

Transcript:

Office of the Department of Education and Labor Meeting with The Hitting Stops Here! and Parents and Teachers Against Violence in Education

**November 18, 2009, 10am PST
1333 Willow Pass Road, Concord, California**

In attendance: Barbara Johnson, Team member of Dept. of Education and Labor Chairman George Miller, Paula Flowe, Executive Director of The Hitting Stops Here!, San Jose City College instructor and advisor to an Associated Student club, American SAFEPASS (Student Alliance For Education in Peaceful American Schools), Mr. Jordan Riak, Executive Director of Parents and Teachers Against Violence in Education (PTAVE), Daniel Perez, San Jose City College student, Nery Perez, parent of Daniel Perez and student, San Jose City College, Mrs. Y.T. (her name is being kept anonymous due to current litigation involving her daughter, having special needs, who was recently abused by a school teacher who has a history of student abuse and who is still teaching), Renetta Sainz, San Jose City College student, Lovell Turner, San Jose City College student, Ria Hagen, San Jose City College student, Cassandra Harper, San Jose City College student, T. A. Hunter, concerned California citizen

The entire meeting lasted approx. 50 minutes.

Paula: So, you know what we can do, Jordan, once you're all settled and everything we'll just introduce ourselves and then just go on and get started.

Jordan: I'm all set to go. I'm set when you are.

Paula: Okay, great. So, what we could do is just say who we are and why we're here so that we can have Ms. Barbara know...and so, My name is Paula Flowe. I'm the Executive Director of The Hitting Stops Here!, a campaign for having corporal punishment banned in US schools and the use of harmful seclusions and restraints and all forms of abusive discipline that is being targeted at our American school children. So our goal is to have that banned and replaced with proven positive discipline models that are more befitting to the 21st century and that have our children become leaders, independent thinkers and problem solvers. You know, what everybody wants for their child.

Barbara: Sure

Paula: School needs to be a place where they feel safe and thrive. So, that's who I am.

Barbara: Okay.

Paula: And, this is

Paula/Renetta: Renetta

Renetta: Sainz, and I'm here to back up Ms. Paula

Barbara: And you're from where?

Renetta: San Jose

Paula: City College. She's a student at the college.

Jordan: I'm Jordan Riak. I'm Executive Director of Parents and Teachers Against Violence in Education. I've worked on this issue for over 30 years. I'm responsible for the legislation in California that banned the paddle about 25 years ago. I wrote that bill for Assemblyman Samuel Pharr. Before that I worked in other places including New South Wales Australia to get corporal punishment abolished.

Barbara: Okay.

Lovell: My name is Lovell. I'm a student in Miss Paula's class and I'm here to back her up.

Barbara: You're a student where?

Lovell/Paula: San Jose City College.

Barbara: I was there too. I was there a long time ago. You probably weren't born yet. (Laughter.)

Paula: Were you a resident of San Jose at one time?

Barbara: Yes.

Ria: My name is Ria Hagen. I also go to San Jose City College. I have a brother who was abused in the school system.

Barabara: Okay.

Cassandra: And I'm Cassandra Harper and I'm in Paula Flowe's class too. I'm here to support her too.

Barbara: You teach at City College ?

Paula: Yes. I'm an instructor at San Jose City College. We actually have a club there called American SAFEPASS and they are all members of it. It stands for Student Alliance For Education in Peaceful American Schools.

Barbara: Okay.

Y.T.: My name is Y.T. and I am so nervous, so I just want to let you know that up front. My husband is the one that does all the public speaking (Laughter.) But he's deployed right now.

My daughter was the victim of abuse. She's a special needs child and her bus driver actually turned in a special education teacher for physically abusing Mary, our daughter, and this went on for about a two month period. Another special education teacher, four cafeteria workers and another educator corroborated the allegations but the assistant district attorney decided not to proceed because it was not a broken bone or sexual abuse. Unfortunately for Mary, and granted she wasn't paddled like everyone else is here for, but I still feel I need to be here because what this teacher, the only thing that she's taught my daughter is if you want something done, you should hit, pinch and pull. And that's what she does to me now. And we are paying out of pocket what Tri-care doesn't cover for in-home behavior therapy and it's ruined her life.

Barbara: What school district?

Y.T.: X County. At XX High school .

Barabara: At XX.?

Kimberly: Yes, in X County .

Paula: And I just want to interject, thank you (to Y.T.). Cassandra, if you don't mind letting Ms. Barbara know about, just a little bit of your occurrence, what grade you were in when that...

Cassandra: Oh, I was like in, first grade, well, I was like in second grade and I lived in Amarillo, Texas and I went to elementary school and we used to go to the principal's office or we used to get paddled on our hands like... that (demonstrates).

Paula: Yea, and we've talked about this in class and how these things, just as you said (to Y.T.), it affects your life forever and, you know, I don't know if anybody's here who hasn't had an experience in an American school...

