3120 Newark Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008

October 9, 2003

16970

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D.C. ZONING

Mr. Geoffrey Griffis
Chairman
DC Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Griffis:

I am writing to address a serious accusation, made during Tuesday's hearing on the case of NCRC, which cannot go unchallenged. During the testimony one supporter of NCRC's position charged that the community's opposition to the expansion is rooted in racism. The implication was that what the opponents object to is not the traffic or congestion, but the minority children the expansion might attract. As an African American living in on Newark Street, who opposes the expansion, I feel I must defend my neighbors against this outrageous charge.

When my husband and I and our two children moved here seven years ago, we were not just welcomed by this community, but embraced by it. The neighbors came forward immediately with hospitality and offers of help in getting settled. Since then they have become friends, whom we can depend on for anything. And we are not a "token" example or an isolated case. This neighborhood has a history of diversity that goes back more than 30 years.

I find it absurd that we as a community should have to cite our diversity "credentials." But in the face of this charge we apparently do. We are honored to have as our neighbor Marion Wright Edelman, the African American woman who founded the Children's Defense Fund. She has dedicated her life to protecting the rights of children---including children of color. African American artist Lou Stovall and his wife and son live across the street from the Edelmans. A block away, on the corner is another African American family. And more than one neighborhood family has adopted bi-racial children. There has never been anything but total acceptance for us. In addition, John Eaton, the nearby public school where many of us have chosen to send our children, has been officially named the most diverse public school in the city. The neighbors, even those with no children at Eaton, show their support with financial contributions and volunteer time.

There are only two reasons why the supporters of the NCRC would present this flagrant misrepresentation of the facts. Either they are truly misinformed and decided to play the "race card" without doing their homework. Or they are engaged in a cynical strategy to capitalize on one the most emotional and divisive issues facing this country. Whatever the reason, they have shown themselves to be willing to say anything to get their way, thereby casting doubt on the rest of their testimony.

Sincerely,

Royal Kennedy Rodgers

Mrs. Royal Kennedy Rodgers

BZA
Case No. 16970
Exhibit No. 245

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16970
EXHIBIT NO.245