

1 Since I got one of the last slots, you know, I had
2 -- there was time for me to watch other interviews.
3 And all of the people that I was able to watch, not
4 all of them but the ones I saw, so, so smart, so
5 interesting, and I would love to work with them.

6 And I thank all of you on the Panel, and
7 Mr. Dawson, for your service to our state and
8 listening to weeks and weeks of interviews. And
9 I've enjoyed it. Thank you very much.

10 CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Ahlers.
11 Thank you for taking the time to speak with us this
12 morning.

13 Our next interview is scheduled for 10:45
14 a.m., so we will be in recess until 10:44.

15 (Thereupon the Panel recessed 10:22 a.m.)

16 (Whereupon the Panel reconvened at 10:44 a.m.)

17 CHAIR COE: Okay, the time being 10:44
18 a.m., I'd like to call this meeting back to order.

19 At this time, I'd like to welcome Russell
20 Yee for his interview this morning.

21 Dr. Yee, can you hear us okay?

22 DR. YEE: I can. Thank you.

23 CHAIR COE: Great. Thank you. Welcome
24 and thank you for being here this morning.

25 I'd like to turn over to Mr. Dawson for

1 the five standard questions please.

2 MR. DAWSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

3 Dr. Yee, I am going to ask you five
4 standard questions that the Panel has requested
5 each applicant respond to. Are you ready, sir?

6 DR. YEE: Yes, I am.

7 MR. DAWSON:

8 First question: What skills and attributes
9 should all Commissioners possess? What skills or
10 competencies should the Commission possess
11 collectively? Of the skills, attributes, and
12 competencies that each Commissioner should possess,
13 which do you possess? In summary, how will you
14 contribute to the success of the Commission?

15 DR. YEE: Good morning everyone. And
16 thank you for persevering under this difficult
17 circumstances.

18 I think the 2020 Commission will
19 definitely need the qualities that the Panel has
20 focused on its materials. Those are impartiality,
21 analytical ability, and an appreciation for
22 California's diversity.

23 As I've researched the work of the 2010
24 Commission and have been so impressed by their
25 success and what they were able to achieve,

1 certainly, they used excellent teamwork. I was
2 very impressed by how they used rotating Chairs and
3 so forth. They had good use of technical skills,
4 not necessarily the Commission itself but the
5 consultants and contractors and people they used,
6 and the mappers. They made a good use of those
7 resources and were able to interpret it to use
8 their results.

9 But it seems to me what was most important
10 to the success of the 2010 Commission and what will
11 be most important to the success of the 2020
12 Commission is perseverance, perseverance to the
13 goal. The 2010 Commission really faced significant
14 obstacles and challenges at just about every step
15 of its work and they persevered, and especially at
16 the end when the timeline became seemingly
17 impossible, they burned the midnight oil and were
18 able to deliver the four maps in time, and those
19 maps have stood the test of time.

20 So when it comes to my own possible
21 contributions to the 2020 Commission, I'd like to
22 mention five.

23 The first one that I can mention is
24 contributing to that perseverance that will be
25 needed, perseverance to the goal.

1 And if I'm selected, I can promise that I
2 will give the Commission, the 2020 Commission, my
3 100 percent full-time attention. I'll be able to
4 put my teaching work aside for the full year that
5 the main work will be done. And I intend to attend
6 100 percent of the Commission meetings. I believe
7 the 2010 Commission had about 34 public input
8 meetings and about 70 business meetings then. I
9 will be prepared, ready, willing, and able to
10 attend 100 percent of those. One of the 2010
11 Commissioners described the work as "all consuming,
12 all consuming," which sounds very daunting but I'm
13 ready for that.

14 I've been in any number of meetings over
15 the years. And I've decided that meetings are
16 physical work. They're not aerobic, unfortunately,
17 but they are physical effort. And this Commission
18 will certainly have its share of meetings and I'm
19 up to that.

20 As it happens, I was actually scheduled to
21 run the Boston Marathon in four days, which has now
22 been postponed. But marathon running is a big part
23 of my life. It's taught me a lot about
24 perseverance, mental and physical perseverance.
25 And I certainly intend to apply those lessons to

1 the work of this Commission if I'm chosen.

2 In all my years of education and work,
3 I've learned that while skills and talents are
4 important, nothing can substitute for perseverance.
5 And so that's the first quality, I think, the
6 Commission will need.

7 The second quality is impartiality. And I
8 think I'll be saying about that as I respond to the
9 second question but I'll mention here that aspiring
10 to this Commission is by far the most political
11 thing I've ever done and -- other than voting. And
12 so this -- I find that I was motivated by this
13 opportunity, precisely because it's nonpartisan,
14 precisely because it's fundamentally, you know,
15 emphatically nonpartisan.

16 And by being on this Commission, I would
17 have an opportunity to be on everyone's side. I'd
18 be on everyone's side. And the nonpartisan nature
19 of this Commission is like its superpower. And I'm
20 really attracted by that and really drawn to that,
21 so impartiality.