[Daniel Perez, student from San Jose City College, entered with his mother; seats being adjusted at the conference table.]

Paula: We were just doing introductions and we were just talking about how the affects of school abuse last forever, basically, and so we all are here now. We want to talk about having corporal punishment ended. And I know that Y.T. mentioned that, we're all here for corporal punishment regarding paddling, but we're actually here for the fact that we want corporal punishment banned, we want the use of harmful seclusions and restraints banned, we want all forms of school abuse in American schools banned and replaced with proven positive discipline models in education. And we don't think that is asking for a lot and we think its all possible and we think that it's just going to make America, what it claims to be, "the beautiful" and that cannot happen when we allow our children to be abused.

I, again, I think everybody in here has been abused by an American school employee and if not maybe one or two of us have not been. And this is a huge issue, these pictures, even if I said not one other word and all I did was say, Ms. Barbara (holding up the wooden board and photographs of 12 bruised buttocks within 24 inches of Ms. Barbara's view), this needs to stop, the meeting is over as far as I'm concerned. You know, this needs to stop. And we have a fine president in the office who, if his kids came home with anything that looked like this, it would be an issue of "national security" and yet teachers are being paid by our tax dollars to ruin lives.

I've been an instructor since January 1980;

I'm coming up on 30 years of teaching. I've never hit a child in my life and I've had a great success rate with them so it's not like it's necessary. And it's not like we don't have options that are encouraging and that have children thrive. And we recognize, Mr. Chairman George Miller as the man who is the head of the legislative branch, in so far as our American schools and our territories are concerned.

I get stories from parents from our beautiful islands and these children live in paradise, and they're all suffering from being battered. So, we know that Dept. Chairman George Miller is a huge key player in bringing this "school terrorism" to an end. And so, that's primarily why we are here. We want it brought to an end immediately. Immediately. That's the word here.

So, does anybody else want to add anything just yet?

Jordan: I have a statement that takes about three minutes for me to read and when you've got that slot open I'll begin.

Barbara: Go ahead.

Jordan : The statement is also in print so if you forget what I say, you can read it at your leisure. The title is, "*Sowing the Seeds of Sodomasochism.*"

The United States stands virtually alone among developed nations in allowing schoolchildren to be assaulted and battered by teachers. Polite terms for the practice are "corporal punishment" and "paddling." Specifically, it is the battering of a child on the buttocks with a flat wooden board. Fear, pain and humiliation, intended or not, are by-products of the act. Corporally punished children are often bruised, sometimes injured, and psychological harm almost inevitably results from such mistreatment.

Most Americans are unaware that this happens legally in the schools of 20 states. The number of recorded incidents hovers around 1/4 million per year, give or take. Serious discussion of the subject is taboo. The hitters refer to it in joking terms mainly when they are in each other's company. Victims keep silent through shame.

Corporal punishment, or paddling, or spanking or whatever else one wants to call it is also sexual assault. Were an adult struck with the same instrument on the same area of the anatomy, the perpetrator would face serious criminal charges involving prison time if convicted. But when it's done to a child, it's often characterized as "just a friendly little tap on the butt to get her attention" or "a pop on the bottom to let him know you're serious."

The process I've just described is only part of the story. It's time we examined the other part - the part that is typically left out of polite conversation. Spanking causes intense stimulation of the buttocks - a major erogenous zone. As a consequence, spanked children are at risk of having their sexual development permanently deranged. That's good for the pornography and prostitution industries, but it's not good for children.

When Washington lawmakers are asked about school corporal punishment, they say it's a subject to be addressed at the state level. When state legislators are asked about it, they graciously defer to the local districts. "Decisions of this nature should reflect community sentiment," they advise. When school districts are asked, they are apt to respond, "We are only doing what the state allows. It's perfectly legal. What's your problem? This isn't California, you know, where kids are spoiled rotten by an overdose of mother love." In this well-practiced ritual of duck-'n'-dodge, each party shirks its responsibility to do what's right, and comes out smelling sweet.

The familiar maxim associated with data analysis applies perfectly, I believe, to the education of children:

"GARBAGE IN, GARBAGE OUT."

Until educators are cured of the hitting habit, society will continue to reap the whirlwind. Paddling schools will remain models for legalized child abuse setting a dangerous standard for the community. And every year we will watch with dismay as a new crop of graduates to adulthood puts into practice some of the worst lessons from childhood.

Now is the time to apply the brakes to the hitting habit. Now is the time to bring schoolchildren safely into range of the normal protections of law that apply to all other citizens.



Sowing the seeds of sadomasochism

Jordan: I was packing up to come here today and I saw something that I'd almost forgotten to bring. This is a picture of a boy who was injured in a Texas school and I have three significant excerpts from the newspaper article:

- Justin's mother said, "You could see blood coming through his underwear."
- Justin's doctor said the injuries were consistent with traumatic injury.
- The Texas Dept. of Education said, "Corporal punishment is allowed. If it's done in a measured nonviolent way, it's not considered abuse."

