Susan B. Taylor
3301 Highland Place, NW
Washington, DC 20008

16970

Dear Mr. Sanchez, October 10, 20003

My name is Susan Taylor. I live at 3301 Highland Place, NW, on the northwest corner of 33rd and Highland. I write to you because of the remarks you made about race at last Tuesday's BZA hearing. I believe they will change the relationship between NCRC and the neighborhood in a way that the zoning controversy never could. I first learned about NCRC's plans to expand from Alexa Halaby. She called me and asked if she could describe the project. I invited Alexa and Susan Piggott to my home for coffee. I remember saying to Alexa and Susan that I thought NCRC could gain the support of neighbors, but that it would first have to solve its traffic and parking problems. I suggested that NCRC and neighbors form a joint committee, perhaps even hire a traffic consultant together, to puzzle out the problem. Within two weeks I learned that NCRC had already contacted its own traffic consultant, filed an application with the Cleveland Park Historical Society Architectural Review Committee and intended to start construction in six months. I thought that NCRC was wrong for a number of reasons.

The zoning regulations contain a standard intended to protect residents from adverse impact caused by neighboring institutions. I believe that NCRC's proposed expansion violates this standard. NCRC says it does not. I have spent nearly two years educating myself about zoning regulations and land use. But during the six NCRC hearings at the BZA, NCRC seems more interested in conducting some kind of contest about who does more "good works", NCRC or the neighbors. And last Tuesday I listened as you deteriorated the debate even further. You suggested that opposition to NCRC's expansion project, as currently proposed, exists because neighbors don't want "outsiders of color" driving on their streets.

I have been awake the better part of three nights pondering that thought. It has taken me some time to realize why it has upset me so much. But I think I have figured it out. So I will share some of my thoughts with you since you opened a door that reaches into the deepest regions of what it means to be human. My youngest child is bi-racial. Much of his future depends on things that he can control. But a large part of his experience will hinge on things outside of his control. One enormous issue is, obviously, race. A critical reason I chose to live in this neighborhood is because the community is made up of people who resist stereotyping and simply support one another. I have never, ever, caught a whiff of any bigotry in any of the hundreds of conversations I've ever had with any of my neighbors, including conversations pertaining to NCRC. The only moment I detected bigotry and stereotyping, was the moment you suggested that opposition to NCRC's plan was based on race.

BZA
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Exhibit No. 246

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16970
EXHIBIT NO.246

You do not know me Mr. Sanchez. You do not know my husband or my daughter or my son. You do not know most of my neighbors. Yet you sat a public hearing and suggested that all of us who oppose NCRC's current proposed expansion are racists. Surely you cannot be aware of the character of the people you accuse. You must not know Laine Kaufman, who spent a year of her life raising $200,000 to renovate a public playground and who is on the board of Big Brothers Big Sisters. Do you know Bill Ince, who has served on the Board of The House of Mercy for nine years? A man of your stature in the Hispanic community must know that The House Of Mercy provides the facility for the Rosemont Day Care Center in Mt. Pleasant. How about neighbors on Newark Street who also oppose the current application? Do you think its possible that Marion Wright Edelman, founder and director of the Children's Defense Fund, opposes NCRC's expansion plans because she has an aversion to "outsiders of color" coming into her neighborhood? Not all of my neighbors are on the front line of raising civic awareness. But most who are not support those who do with passion and generosity. I do not know which is worse. The idea that you did your home work about this neighborhood and still chose to make your remarks, or the idea that you never bothered to learn your facts and made such a damaging statement. Neighborhood opposition is based solely on the problems NCRC's expansion presents. It has nothing to do with skin color.

Your remarks indicate to me that you believe the neighborhood opposes NCRC as it currently exists. Nothing could be further from the truth. Many neighbors have at one time or another had an active relationship with NCRC. Several sent their children to NCRC. Some have taught at the school. Some have served on its Board. The relationship between neighbors and NCRC was much more than mutual tolerance, the neighbors actually helped *finance* the school! They raised money by opening their homes to the public. It is a shame that relations between NCRC and its neighbors are now marred with acrimony and mistrust. But what you said last Tuesday, Mr. Sanchez, was wrong. I hope you will realize the damage you have caused and will reconsider your remarks.

Sincerely,

Susan Taylor

Susan Taylor

Cc: Mr. Geoffrey Griffis
Mr. Curtis Etherly, Jr., Esq.
Mr. Anthony Hood
Mr. David Zaidain