22 The third quality I can bring to the
23 Commission is analytical ability and just my
24 scholarly skills and instincts and research and
25 analysis and presentation and summary. The 2010

1 Commission had to do a lot of learning and, you
2 know, learning about the Voting Rights Act and so
3 forth. And I am certainly ready and interested and
4 motivated to do that. I love gathering evidence
5 and making lists and writing down pros and cons and
6 writing reports even. All of that really motivates
7 me. I'm always looking for the best way to say
8 things clearly and find the best ways to express
9 things.

10 I've discovered on the U.S. Census
11 website, there's an online academy. And I've been
12 studying, some of my shelter-in-place time, working
13 through the modules there on the U.S. Census Online
14 Academy and learning about how to use their system.

15 I also bring to the analytical ability, I
16 think I can also bring historical perspective. So
17 I'm a History Docent at the Oakland Museum of
18 California. And I think a lot of the Commission's
19 work, especially around communities of interest,
20 will involve trying to understand those
21 communities, including, you know, how they got the
22 way they are and why they are the way they are, and
23 that will involve some historical perspective. And
24 I think I can bring that aspect of analytical
25 ability to the Commission's work. So that's

1 analytical ability.

2 The fourth thing I think I can bring is an
3 appreciation for California's diversity. I'll be
4 responding to more about that, I think, in a later
5 question. But I can just mention here that I've
6 spent my whole life here in Oakland. And, you
7 know, it's -- Oakland has not had a majority race
8 since 1980. And so I've spent most of my life in a
9 very multi-cultural, multi-racial setting. And I
10 went to all public schools. And I continue to
11 circulate in racially and economically mixed
12 settings. And so, for me, diversity is a given.

13 And I think the work of the Commission,
14 you know, part of that will be going to places that
15 actually aren't very diverse and that's part of
16 California's diversity too. So that will be a
17 little more of a stretch for me but that's part of
18 California as well.

19 Lastly, I think I can bring my love for
20 California. I love our state. And I love that
21 five generations of my family have been here in
22 California and three of them, three of those
23 generations, are native-born Californians.

24 I love being a History Docent at the
25 Oakland Museum of California. Here's my docent

1 badge. And I love telling California's story over
2 and over. I never get tired of telling
3 California's story to our visitors and guests.

4 I'm really proud that we Californians have
5 proven that nonpartisan citizen redistricting can
6 work. And we now offer that as a model to other
7 states, even though, you know, we're the most
8 populous and most complex state in many ways and,
9 yet, we showed that it can work.

10 Last month, I served as an election poll
11 worker in the primary, the March primary election.
12 And I was so proud of how California really bends
13 over backwards to help people vote. And, you know,
14 we allow for same-day registration. We allow for
15 permanent mail-in ballots, and so on and so forth.
16 And I was very proud of our state and how we
17 approached that.

18 And so with all of that, and with
19 redistricting, you know, nonpartisan citizen
20 redistricting, I want to help California lead the
21 nation in advancing voting rights and political
22 equality through nonpartisan redistricting.

23 And if I'm chosen for this Commission, I
24 very much think of it as a ten-year commitment, not
25 just a one-year commitment. And I very much would

1 look forward to, even after the mapping is done,
2 look forward to representing the Commission and
3 sharing its work for the rest of the decade.

4 So, in summary, I believe I can contribute
5 to the Commission's success with perseverance,
6 impartiality, analytical ability, and appreciation
7 for California's diversity, and my love for
8 California.

9 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

10 Question two: Work on the Commission
11 requires members of different political backgrounds
12 to work together. Since the 2010 Commission was
13 selected and formed, the American political
14 conversation has become increasingly polarized,
15 whether in the press, on social media, and even in
16 our own families.

17 What characteristics do you possess and
18 what characteristics should your fellow
19 Commissioners possess that will protect against
20 hyper-partisanship? What will you do to ensure
21 that the work of the Commission is not seen as
22 polarized or hyper-partisan and avoid perceptions
23 of political bias and conflict?

24 DR. YEE: Thank you, Mr. Dawson.

25 Yes, so I'll start off by saying, I have

1 been very personally directly affected by this
2 hyper-partisanship and all these political debates.
3 And I know that they're a huge challenge and that
4 there are no easy answers.

5 One of the areas where I've been affected
6 is at my church. And it's a church that happens to
7 attract people from a wide range of backgrounds,
8 political persuasions, and temperaments. And so at
9 that church, I was the church board chairperson,
10 the board chairperson, from 2015 to 2019. And so
11 that was during the years of the 2016 election and
12 all the drama and rancor over that, Black Lives
13 Matter protests, further protests around
14 immigration and what was happening on our borders,
15 our own Oakland debates over homelessness and
16 housing and so forth, so a lot of drama in our
17 church and a lot of strong feelings, a lot of
18 division.

19 And so as church board chairperson, my
20 challenge and my goal was to promote what I called
21 a diverse unity. I didn't think we all had to agree
22 but we all had to, as I put it, stay uncomfortable
23 together. That was my goal and my conviction.