There is the unmistakable aroma of "duck and dodge" about that.

Paula: Absolutely.

Jordan: You all have copies of this and most everyone at this table knows Paula Flowe and are in constant contact with her and, of course, my contact information is available on all the literature and I can be reached as well. Thank you very much.

Paula: Thank you, Jordan. I just want to ask Daniel a question. Daniel is a student who has no verbal language and was abused by an American school teacher in his high school years. He is actually going to be 25 next month. And I just want to ask you, Daniel, would you like to say something? He uses a Litewriter.

Daniel: Voice of Litewriter: "I want the hitting to stop."

Paula: Daniel also came to my home last night, his mom, Nery, who is an angel of a mother brought him over to my house last night and I asked Daniel a lot of questions because he wanted to communicate but because of the, you know, it's a bit cumbersome to write a whole letter using this, so we created, we had a conversation and a lot of yes no questions and answers and we created a letter that he is satisfied with that I'd like to read, and this is a message from Daniel. Okay

Daniel. I'm going to read your letter now.
Okay? All right.

November 17, 2009

Dear Chairman George Miller,

My name is Daniel Perez. I was born with autism and I have no verbal language. I am a twenty-four year old man about to turn twenty-five in December. I am intelligent just as most people having autism are, though our society often dismisses us as being mentally delayed or unaware of what is going on in the "real world."

When I was in high school, my school teacher assaulted me in a way that has changed my life forever. If you are reading this letter during a school hour in the US, an American school child, is being assaulted by an American government paid school teacher just as I was. I know this because I learned about the physical and sexual abuse going on in our American schools at an alarming rate from three recent reports which document widespread school abuse in America. The May 19, 2009 Government Accountability Office (GAO) investigative report, ordered by your office, tells all about how children with disabilities, particularly like mine, are being abused in American schools, some leading to fatalities.

I am appalled that our government and those in power to bring this "American school terrorism" to an end are turning a blind eye to it.

As a board member of The Hitting Stops Here! and as a concerned US citizen and adult having experienced American school abuse, I am here today to tell you that these harmful forms of abuse must stop now. I believe that you are in power to bring this sanctioned and lawless barbarism in our American schools to an end. I will not stop campaigning with The Hitting Stops Here!, bringing this social-ill to the attention of fellow Americans across this nation until it is over.

Will you extend to all of our American school children their 14th amendment US citizen right to be protected from harm immediately? If so, by when? If not, why not? The hitting and all forms of assault can and must stop here!

Thank you,

Daniel Perez, SJCC Student and member of
American SAFEPASS (Student Alliance For Education in Peaceful American Schools)
nerydan@aol.com

And it has his email address at the bottom.

Barbara: Thanks. I'll make sure that gets back to DC.

Paula: Very good. Very good. And I want to also read a message but I wanted to give anybody else an opportunity to speak at this time and just say how you feel about the issue of children being beaten in schools and the discrimination. It's primarily minorities, children with special needs, Indians. Black boys are the primary targets, pipelined into prison at a rate that just is creating the swiftest growing slave plantation, "indoor slave plantation" in this country, in fact larger probably than the original slave plantations were in the south. And I was talking to my student, Lovell, and Lovell is an awesome guy; I'm training some of my students to become positive discipline leaders and he's a father of, I think, three children...

Lovell: Two

Paula: Two. And he is going to be one of our trainers...

Barbara: Good.

Paula: ...and he was just saying how, "You know, I can't even walk down the street without someone clutching their purse. We are so immediately," you know, he was referring to black boys, black men, "thought of as we're bad." So it's almost like there is this inherent thing in black boys that says, "I need to get my butt whup'd!" and too many teachers are all too happy to do it. And I was reading the record concerning the state of South Carolina. It almost brought tears to my eyes. We are, as a black race, a percentage by maybe 17% or some smaller number of black students (compared to white students) in the state of South Carolina and when they added up the spankings that took place in the last years, that small number made up 72% of the school beatings in the entire state.

72%. And they're the "smaller number" so this is straight up racial institution...I'm sorry, "institutionalized racism." There is nothing, there is nothing, there's no mystery here. And we got like 300 years of this on the field (waving the paddle at Barbara) and I mean, it's not like Asian kids are coming over here getting whup'd or kids coming over here from the Middle East and getting whup'd in our schools. They're whupping the ancestors of our, the American slaves that were here, we're *still* being whup'd. We ran from the "slave whip," we ran from the lynchman's "noose" and now we're trying to run from a paddle. And I believe that if black boys and girls were not being whup'd, then nobody would be getting whup'd because they don't treat any race in this country more unkindly than black boys and black men. It's just how it is and how it's been.

