



## OC Human Relations

*Building community by fostering respect, resolving conflict and pursuing equality*

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### **Stand Up and Speak Out against Hate**

Irvine, Calif. – One in a series of “Listening Sessions” on African American life in Orange County is scheduled for 9am, Saturday, December 8, 2012 at Christ Our Redeemer (COR) Church. The Orange County Human Relations Commission shared the story of a Black family leaving Yorba Linda, CA because of a series of racially motivated crimes and incidents. Over the past two years a Black family experienced rocks shattering the windows of their house, 8 tires on their two cars being slashed, racial slurs yelled at a family member from passing cars, and acid pellets shot at their home. “These crimes were not reported in our annual hate crime report, and the Commission wants to go into the community with 'Listening Sessions' to hear additional stories of the African American experience in OC, including hate incidents or crimes that may not have been reported. Racist behavior and hate crimes are not tolerated in Orange County,” said Doug Wooley, OC Human Relations Commissioner.

Christ Our Redeemer AME Church, West Coast Christian Tabernacle, New Spirit Baptist Church, OC Human Relations Commission, OC NAACP, Dr. Thomas Parham, and the Thurgood Marshall Bar Association invite community members to share their stories, challenges, and celebrations of living in Orange County, CA 9:00am-11:00am, Saturday, December 8, 2012 at Christ Our Redeemer AME Church, Irvine, CA. “Orange County like other communities has a few misguided people, but we live in one of the most

diverse and safe communities in America,” says Rev. Mark Whitlock. Senior Minister of Christ Our Redeemer AME Church, Irvine, CA.

“OC Human Relations Commission invites you to share your personal experiences living in OC and we look forward to an ongoing dialog with the African American community over the next few months.” Stated Carol Turpen, Chair, OC Human Relations Commission

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### ***About Christ Our Redeemer***

*Christ Our Redeemer AME Church was founded on the University of California, Irvine campus with five people. Christ Our Redeemer AME Church is now the largest Black church in Orange County with more than 2300 members.*

### ***About OC Human Relations***

*Since 1971, OC Human Relations has worked to build bridges of understanding to promote a vision of our community where all people are valued and included and our diversity is realized as a source of strength. For more information, visit:*

*[www.ochumanrelations.org](http://www.ochumanrelations.org)*

## **About OC Human Relations Commission Listening Sessions**

### **Background**

The Orange County Human Relations Commission released the 2011 hate crime report in the Fall of 2012 showing a rise in hate crime targeting African Americans. This hate crime report, published by the Commission annually since 1991, showed that African Americans were once again the most frequently targeted victims of hate crime in Orange County, as they have been every year. And in spite of the fact that they represent only about 2% of the county population.

A group of concerned African Americans representing the National Association for Equality and Justice addressed the November 8, 2012 Commission meeting with their concerns about the plight of African Americans in Orange County.

In October an African American family led by two law enforcement officers relayed their story of hate crimes that hounded them so they moved out of Yorba Linda. They had rocks thrown through their windows in the middle of the night, all 8 tires on their two cars slashed, racial epithets yelled at their young adult son on his way to work, their first grader faced a group of kids saying to not let him play because he was Black, and finally they had acid pellets shot into their garage door damaging their car and window.

When this story was told, other stories began to be shared of disparate treatment, discrimination, and prejudice.

### **Commission Action**

The Board of Supervisors created the Commission to eliminate prejudice, intolerance and discrimination and included a strong mandate to educate the residents of Orange County about these issues. So when the Commission discussed this family's experience they adopted a variety of actions to address these concerns.

The first was to contact this family and offer assistance, support, and express the official feelings of the County of Orange of outrage that they were subjected to this bigotry.

Secondly the Commission decided to undertake a series of Listening Sessions to meet with African Americans at key institutions around Orange County to ask if others are experiencing similar incidents of hate and bigotry.

The Commission will then collect these stories and publish a paper about the status of the African American community of Orange County to educate the larger community.

This information can then be used to redouble preventative programs to eradicate hate crime, bigotry, discrimination and prejudice.

### **Listening Session Structure**

The Listening Session concept is that rather than to ask people to attend a Commission meeting, to have Commissioners go out to community institutions where people gather, and engage in conversations there to understand the issues. This may be augmented with research and testimony at Commission meetings, but is meant to reach some who may not take time to participate in such meetings. Additionally, the Commissioners get a wonderful insight into the valued institutions of the community that is being contacted.

In previous sessions with other communities, Commission representatives attended worship services and key personnel would invite attendees to meet with the Commission representatives immediately afterward in the Social Hall for round table discussions. Advanced promotions by the Pastor, newsletter, announcements, etc. would be handled by the hosting institution.

Commission representatives would come prepared with some questions and would listen to the stories of the community members who participated.

Those stories would be collected and recurring themes would be pulled out and included in a report that would try and tell a broader, more general story.

Finally the Commission would publish a report and take the information to every city council in Orange County as well as Board of Supervisors, school boards, libraries etc.