24 At one point, I was called upon to write
25 an open letter to the church and I did. And in

1 that letter, I included a picture of a mobile,
2 which I brought a copy of it. So here's one of the
3 Alexander Calder mobiles in the National Gallery of
4 Art. And the point I made with that illustration
5 was that we're all like pieces on the mobile that
6 have to stay balanced. And we all need each other.
7 And no matter how strong our feelings, one side or
8 the other, only by being together, being willing to
9 be uncomfortable together, could we grow together.
10 And to this day, some years later, some people
11 still will refer to the mobile letter at our
12 church.

13 So I feel very deeply and personally that
14 need for balance. I think I've earned a reputation
15 as being fair minded and even tempered and
16 inclusive.

17 When it comes to the Commission itself,
18 here's -- I think I could think of five ways that
19 it can promote that kind of balance and avoid
20 hyper-partisanship and perceptions of bias
21 conflict.

22 The first way, I think, certainly to speak
23 and act in a consistently nonpartisan fashion. I
24 think about my experience last month as a poll
25 worker. And, of course, that was a primary

1 election, so there were different ballots depending
2 on one's party. And as a poll worker, you greet a
3 voter, and you have to find out which ballot they
4 want and you get that ballot for them. And my
5 goal, as I did that, was that no voter should be
6 able to tell, you know, my own party or leanings.
7 You know, what I said, even very subtle tones of
8 voice, should not give anybody any indication what
9 party I was registered as.

10 And that would be my goal for the
11 Commission. In its public hearings and public
12 meetings, we should not give the public -- it
13 should be pretty hard, maybe even impossible, for
14 anyone just listening to our discussions to guess
15 what our political affiliations are. That would be
16 my goal. We should all come across as representing
17 all of California in doing nonpartisan work. So
18 that would be my first thought for the Commission.

19 My second thought is to follow open
20 meeting laws by the letter and by the spirit. I
21 guess that's the Bagley-Keene Act. And I know that
22 can be frustrating.

23 I remember serving on a jury some years
24 ago. It was a nine-week trial and we were
25 instructed not to discuss the evidence at all, you

1 know, for nine weeks, even among ourselves, which
2 was really hard. But we did that, and there were
3 good reasons for that, and I kept to those rules.

4 As well, I think we'd need to be very
5 disciplined in all social media. Of course, not
6 post anything about the Commission's work, but
7 also, and especially because this is an election
8 year, to not post anything that will come across as
9 partisan because somebody will find out and find
10 out that we're on the Commission and that would
11 reflect poorly on the Commission, so we need self-
12 discipline about that. So that's my second
13 thought.

14 Third thought, as we schedule public
15 meetings, public input meetings, of course, we'll
16 need to be clearly representative of the state as
17 far as we can, we can't go everywhere, but to have
18 a clear balance in different regions and different,
19 you know, rural, suburban, urban, different
20 communities and interests and so forth.

21 Fourth thing, I think, in meetings, to do
22 a lot of excellent listening. You know, we're
23 there to listen. We're there to understand. We're
24 not there to debate, not there to air our own
25 opinions, and so to listen. To always assume

1 positive intent from those who are presenting. To
2 really look for the values behind what they're
3 saying and try to appreciate those values and go
4 with that kind of attitude.

5 Lastly, I think even physical settings
6 convey a sense of partiality or impartiality. I
7 think one of the suggestions from the 2020
8 Commission was to have mixed -- to mix the seating
9 of the Commissioners at each meeting so there's no
10 patterns, you know? It's not like congress, you
11 know, with an aisle in between this side and that
12 side and all that, but to mix the seating.

13 And also, in terms of physical settings, I
14 find I pay a lot of attention to things like
15 lighting and sound and, you know, projected
16 material and so forth. And I think as we go to
17 different parts of the state, you know, to really
18 treat each meeting -- to do our very best job at
19 each meeting of a conveying the setting is, you
20 know, worth our full effort, that we're doing a
21 good job, even in the hosting of the meeting and
22 the physical setting of the meeting, and show that
23 we are treating all the different settings equally.

24 So those are some of the ways I think the
25 Commission can avoid hyper-partisanship and

1 perceptions of bias and conflict.

2 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

3 MS. PELLMAN: We have --

4 MR. DAWSON: Madam Secretary --

5 MS. PELLMAN: Yes. We have 13 minutes, 35
6 seconds remaining.

7 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

8 Question three: What is the greatest
9 problem the Commission could encounter and what
10 actions would you take to avoid or respond to this
11 problem?

12 DR. YEE: Well, suddenly, you know, COVID-
13 19 is probably going to be a huge issue for this
14 Commission. And, you know, we're going to have to
15 do a lot more video meetings. And I think the
16 outreach to get public input, we'll very probably
17 have to rely a lot more on online input, so that's
18 going to be a new challenge for this Commission.

19 There's also just the tightness of the
20 deadlines that the 2010 Commission faced. And
21 their advice to this Commission was to really start
22 early, you know, do the hiring of staff early, get
23 consultants on early, do the Voting Rights Act
24 training early, and so forth.

25 I did notice this week, just on Monday,

1 there is a possibility that the census data for
2 redistricting will be delayed. The Secretary of
3 Commerce has asked for a 120-day delay. And so
4 that would put the data release to the end of July.
5 And the maps are currently due in August. So, you
6 know, I don't know if the legislature will have to
7 do something about that but we'll certainly have to
8 keep track of that.