Jordan: Appropriate to what Paula is saying, we all have this, it shows a slave woman on the ground being beaten by a slave master and two members of the community watching and enjoying themselves.

Paula: And the thing is, hold that picture up again, Jordan, the way the community is observing that...

Jordan: It's entertainment!

Paula: ...but not only that, the way that those two people are watching it, it's almost like a symbol of how our country is observing it. I mean, they're just looking at it like, "Oh yeah, she's getting her butt whup'd; you know, we see this all the time." I mean if you have 72% of the black boys out of all the children being whup'd in South Carolina, that's probably how they look at it in South Carolina. That's probably how they would look at it like, "...hummm, another black kid getting whup'd."

It's enough already! And Chairman George Miller, I mean, I've gone to his website. That man has all kinds of accolades and all kinds of degrees and this is an educated man. You cannot be educated and think this is okay because if it were okay, it would be going on in the finest schools starting with our president's children.

And the only thing black children have ever gotten a greater dose of something that is considered “good for you” has been whupin’s. This is the *only thing we ever get more of* that everyone says, “Oh no, it’s good for them. They need it. They need it!” Well, why is it the only thing that we get the largest amount of that is purported to be “good for a child?” Whup’ns.

So you know, I think that it is reasonable for us to be able, for us to be able to get up from this meeting after I read my letter and recognize that the hitting needs to stop here! The duct taping needs to stop here, the bungee cording, the ropes and all the shoving into closets and crawl spaces, all of that needs to stop here! And we want George Miller to know that we understand his role as a leader and as the Chairman of the Dept. of Education that this is his J-O-B to lead this country and if he’s got this thing called “No Child Left Behind” if this thing (holding up the paddle) doesn’t leave your behind “BEHIND,” then I don’t know what else does because that’s not going to happen to any president’s child (pointing to the bruised buttocks photos) and we need him to stop it immediately. This needs to stop!

Before I read my letter does anybody else want to make a comment.

Y.T.: Just a quick one.

Paula: Go right ahead.

Y.T.: In catechism Sister Beverly hit my hands many times. I remember that. But along with our friend here, my daughter is also autistic. She has a syndrome that is degenerative and she’s outlived her life expectancy. When people look at her because she is autistic my husband likes to say she’s mentally retarded but she’s not stupid and she is like I said, she’s learned this behavior, you know, and for her to push other kids, hit other kids, it’s because her teacher did it to her.

Barbara: And she’s in high school now?

Y.T.: She is. She’s 16. This happened in January

when the teacher was turned into the...when the child abuse detective was notified it was January 20.

Barbara: Was that the first time?

Y.T.: For this teacher?

Barbara: No, for your daughter.

Y.T.: Yes.

Barbara: Where is she now?

Y.T.: She's at XX (high school) where that teacher was suspended until the summer and they brought her back to another center where they have kids who go after high school to post graduate training. She is still teaching.

And Detective X actually told me that another boy the year before was abused by her but his mother was in alcohol drug rehab and she never pursued anything so they just moved him to another classroom. So, that paved the way for my daughter to be next when we were stationed here at the military base.

Barbara: Is she doing all right now?

Y.T.: Well no. She is still hitting and pushing but we have a behavior therapist that comes everyday after school from 3:00 till 5:00 to try to help us.

Barbara: But she's in a safe spot now?

Kimberly: Yes.

Paula: I just want to add that first of all, I commend you for immediately taking care of your child but most places where this occurs is in poor rural America and unfortunately these children don't have parents who can have that sort of therapy waiting for them when they come home from school. And they grow up, and even with that therapy there is damage that is irreparable, and to mom; I mean just hearing about it, it damages everybody. When we know this is happening,

it damages everything, everybody.

Y.T.: She used to be a little sweetie. Now she's a big girl. She use to be loving; kids use to flock to her and now anybody that invades her space, immediately she doesn't ask any questions because she is "verbal-less" it's hard to understand her. She doesn't ask questions; it's just swatting, swatting. There's a little boy, Kevin that has "downs" that wants to be her friend so bad. He doesn't understand that "personal space" and he likes to hug and she hits him all the time. You know, and they call me..."Well, what do you want me to do?" "We need you to come and pick her up." "No, I'm not going to come pick her up." I want to say... You created this "Frankenstein!"

I don't want her to hurt people. I want people to like her again.

Barbara: Are you getting help through Travis?

Y.T.: I called the family advocacy. There wasn't much they could do but I did talk to the behavior therapist at the military base and she, obviously, can't go into the school. This is a VA "habilitative" therapist and we're paying for them. We're getting an extended health care option. But we're paying for it and these therapists are coming out and actually next, after the Thanksgiving break they're going to go into the school and observe and support and try to help us figure out how to handle her and how to turn back this behavior.

