAACP pin today. I noticed earlier that he used to work earlier at our Washington bureau as well as with us at our national office, and I always was impressed with him.

I'm going top ask the first question, so whenever we get to it, this

is the first question. This is the issue: As a young activist coming out in Charleston, SC, what we used to do [then], I had my temporary radio license. I learned to talk in the radio, [taught] by people who had control over the radio in my community. And one of the things I learned earlier on is that when you get the mike, you say what you have to say, because they might not give the mike back to you. And so, he taught me to do the commercials in a very low country accent. His name was Bill Saunders, in WPAR radio station down in Charleston. He said to me between a break, as I was being more loquacious that logical, “Let me tell you one thing, when they put the mike in your face, say what you’ve got to say, because they might never put the mike again. So speak up.” That was my introduction to how to do radio.

Since that time the radio has been taken away from us, and a big issue for us is because you don’t require them to do public service broadcasting and programming anymore, they don’t do it. It used to be they had to do it. I asked Rudy before we got in, when did the regulation change. He said it evolved over time. So what do we need to do as a community and community organizations to demand and require that public service broadcasting and programming be brought back to radio? The NAACP used to do a radio-thon every year, where we got radio stations all across America to agree that they would help us one Saturday a year to broadcast two or three hours to our community. And one of the reasons they did it is because it fulfilled the requirements to do public service programming. That requirement is gone. We need to know how do we help you get that back. That’s a big issue for us. And I think that those who are watching the election November 7 is so important to understand how you connect the dots. The state of the FCC started many years ago, but it crystallized when Ronald Reagan lost in 1964. When Reagan lost, some folks in that part of his party made up their minds that they were going to take everything. And they did not care how long it took; they were going to take it. And methodically over those years, they have done that. And they took it by focusing on what they considered the bigger mouthpiece for public opinion, and the FCC controls that. And so they took [over] the FCC and they took control of how American public opinion is shaped. How do we help get the FCC back to belong to the people and not to the far right wing

of the Republican Party?

RON HASSON, NAACP:

Thank you, Nelson. I'm going to move into our panelists because there are a number of questions. The Commissioners are beginning to hear some of the questions coming from some of our panelists. I'd like to move next to Sandy Thomas, who is sitting next to you, Commissioner. Dr. Thomas is from the Altadena/Pasadena area. She is a Sectional Director in that area, and she comes to us with a wealth of knowledge, having her own television show in that area. So, Dr. Thomas, can we get some comments from you?

DR. SANDY THOMAS, NAACP:

My name is Sandy Thomas, and I am from the Southland. For the past six years I have managed to produce and direct the 'NAACP Today' television show. But before I go into that, I'm going to piggyback a little bit into what Reverend Rivers brought forth. But I was asked to say what I do for the NAACP. I serve as Section Director on the California State Conference, but I am also the President of the Altadena Branch and the Region One. We have three regions, and I am the Region One Secretary. So we stay very busy with the NAACP.

Back to the television show. I've seen some changes over these six years, and some of the changes that I've notices are with the broadcasters. By this I mean, in times past broadcasters were required to address community issues. I need to know, is this still true? Because in my area, I don't see this happening. I need to know if broadcasters are being held to the same standards that they were in the past. If changes have been made in the laws, maybe you could address that for me? And if these laws have changed, is there anything to ensure, like Reverend Rivers said, that the community is represented? I think that's about it. I know there's a lot of questions, but those are my concerns, and I'd like the Commissioners to have a chance to address those in their own way.

RON HASSON, NAACP:

Thank you, Dr. Thomas. Our next panelist is Catherine Henry. Catherine, would you introduce yourself?

CATHERINE HENRY, NAACP:

I'm Catherine Henry. I always mention that I'm the sister of Alice Huffman. I'm also a past broadcast station owner, and I remember the restrictions that we had as owners and what was required of us as owners. One of the things I noticed in the marketplace now is that you don't get too much feedback from the audience, and maybe it's because they don't know. But I don't think all the rights have been taken away from our citizenry because those licenses are issued to conglomerates now. There used to be a lot of independents, and that's almost a thing of the past. But the conglomerates have said that the marketplace regulates itself. If the marketplace doesn't hear from you, there is no way to regulate them. Most people don't know that you have to have public records that are available to the public. You can walk into a broadcast owner's property and ask them to see the public records and to see what they'd promised the Commission that they were going to do. And one of the things that makes a broadcast owner really nervous is when a citizen comes in and says, "May I see your public records?" Because they know you are looking for something, and they are afraid that you are going to apply to the Commission in terms of what is going on and what is not going on. And the [broadcasters] are obligated to show it to you. You look at what they promised to the Commission, and then you see if they are addressing the promises they made to the Commission. If they are not, then you take it a step further. The [broadcasters] don't want you to do that. I can tell you a whole lot, but I'm not going to hold up your time. But having been an owner, in an owner's seat, I know what it used to be. Now I don't know what it is now, and maybe we can find that out from the current Commissioners.

RON HASSON, NAACP:

Thank you, Catherine. Our next panelist if the Honorable Gwen Moore. I think you can still call her the Honorable Gwen Moore. Gwen brings a wealth of knowledge in that she sat in a number of committees in her career which dealt with FCC issues. Gwen, do you want to tell us

a little bit about yourself and comments you may have to offer to the Commissioners?

HON. GWEN MOORE, NAACP:

I served in the California State Legislature for sixteen years, and for twelve of those years I chaired the Utilities and Commerce Committee, which had jurisdiction over electric, telephone, and water industries, in addition to cable television. So I have some knowledge and regular interest in what happens with the FCC, and I have actually testified before the FCC at one point. Currently I serve as the Second Vice-President of the California State Confer