9 I think there's also a question of
10 funding. Will funding be adequate? I think the
11 2010 Commission enjoyed a large grant from the
12 James Irvine Foundation and that was almost a
13 quarter of its budget. So I don't know if that
14 grant is going to be available this time. And with
15 the pandemic, as well, how state tax revenues are
16 affecting the funding of this Commission. So those
17 are all issues that we'll have to face.

18 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

19 Question four: If you are selected you
20 will be one of 14 members of the Commission which
21 is charged with working together to create maps of
22 the new districts.

23 Please describe a situation where you had
24 to work collaboratively with others on a project to
25 achieve a common goal. Tell us the goal of the

1 project, what your role in the group was, and how
2 the group worked through any conflicts that arose?
3 What lessons would you take from this group
4 experience to the Commission, if selected?

5 DR. YEE: So I'd like to tell you about my
6 experience at one of my former churches, not the
7 one I'm at currently but a former church, where I
8 was the pastor. And that church was a startup. And
9 early in its life, we decided we wanted to
10 affiliate with a larger church body, a
11 denomination. And it would be sort of like if you
12 had a community service organization that had been
13 going for a while and decided it really wanted to
14 affiliate with a larger body. And so we looked
15 into Kiwanis and Rotary and Lions Club and so forth
16 to, you know, try to decide on larger organizations
17 to become a part of. So that's the position we
18 were in.

19 It was a big challenge because the members
20 of the church had come from different backgrounds,
21 so some Presbyterians, some Baptists, and so forth
22 and they had strong feelings about that. So there
23 was not guarantee at the beginning of the process
24 that we were going to be able to agree on anything.
25 And even if we did agree, it was not -- I was

1 pretty sure we would lose at least some people
2 because of just the nature of the decision.

3 So we took a full year to work through the
4 process. We had a lot of meetings, a lot of
5 discussions, did a lot of research into our
6 options. Went through kind of predictable stages
7 of a community process where people test the
8 waters, they say things, they find out we don't all
9 agree. At some point you feel stuck and you have
10 persevere through that.

11 And in the end, we were able to do a lot
12 of learning together, a lot of growing together,
13 and at the end we took a vote of the whole
14 membership and we did make a decision. It was
15 actually not the choice that I had originally
16 supported, so my own mind had been changed by the
17 process. And most amazingly to me, we actually
18 didn't lose anyone. So that was just quite an
19 inspiring experience.

20 So some lessons for the Commission, I
21 think you have to not fear differences of opinion.
22 And you have to be willing to sit with them and
23 work with them and persevere through them.

24 I think people really notice how you treat
25 others. And so in a community input meeting, let's

1 say, people really notice if your tone of voice,
2 whether you're giving people plenty of time to
3 share, things like that, I think the Commission
4 would need to, you know, really surprise people
5 with kindness and openness and patience and
6 generosity and the ability to listen,
7 approachability, you know?

8 I learned that people's minds can change.
9 My mind changed. And that people's first answer is
10 not necessarily the last answer. I learned that
11 people's values behind their choices, you know, are
12 actually what are driving their choices. And
13 sometimes if you can get those values, understand
14 them, and be creative about ways to honor those
15 values, that may involve different choices, and
16 that counts for a lot.

17 I also learned that feeling heard and
18 understood is more important than winning. So even
19 if some people had voted no to our decision at the
20 church, I think that would have been okay as long
21 as they felt heard and understood. That's more
22 important than everyone getting their way. And so
23 I think on the Commission, that would certainly be
24 the case as well.

25 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

1 Question five: A considerable amount of
2 the Commission's work will involve meeting with
3 people from all over California who come from very
4 different backgrounds and a wide variety of
5 perspectives.

6 If you were selected as a Commissioner,
7 what skills and attributes will make you effective
8 at interacting with people from different
9 backgrounds and who have a variety of perspectives?
10 What experiences have you had that will help you be
11 effective at understanding and appreciating people
12 and communities of different backgrounds and who
13 have a variety of perspectives?

14 DR. YEE: So as I mentioned earlier, as an
15 Oakland native, I guess diversity is a norm for me.
16 And, you know, everywhere I go in the course of the
17 day, normally, you know, not right now, I'm
18 encountering people of different races, languages,
19 cultures, and so on and so forth.

20 My teaching and writing have included
21 quite a bit of attention to matters of culture and
22 cultural understanding, cultural expression,
23 cultural identify. I have especially focused on
24 Asian American identity and culture, as well as
25 Southeast Asian American identity and culture. You

1 know, the fact that this week is actually Cambodian
2 New Year this week is part of the landscape of my
3 life.

4 As an Asian American, I have a particular
5 awareness of immigrant stories and generational
6 differences and changes, immigrant populations.
7 You know, California is one-quarter foreign-born
8 today and, you know, the highest in the nation, the
9 highest percentage. And so that world of people
10 from elsewhere and their kids and grandkids, that's
11 a normal part of life for me. That's familiar
12 territory for me.

13 As a racial minority, I have an awareness
14 of settings and, you know, majority versus minority
15 cultures, and stepping into a setting who, you
16 know, treats that setting as belonging to them
17 versus those who feel like outsiders, those you
18 have to invite in versus those who come in assuming
19 that they're included, and so forth.