You know, hitting Mary has never helped. You know, spanking her, I've always believed you have to get kids "where they live." Our nineteen year old if he did something bad you took away his cell phone or video games. Get them "where they live." Hitting Mary just says you were bad, I'm going to hit you. Now if I do something that Mary doesn't like, she's going to turn around and hit me. I just think there are better options. Take away something they like. Don't allow them to go on their community trip with the other kids if they cannot act appropriately. You know. I mean like, I said, I was spanked. My parents

didn't "spare the rod." Sister Beverly liked to hit us with a ruler, but I grew up not to abuse Mary because I didn't want to do that to my kids.

Jordan: Can I interject one point. We're all talking about a reform that has to take place simultaneously from the bottom up and the top down. We want to see society change exactly as it changed with regards to husbands beating wives, with regards to people with dark skin being able to sit anywhere they want in a restaurant. We've all seen that change and I've lived through that. I went to school in the segregated south. I remember lynchings. So I've watched rapid change relative to time and history. But this reform that we're asking for has to begin with the schools because they represent "authority," they represent "professionals who are trained." Think about this. Think about one thing. We've all been to hairdressers or barbers and you see a certificate on the wall that says before this person is allowed, legally, to put a pair of scissors to your hair or to give you a manicure they have been certified; they have been trained tested and certified. There is no profession I can think of that says you can put your hands on somebody in a way that hurts, that's potentially dangerous without training. I have written to the teachers' colleges in the 20 paddling states in search of a teacher's college that has a course that teaches perspective teachers how to hit children with that paddle (pointing) and they respond as though I'm crazy. Of course they don't teach it.

Think about that. It must begin with the schools because they represent authority. They are the "standard of excellence." They are looked up to and when you tell a parent, "Don't beat your baby" and they say, "Well, schools do it. It must be right. The teacher is trained and educated. They paddle kids in school. What's the problem?" We want to remove that rationalization and that justification for child abuse. Thank you.

Paula: Thank you, Jordan . So, basically, I just want to finish this letter. I do want to add one thing, Jordan. I want to commend Jordan. Jordan has been working on this now 31 years;

I think last year was his 30th anniversary that he has been working to have safe American schools and I have been a partner of his for the last three years and we have worked diligently, nonstop, no vacation, nothing. And it is our honor to be here and to have the privilege to let Chairman George Miller know what we think, how we feel and what we expect of him. And, I just want to thank you for this opportunity for all of us to speak, and we do wait in anticipation for him to be a man of integrity and to do what is right for our American school children.

Barbara: Can I ask how your organization is interacting with the states? There are 20 states that still allow. Are you interacting with those states?

Jordan : We interact on an informal level. When anyone is interested in the issue, they find Paula or Jordan within minutes. “Google” brings you to her or me and we’re not the only ones there are others that we work with. On an individual basis, the people who need the information, the tools that we provide, find us instantly, and the people who don’t want to know about what we are doing avoid us with a passion.

Terry Hunter: I’m just an interested citizen and what I have learned, I just want to let you know that Paula has traveled to these states and has had campaigns going on and she has talked to school districts and different people that are in charge of their schools and she has put a lot into that so there is, she has had conversations and connections just like she’s having with you right now.

Paula: I’ve actually campaigned 16 times. I’ve gone to Washington twice. I’ve gone to Mississippi, Texas, Tennessee, North Carolina six times, Texas four times, Georgia. I’ve had meetings with school boards and just like WEB Dubois, during the lynching era, he went to see FDR and he said to him, “We need you to help these men who,” as Mr. Riak said, lived during that era, and he said to him, “You need to help

us protect our men. They are killing them by the thousands.” And he (FDR) said to him, “You go out and do something about it.” And when I have gone to board meetings from every single state, I’ve gotten the same thing, “You go out there. You tell the parents.” So even though I’ve “gone out there” and I’ve gone on 16 trips already, the response has been the same. “You do something!”

Barbara: Have you’ve talked to electives there? You know part of what happens when you have layered jurisdictions issues, California has jurisdiction over the policies for the schools; what we encourage people to do, especially if you have networks, if you have friends in other districts, that you contact them and have them have meetings with their electives just as you’re having with me...

Paula: Well, see the thing is, is that honestly, we’re really, that’s really not something that we want to do. We are actually here because Dept. of Ed. and Labor Chairman George Miller is a man who is “the man” over education and really there’s no reason for a conversation with different states. This is abuse. It is criminal behavior. It is a violation of their 14th amendment right. It is a crime, and it needs to stop and so...

Barbara: I understand. I understand.

Paula: But to go from state to state to state that’s not what our goal is. Our goal is for Mr. Chairman George Miller to take responsibility for having no “child left behind.” And we need him and Arne Duncan, and the President and Michelle Obama or whoever needs to get together on this issue, we are not going to bounce around; we are saying that this is within his ability.

Barbara: No, I’m not saying to bounce around.

