

# Parents of Watts



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To the Little Hoover Commission:

As requested, I am submitting I in writing the content of my testimony that I will give at the public hearing on November 21, 2002.

First, we have found that most social workers are not sensitive to the community, are not familiar with the culture of that community, and are often afraid of or have negative attitudes about the families they serve. County Social Workers need to be trained for the community where they are being assigned; they need to become knowledgeable about and familiar with the community and culture of the people they serve.

Second, Foster Parents are volunteering their time, the money they receive is for the children. An incentive is needed to draw qualified families into the foster care system, for example, tax write offs at the end of the year, or a HUD housing program similar to that for teachers and police officers where the foster parents could receive a 50% discount off the purchase price of their primary home. This would also benefit the foster children when they have a better and more stable home to live in.

Third, and most important, when a child is brought into the foster care system, the focus needs to be on that child, that child's family, and the home where that child is being placed. Focusing on these three areas will help us to answer the most crucial question that we must address. That question is "How do we avoid losing children in the system?!?"

Answer: Assign county social workers to specific Foster Family Agencies a geographical area, similar to the way that LAUSD school district Superintendent has assigned assistant superintendents to mini districts.

Each Foster Family Agency should be responsible for having it's own parenting teacher(s) on site. LAUSD adult education division will furnish teachers at no cost to the FFA at no cost, the agency only needs to provide the space.

The County Social Worker, the Foster Family Agency Social Worker, the Parenting Teacher, and a psychologist should form an evaluation and ongoing support team for the entire case.

A CSW assignment to a FFA team where the team has ongoing contact with the children, the parents, and the foster family will assure that all children are accounted for at all times.

In closing I would like to reiterate that if we start a program designed to take a CSW, assign them to an FFA, and have that CSW develop and nurture relationships with the children in placement, the providers, the parents and the community. The advantage to this is the CSW will be more knowledgeable about the children and their needs; this will offer a better tracking system so that children will not fall through the cracks or get lost in the system.

Thank you for your time and I am looking forward to meeting you at the hearing.

Sincerely,

*Sweet Alice Harris*

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Executive Director

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