20 I can mention that my postgraduate degrees
21 came from two very different institutions, master's
22 degree from Dallas Theological Seminary and a
23 doctoral degree from the Graduate Theological Union
24 in Berkeley. And together, those two would cover
25 an extremely wide range of religious and cultural

1 and political spectrum constituencies in Christian
2 circles, you know, far right to far left. And I've
3 circulated in those circles, that whole range, and
4 have connections in that whole range. So that's
5 part of my background.

6 Being at my current church definitely puts
7 me outside my comfort zone and there's a range of
8 political and, you know, temperaments there,
9 political opinions, and temperaments there,
10 socioeconomic range. I'm actually one of the older
11 members there now, so the generational differences
12 and so forth.

13 I have traveled quite a bit throughout
14 California my whole life. My honeymoon, 33 years
15 ago, was actually a road trip in California. One
16 of my daughters just finished up her college degree
17 in Southern Cal, so I've spent a lot of time down
18 there, as well as doing some teaching in Southern
19 Cal myself, and other work there.

20 I can also mention, as a runner, you know,
21 everywhere I go, I like to run. My wife and I were
22 just in Hollister earlier this year and did some
23 running there. And when you run, you see things up
24 close that you don't see, you know, when you're
25 driving through a place. And certainly, if we have

1 or were able to have onsite meetings with this
2 Commission and public input meetings, any overnight
3 meetings, overnight travel I'll do to any of those
4 meetings, I certainly look forward to running in
5 those places and seeing those communities up close,
6 you know, not only for the pleasure of it, but also
7 as part of my research to those communities.

8 Some other things specifically for the
9 Commission, I think it counts a lot when you go to
10 a place to show active interest in that place. Do
11 your homework. Find out the background of the
12 place. If it's a small town, find out, you know,
13 the mascot of the high school there and things like
14 that. And find out what the current issues are and
15 come prepared.

16 Coming into a community, know the
17 community organizations that are there, you know,
18 connect with the leaders of those organizations
19 before you get there and get their endorsement and
20 participation, if possible.

21 Then just do a lot of outreach to those
22 communities. Invite. Invite again. Invite five,
23 ten different ways, you know? And because
24 everyone's different and people circulate in
25 different circles. They take in information in

1 different ways and make different assumptions. So
2 the Commission will definitely need to do that.
3 And so try to reach as many different communities
4 of interest and different people and perspectives
5 as possible.

6 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

7 We'll now go to Panel questions. Each
8 Panel member will have 20 minutes to ask his or her
9 question. We'll start with the Chair.

10 Mr. Coe?

11 CHAIR COE: Thank you, Mr. Dawson.

12 Once again, good morning to you, Dr. Yee.
13 Thank you for taking the time to speak with us
14 today.

15 I wanted to ask you about your role as a
16 History Docent at the Oakland Museum of California.
17 You've talked about it a couple of times this
18 morning. I wonder if you give us a little bit more
19 information about your duties in this role?

20 DR. YEE: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Coe.

21 So we do -- the main duty is leading
22 tours. And the bread and butter is school group
23 tours, fourth grade tours, and I love it. Fourth
24 grade is a great age. Kids are curious, you know?
25 They can absorb quite a bit but they're still --

1 they're not teenagers yet, you know?

2 So -- and so we -- the Oakland Museum of
3 California, so there's two museums dedicated to
4 California. As a state, one is the California
5 Museum in Sacramento. And the other is the Oakland
6 Museum of California. So we have three galleries
7 at our museum, Art of California, The Natural
8 Science of California, and then The History of
9 California.

10 So I'm a Docent in the History Gallery.
11 And we lead these tours. And, you know, we get
12 school groups from all over the Greater Bay Area,
13 all different towns and school districts, you know,
14 all different socioeconomics. But I love, most of
15 all, the groups that include kids from immigrant
16 families. And you can have a group, a tour group
17 of, you know, seven kids who are from seven
18 different, you know, whose families are from seven
19 different countries. And it's just spectacular and
20 amazing and beautiful and I love that.

21 And some of these kids, it's their very
22 first experience of any museum, you know, anywhere.
23 And I get to be -- I have the honor, you know, of
24 introducing them to that experience.

25 At the Oakland Museum, one of our tag

1 lines is, "The Museum of You," which is a little
2 cheesy. But its -- you know, the idea is that
3 every Californian is part of the California story.
4 And that's part of what we try to convey to the
5 school kids, is this is their story. This is not
6 somebody else's story. This is their story. And
7 all the different parts of it, the good parts, the
8 not-so-good parts, that's all part of their story.
9 And it's an unfolding story they get to continue
10 helping to tell.

11 So those are some of our duties.

12 CHAIR COE: Now what's your favorite
13 subject to speak in public about in your role?

14 DR. YEE: Favorite subject? Certainly,
15 Native American backgrounds and present Native
16 American life which, of course, is a very mixed
17 story and a very heartbreaking story in a lot of
18 ways. But our museum has done a particularly good
19 job of that, portraying that.