Paula: Okay. All right.

Barbara: What I am saying is that networks work with advocates in all different areas of the country. So if you have a network, if you have a group of folks, give me a state that...

Paula: Well, all 20 of them.

Jordan: Mississippi.

Paula: Mississippi.

Jordan: Louisiana.

Barbara: So if you have folks as committed as you are, in Mississippi...

Paula: We don't. We don't. We are "it" right here. And we want Dept. of Ed. Chairman...

Barbara: Do you know why that is? Why is that?

Paula: Because it's not rich white children who are being abused. It's poor, it's black, it's Native American...

Barbara: So there are 20 states.

Paula: Yeah, that are breaking the law.

Barbara: Right.

Paula: Okay, so it needs to stop. They're breaking the law.

Barbara: That's a considerable, I mean there are 30 that aren't.

Paula: Right

Barbara: There are 20 states...

Paula: Well, I want you to keep in mind that these states are, just like I was commending her (acknowledging Y.T.), I said I'm glad you can have therapy for your child because where this occurs, primarily is in rural areas where parents are uneducated, where parents are poor. This is not happening to "our children" (gesturing to meeting participants). You know that's not going to happen to an educated parent's child, in general.

Barbara: All of Mississippi is not uneducated and poor.

Paula: The bottom line is that when you look at the statistics, which I'm surprised that it sounds like you're not as familiar; maybe that would be something that Mr. George Miller would be familiar with, but when you look at the statistics they point to, again, black boys, black girls, Latinos, Indians, and special ed. in poor areas.

Barbara: I understand that but you have parents here, two who are white.

Paula: That's why I said primarily; I didn't say all.

Barbara: Alright. I understand. I'm not arguing and I understand. What I am telling you is that I have been with George since 1987. So we've had, you know there's been a ton of issues that come through and what "works" in advocacy, whether you're talking about global peace, whether you're talking about education, or how the VA works or how Social Security works or anything, when you're talking about advocacy, the wider the "net" the more effective your advocacy is.

Paula: I understand that. Our "net" is right here and this is a crime and we don't think that we need any more than a responsible Dept. of Education leader to have that crime stopped, okay, because that's really what we need right now and so...

Barbara: Well I'm just trying to offer you a wealth of information here.

Paula: Well, it's not working.

Terry Hunter: I'd like to say that when I first met Paula a couple of years ago one of the things that she was doing, if you remember this (gesturing to Paula), we were given assignments of names of all of the state legislators and getting the department heads and that type of thing so that we were, she was moving in that direction as far as trying to get this information out and then when she did take those trips, there were parents that had abused kids, they were going to school board meetings. So I just want everyone to understand that it is not just something that she has done here but, remember,

she has taken 16 trips, she's met parents and people and have contacted legislators.

Barbara: Yes. That's an important piece of it.

Terry: Right, so I just want you to know.

Paula: And not only that, Jordan has contacted repeatedly, repeatedly every legislator ... they all know this is going on.

Jordan: ...members of legislations, state boards of education,...

Barbara: What's the answer that they give you?

Paula: Those pictures (pointing to photos of bruised buttocks).

Jordan: Well, I have on my website, there are several. I did several campaigns all based roughly on the same formula. One, I wrote to boards of education, board members, rather, superintendents of education for the states of up to 20 paddling states. And I asked each one, can you... we're trying to find a teacher's college that gives instruction in the correct way to apply corporal punishment. And then I put all the lists on the website. You can see the list of all who I wrote; their names, their addresses and a copy of the letter they were sent. Not email, it was sent "snail" mail. First class postage on each one and then I put after their name and address, I put "no reply," "received to date," or a reply in red and then if you click on the link, you could read their answer to me. I say that, out of the 20 I might have gotten four replies three out of the four would have been "polite evasions." When I did that mailing campaign, I had one positive reply and that was from the Superintendent of Education in Louisiana who wrote to me. His secretary wrote to me and said, "I agree with what's in your letter. We are working on it now. We attempted to introduce a bill and it failed." So, that was like a positive response. Most of them ignored it or evaded it.

Now, something that you have to be clear about this, because this is a taboo issue, this is a forbidden topic, most people

- a) don't know about it
- b) would rather not know about it; feel awkward talking about it.

But people that you see gathered here around your table, as a general rule, they are people who have been personally touched by it and their sense of outrage has been ignited because either it was done to them and they remember it or it was done to their children or is being done to their child. Once people are ignited to this issue, alerted to it because they have been personally touched, our job, Paula's and mine is to put in their hands the right "weapons of action." Our booklets, our leaflets our websites, our information. This lady sitting at your right (Y.T.), she was, this will remain an issue for her for the rest of her life. Correct me if I'm wrong. No one can turn the "switch" and make this go away for you. You have been enlightened to it because your own daughter was a victim. You're never going to forget this and you will always be an activist.