20 The very first thing you see as you enter
21 the History Gallery is a display of an Ohlone tule
22 reed boat. And the caption over the boat is, and
23 the caption for the first section of the History
24 Gallery is, "Before the other people came. Before
25 the other people came," and, you know, and of

1 course, you know, starting off with the Native
2 American story, so I like to start off there. We
3 have a video there of some local Ohlone Native
4 Americans welcoming guests to the gallery,
5 welcoming them to the displays, and so I love to
6 start there.

7 Of course, we do a lot with the Gold Rush
8 and try to explain that to kids and the complexity
9 of it and just the drama of it and how it changed
10 California.

11 Other parts of our history, I love taking
12 them up to the present and showing them how it
13 connects with the past and how even gold is still
14 very much a part of our life here in California,
15 and the high-tech industry and how it's used in
16 industrial processes.

17 I also like just impressing on them that
18 people keep coming to California, right, and with
19 aspirations, with dreams, hopes of a better life
20 for themselves and their families, and that we're
21 all connected in those ways.

22 CHAIR COE: Thank you for sharing that
23 perspective.

24 I want to talk about your impartiality
25 essay for a moment.

1 DR. YEE: Um-hmm.

2 CHAIR COE: In that essay, you write that
3 you have had "endless opportunities to practice
4 listening to different sides, speaking your own
5 convictions, and coming to decisions, even with
6 imperfect and incomplete data." And as we've
7 talked about a delay in census or, maybe, some
8 issues with census data as a result of the
9 pandemic, making decisions with imperfect and
10 incomplete data seems to be a pertinent topic. But
11 my question to you is kind of a double question.

12 And I'm wondering if you can give us an
13 example of a time where you had to set aside your
14 personal beliefs or your preferences in order to
15 make a difficult decision with imperfect or
16 incomplete data? And the second part to that
17 question is as part of the decision making, for
18 that example that you're going to give us, what
19 process did you employ to ensure that you made the
20 best decisions possible with the data that's
21 available?

22 DR. YEE: Sure. Thank you. Wow.

23 For sure, the example I gave of the
24 denominational decision at my former church. That
25 was an example of making a decision, you know? And

1 we took a whole year. We got lots of data. But,
2 of course, there's always more to get and, at some
3 point, you just have to make a decision, and so we
4 did that.

5 Another example, a little more recent,
6 might be so at my current church, a decision we
7 faced came when -- so we -- as it happens, at our
8 church site, we're a block away from a halfway
9 house. It's a facility where folks who are newly
10 on parole can spend some time living as they get
11 reentry experience into jobs and so forth. And at
12 one point a few years ago, some of the men at the
13 reentry facility starting coming to our church.
14 And so these are paroled lifers, folks who had had
15 life sentences but had earned parole. And so they
16 were now out and coming to our church.

17 And we had to admit that we had no
18 experience with this in the past at the church.
19 And so we had to make a decision how to respond to
20 their presence and how to, you know, how to include
21 them, and whether or not to invite them into small
22 fellowship groups that we had the church, and so
23 forth? It was right around the time we had our
24 church retreat, going off to a spot in the redwoods
25 and spending a weekend together, you know, and

1 would we make that special effort to include these
2 parolees?

3 And, you know, we did research, talked to
4 people, but we had to make a pretty quick decision,
5 you know, just because of the timeline. And so,
6 partly, what informed our decision was just face-
7 to-face discussions. And so we let -- we had --
8 you know, we met with some of these men and had
9 them educate us about their lives and the
10 difference between short-timers and lifers and what
11 it takes to earn parole, and all the supervision
12 that their lives were under currently, and so
13 forth. That was all news to us.

14 And as we weighed that information, you
15 know, in the time we had we didn't find out
16 everything we wanted to or needed to but we made
17 the call in the end, okay, we will embrace this
18 group. We will treat them like everyone else. We
19 will not have any special rules for them, you know?
20 And in the end, you know, and this included hosting
21 some of these men in my own home and for regular
22 meetings, and we made that decision and it's
23 actually worked out well. So that's an example.

24 I don't know, maybe that will do for now.

25 CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you.

1 I want to talk about something you
2 mentioned in your appreciation for diversity essay
3 that you sent to us. In that, you discuss your
4 seminary teachings and how, in those teachings, you
5 challenge assumptions some students have about the
6 normativity of the majority culture and/or being
7 the uniformity of any given minority culture.

8 So I'm curious, how do you challenge your
9 students to think about this and what, generally,
10 are the results?

11 DR. YEE: Excellent question. So, you
12 know, a lot of it has to do with people who --
13 students who think of the majority culture as just
14 the norm. And it's kind of -- you know, as I put
15 it, you know, it's the way we use the term ethnic
16 often. Ethnic churches, for instance, the term is
17 often used in church circles. And, basically,
18 that's a reference to racial minority churches.
19 Those are ethnic churches. But the implication is
20 that a majority culture church doesn't have an
21 ethnicity which, of course, is not true. All
22 churches have particular cultures, they have
23 particular sensibilities about time and so forth.
24 So one way I try to bring up the subject is by
25 pointing out all the things that a majority culture

1 might do that are, you know, culturally specific
2 and not just universal.