That's how we recruit people and that's not easy because, as I said before, this is a forbidden topic. People want to avoid it.

I have talked to people, intelligent informed people who have children in the school system and they'll say, "But Mr. Riak, this doesn't happen any more in Missouri." And I say, "Oh, have you asked your child? When your child comes home from school today ask her do they paddle kids in your school." And the parent then discovers that they didn't know it was going on.

I've had parents tell me, "I was not aware that this was happening until I saw my child sitting at the dinner table and couldn't sit properly and I asked him what was wrong?"

I had a mother tell me her son came home from school, he was taking a shower, she brought his clothes into the bathroom for him to change and she saw marks on his legs, and she said, "What happened to you? How did you get those marks on your legs?" He said, "I feel off of my skateboard." And you know when your child is not telling the truth, you can tell. You get the

flavor. When something...you're not getting the whole story. The mother was suspicious about the skateboard excuse. She called the dad in and the dad said, "What happened. How did you get those marks?" The boy started to cry, you see, and he said he was paddled at school. Why was he crying? Because he believes he did something...he was "bad." The teacher hit him because he was "bad" and thought he would get hit again by mom or dad. The mother did not find out that her son was assaulted and battered and injured except by accident. If she had not walked in and seen those bruises he would have never told her. That's the issue that we're dealing with here.

Y.T.: The bus driver was the one that turned her in. We couldn't figure out why Mary's behavior was doing so poorly at home and hind sight is 20-20. I wouldn't have known. She kept telling us that the teacher was mean. We thought she was just making her do her work. I didn't know. I'm from Chicago . I lived the last eight years in Tennessee and moved out here last year to the military base. And Mary's whole personality has changed.

Jordan : And you learned about my organization indirectly, and I don't know who it is...

Y.T.: Detective X. It's somebody on your list, well I'll tell you later, but Detective X, the child abuse detective that's been working with us, who's a wonderful man, he is, he got me "hooked-up" with an advocate that's going to go to the hearing with us the day before Thanksgiving.

Barbara: That's with Vacaville ?

Y.T.: Yes. He's a child abuse detective. So, it's not with the police department its more like for family with domestic issues.

And Mary is not very verbal but he actually took her into another room that I couldn't go in. I thought, she's not going to tell him anything because she doesn't have that, she doesn't understand abstract concepts. She can't say, "How was your day?" You have to ask more

specific things and she may tell you “yes” or “no” or she may not if she doesn’t want to talk. And he came out and told me. I didn’t get to see the video and I can’t have access to the records because it’s a child abuse case; he said she showed me what the teacher did to your daughter. She pinched her nose and pinched her side and pushed her down and she showed the elbow where she had a scrape. I didn’t know that was what it was from because Mary does fall a lot; that’s her syndrome.

She’s already lived out her life expectancy from this type of syndrome she has. He “hooked-me up” with the advocate that’s going to go with me to the hearing Wednesday and she sent me your information (to Jordan). I just talked with him last night (referring to Jordan). This just all feel together today.

Barbara: Okay. You have a letter (to Paula)?

Paula: Yes, and I also want you to know that we have hundreds of signatures (holding up a stack of signed petitions for abolishing American school abuse).

Barbara: I’ll send them off to DC.

Paula: One thing that I want to mention and I know that you’re going to report back to George Miller for us, and I appreciate that, but it is very important that, I would like to leave here feeling that I am being heard in so far as, this is an issue of *criminal behavior*. This is not an issue of knocking at 20 state, the right door in 20states. This is an issue of criminal behavior on the part of American school teachers, from duct taping to handcuffing to beating our children and it doesn’t take more than one person to reach. And, he is an intelligent, well-educated man who knows all of this is harmful and causes our children to fail and to become “different” people (gesturing toward Y.T. regarding Mary). And so I’d like to leave here knowing that I am not feeling like even the Dept. of Education and Labor is giving me a “*you go do it*” kind of thing. I’m not saying that you are saying that but I am saying that to bring up the other states was almost, I’ll tell you the truth, a bit disheartening because

this is not an issue of going to different states. This is criminal behavior and it needs to stop immediately and Mr. Miller has the power and authority to make that happen.

Barbara: I'll give this to him.

Paula: Please do and I also know that it doesn't take more than a stroke of a pen to ban it. Just as they banned the use of liquids and gels in just one day because I traveled that day. That night I packed my liquids and gels. When I got to the airport I had to dump them because *in less than 24 hours* a federal law was put in place that said drop it in the garbage, and in less than 24 hours they can say, drop it in the garbage (holding up the paddle to illustrate). Okay? That's what we're counting on Mr. Miller doing because it is harmful to our children for him to do anything else.

Barabara: Okay.

Jordan: And the Constitution forbids it.

Paula: The Constitution, it's against the law.

Jordan: Yeah.