3 So, for instance, how do generations
4 interact? In the majority culture, and especially
5 here in the Bay Area, a lot of it from kind of the
6 influence of Silicon Valley. You know, we have a
7 very non-hierarchical culture --

8 CHAIR COE: Um-hmm.

9 DR. YEE: -- people on a first-name basis.
10 It would not be unusual for, you know, young people
11 to call adults by their first name and so forth.
12 Whereas, in other cultures, of course, you would
13 use a title. You would never call a grandparent,
14 you know, or a parent by a first name and so on.
15 So, you know, just pointing out some of those
16 differences in sensibilities and how specific they
17 are and trying to open people's eyes to how, you
18 know, how particular different aspects of the
19 majority culture are.

20 And so it's generally well received. As
21 people come to understand, you know, people who are
22 in, you know, a ministry career aspirations, you
23 know, they want to understand people and they want
24 to reach out and learn. And so it's generally well
25 received that way but, certainly, still some

1 resistance or a sense that, you know, the majority
2 culture is somehow, you know, privileged or better,
3 you know, or special in a way that should, you
4 know, I don't know, keep it in some kind of
5 privileged position, so just challenging those
6 assumptions.

7 At the same time, you know, not to make
8 all cultures relative, you know, I think American
9 culture has particular qualities that make it --
10 you know, our commitment to equality and free
11 speech and liberty, I mean, those are particular
12 things and special things.

13 So I think, for instance, you know, in
14 community input meetings, as we reach out to
15 communities that may not be used to going to
16 community meetings and speaking up in public, you
17 know, part of being American and being in a mixture
18 of cultures is teaching each other, challenging
19 each other how to grow into that, you know, that
20 bi-culturality and so, you know, to encourage a
21 community member that has never spoken up at a
22 public meeting before to do so, you know, and
23 explain why it's a good idea and explain how it's
24 safe, and so on and so forth. So it goes both
25 ways.

1 CHAIR COE: Thank you.

2 From your experiences in that role or in
3 any other role where you've worked with diverse
4 groups of people with a variety of backgrounds,
5 what have you learned about the needs and desires
6 and preferences of the diverse groups of people
7 that you've met that you think would make you an
8 effective representative for the diverse population
9 of California on this Commission?

10 DR. YEE: Sure. I think the first thing I
11 would bring in that regard is just a sensibility
12 and a sensitivity to who thinks they belong and who
13 doesn't, you know, who would think of a meeting, an
14 official meeting, as somewhere they, you know, they
15 have a right to speak up and they're going to speak
16 up there versus someone who has to be specially
17 invited to come or to comment, you know, someone
18 who would think of that as somebody else's
19 business.

20 I think of some of the Southeast Asian
21 American people I've worked with, and especially
22 those who came out of wartime situations, you know,
23 in Southeast Asia and how some of the really
24 negative experiences they've had with officials and
25 governments in settings where they came from, you

1 know, predisposed them to not, you know, to not
2 want to speak up, you know, not want to share their
3 name, not want to comment publicly. And so being
4 sensitive to things like that.

5 I think generationally, too, being at my
6 church, being one of the older members there, I
7 keep having to challenge myself to understand how
8 the world looks different for different
9 generations. And so, for myself, I think growing
10 up, you know, as the tail end of the baby boom, you
11 know, I grew up trusting institutions, you know,
12 trusting officials, trusting the police, you know?
13 And the younger generation has grown up in a very
14 different world.

15 And so I think in reaching out, especially
16 to the younger generation, and understanding that
17 they may start with an assumption of distrust, you
18 know, and so I would have -- you know, our job
19 would be to go in and earn their trust, by
20 understanding, trying to understand their
21 particular issues and understand their doubts and
22 questions, and to go in understanding that, you
23 know, they're not -- they don't come in predisposed
24 to just believe in the system and believe in the
25 work that we're doing.

1 So those are some of the things I would
2 do.

3 CHAIR COE: Thank you very much.

4 Similar question but in regards to
5 geographic diversity, and people in different
6 regions of the state may have different concerns
7 depending on where they live, the things that are
8 facing them and the challenges.

9 I know you said you were born in the Bay
10 Area and still live in the Bay Area. So I'm
11 curious to hear about your experiences in other
12 regions of the state and what you've learned from
13 the people in those regions about their
14 perspectives and preferences that you think would
15 make you an effective representative for them on
16 this Commission?

17 DR. YEE: Sure. Yeah, so I am -- you
18 know, my parents were born in Oakland, I was born
19 in Oakland, so a lot of deep roots here. But, as I
20 mentioned, I have spent quite a bit of time in
21 Southern California with relatives down there.
22 I've done some teaching down there. I've been part
23 of a nonprofit down there, based down there, and so
24 quite a bit of time in Southern Cal.

25 I also have visited, you know, almost the

1 whole state. I haven't been to the far northeast.
2 And somehow, I haven't made it to Death Valley, but
3 through of the rest of the state, I've traveled and
4 enjoyed. You know, I just enjoy so much traveling
5 all throughout our state, our beautiful state.