Paula: I understand what you're thinking when you're thinking like that (to Barbara regarding "state hopping"), but that's "the thinking that has been the problem," thinking that we have to go here and there...it's just like rape...

Barbara: Not "you" have to go here and there. You need to get people in those states to be as outraged as you.

Paula: Well, no, no. It's a crime. We don't need... let me ask you. If I commit a crime, I don't need people to get outraged. I need to be locked up. I'm committing a crime. We don't need "outrage."

Barbara: Well you're committing a crime...

Paula: We have standards.

Barbara: I understand that.

Paula: Okay.

Barbara: Alright

Paula: So...

Barbara: Go ahead with the letter.

Paula: I sure will. Thank you.

November 18, 2009

Dear Chairman George Miller,

As Executive Director of The Hitting Stops Here! and board member of Parents and Teachers Against Violence in Education (PTAVE), I request that you bring your immediate attention to the material contained in the packet that I am leaving in your hands on this day. It contains information and evidence of the harm caused to a human being when mistreated in any way during their developing years.

I have included information on how **mistreatment of children negatively affects their:**

- mental and emotional condition
- self-esteem
- digestive system
- desire to learn
- relationship with authority figures
- relationship with their peers
- ability to make contributions in their communities

and a host of other social-ills that children and society at large experience when children are targets of violence in ANY form.

I request that you consider, with Godspeed, bringing this dark day of American history to a close for our American school children.

Presently, our government is failing to extend the 14th amendment “equal protection” law to ALL American school children, a US citizen Constitutional right. To continue to do so having full knowledge of the widespread and numerous cases of US school abuse and fatalities occurring in our schools on a daily basis would display our US Government as being reckless and cruel to its children.

We believe that we have a better “America” than that. We believe that our government officials will respond with the level of integrity and care that our children believe in and to which they pledge their allegiance daily from our American classrooms.

The Hitting Stops Here! Parents and Teachers Against Violence in Education and other children's rights advocates are calling on you, as Chairman of the Dept. of Education and Labor, to bring all forms of sanctioned and lawless methods of discipline that have been proven with an overabundance of evidence by science to be harmful to an end by December 1, 2009.

We request a follow-up meeting with you on Wednesday, December 2, 2009.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Paula Flowe, Exec. Director

Tony Brian, Asst. Exec. Director

The Hitting Stops Here!

A campaign for teaching kindness and respect in schools everywhere.

www.TheHittingStopsHere.com

info@thehittingstopshere.com

Board members of Parents and Teachers Against Violence in Education

408.223.7797

So we would like to, before we leave, we would like to be placed on the schedule to be back here...

Barbara: We don't have the schedule here for Washington.

Paula: No, I mean coming back here to find out. Would we be able to find out his response? How can we find out his response within two weeks?

Barbara: I can get a response back.

Paula: That's what I mean. So, I would like to be back to hear his response on December 2.

Barbara: You want another appointment here?

Paula: Yes. Yes, I do.

Barbara: Okay.

Paula: That's what I want before I leave here.

Barbara: Well, I'll tell you what, why don't I give you a call when I have the response I might have it before that time.

Paula: That would be wonderful. I know next

week is a holiday and I figured that the week after...

Barbara: I might not have an answer by December 2 because we are working on health care.

Paula: Right! That's really funny that we're working on health care while we're "shooting out holes in the floor" (gesturing toward Y.T. regarding Mary), you understand. In other words, while we're getting "health care on" we're creating health care issues 2000 times a day. Like her daughter (pointing to Y.T.) is going to need health care now because we're so busy up here (using my hands to indicate a building) dealing with health care, that now we have a new health care issue, and it happens 2000 times a day in our schools.

Barbara: I understand.

Paula: Okay. All right. Okay good, because that response ("We're dealing with health care right now), makes it feel like it's not on the "priority list" and it really would be backwards to build a building while people are downstairs shooting out the floor and they're up there putting in new windows, you know.

So what I would like to do is let you know, this is a document written by Law Professor Deana Pollard-Sacks (displaying Pollard-Sacks UC Davis Law Review: STATE ACTORS BEATING CHILDREN: A CALL FOR JUDICIAL RELIEF, accessible on our Home page, www.TheHittingStopsHere.com) and she has written everything concerning the issue of American school abuse and how it is unconstitutional. I'm not sure if Mr. Miller has read it. I've sent him a letter and the link and that sort of thing, but I am delivering it to him now. This is everything that points to what is happening to our American school children, and any form of abuse is unconstitutional. It's against the law!

So, I'm going to leave this. I will return with the petitions because we have nearly a thousand and we'd like to come with a thousand on our second trip here, so I am going to take these and bring it back on our second occasion and this is the packet that I would like to leave with Mr. Miller.

Barbara: Okay.

Paula: He has everything in here to make a wise decision. And, he's now been served.

End of meeting.

Commentary to follow.