6 Certainly the urban versus suburban versus
7 rural differences are very clear, small towns, you
8 know, versus big cities, the Central Valley, all
9 the agriculture there, as well as the big cities
10 there, you know? Fresno is bigger than Oakland.
11 And the issues of concern there, immigration
12 patterns, you know?

13 Different majority-minority communities
14 all of state, all our various issues.
15 Homelessness, of course, in the big cities, in
16 parts of the big cities. And yet, you know, here
17 in Oakland, we're right over the hill from some of
18 the suburbs in Contra Costa County and all the
19 issues around housing density, housing development,
20 just heavy debates going on over things like that.

21 Our traditional debates over water, you
22 know, continue to go on.

23 I think, too, of course, every place,
24 every community has its own particular identity and
25 pride and not wanting to lump, you know, all of

1 Southern California with L.A., of course, you know,
2 the Inland Empire, the whole Riverside area, which
3 is one of the fastest growing areas in California,
4 and every distinct community has it's own stories
5 on history, the things they're proud of, issues
6 they're working through are things to appreciate.

7 So, yeah, just wanting to learn more about
8 that. Really looking forward, if I'm selected, to
9 spending time all over the state and learning more
10 about those --

11 MS. PELLMAN: We have two minutes
12 remaining.

13 DR. YEE: -- those parts of the state.

14 CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you, Madam
15 Secretary.

16 And thank you, Dr. Yee. I think in the
17 interest of time, I'll ask one more question really
18 quickly.

19 If you were to be appointed to the role of
20 Commissioner, which aspects of that role do you
21 think that you will enjoy the most and, conversely,
22 which aspects of that role do you think might cause
23 you to struggle a little bit?

24 DR. YEE: Sure. This is a little abstract
25 but I think what I would enjoy the most, actually,

1 and truthfully, is being part of something that's
2 such a great idea. I just love the idea of the
3 Commission and, you know, the risky proposition
4 that it was, you know, back in 2008 and the fact
5 that it's been done once now so well and is a model
6 for the nation. I just love that, so I would
7 really enjoy that.

8 Also, I'd really enjoy just learning about
9 our state more and more stories about life all over
10 our state.

11 Something challenging? I think the open
12 meeting laws, you know, I respect them, I
13 understand them, the need for them. And I
14 certainly would intend to keep to them, the letter,
15 and the spirit. But I know that they can be
16 frustrating, as well, to have discussions.

17 I remember being on a jury some years ago
18 where we couldn't discuss -- I think I mentioned
19 this -- we couldn't discuss the case, you know, for
20 nine weeks and it was just really difficult. Here
21 it's a different situation. But having to have all
22 discussions in open, not being able to have private
23 conversations that might offer themselves, I think,
24 will be frustrating.

25 I'd also find it very frustrating if there

1 were any disunity on the Commission. Anyone who
2 wasn't, you know, a team player, any, you know,
3 division that way, that would be very frustrating
4 for me as well.

5 CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you, Dr. Yee.

6 I think we're about out of time, so I will
7 go ahead and turn the time over to Ms. Dickison for
8 her questions.

9 Ms. Dickison?

10 DR. YEE: Thank you, Mr. Coe.

11 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you, Mr.
12 Coe.

13 Good morning, Dr. Yee.

14 DR. YEE: Good morning.

15 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: So you just talked
16 about one of the things that would frustrate you
17 was if there was disunity among the Commissioners.

18 What are some of the things the
19 Commissioners can do early on to build a team and
20 an atmosphere of collaboration?

21 DR. YEE: Right. So it's a little tricky
22 because, of course, you have the eight that will be
23 initially selected by lottery. I think the former
24 Commission called those the luckies. And those
25 luckies will pick six more, which will be the

1 chosen, as they called them. And so right from the
2 start you'll have a division that will need to be
3 overcome. And I think one of the things that we'll
4 need to do is make those selections of the final
5 six as early as possible, as early as, you know,
6 can be done well, and so not have any -- have a
7 minimum of experiences that only the eight will
8 have that the six will not have and really try to
9 have the whole Commission, all 14 experience, you
10 know, the formative early going of the Commission.

11 So I think one of the issues that the
12 former Commission experienced was some of the
13 Voting Rights Act training that happened before the
14 final six were selected. You know, in retrospect,
15 that was not ideal. So to do that.

16 I think, certainly, to socialize, you
17 know, even outside of the official meetings. You
18 know, just who you chat with, who you sit down for
19 a meal with, and to really mix that up. And maybe
20 make a very intentional, you know, minimize project
21 of that as a Commission. I think, you know, when
22 personal relationships can be cultivated, it adds a
23 lot to, you know, motivation and willingness to do
24 something, not only for the sake of the Commission
25 and the sake of our duties, but for the sake of the

1 personal relationships that can develop on the
2 Commission and the personal, you know, loyalties to
3 the whole Commission, all the Commissioners, that
4 can develop.

5 So those are the things, some of the
6 things, I think would be included early on.

7 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

8 So I wanted to touch on your diversity
9 essay. You talked about you teach a class about
10 Oakland.

11 DR. YEE: Yes.

12 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: And you said you
13 "delight in replacing simplistic ideas about
14 Oakland with a wide appreciation for Oakland's vast
15 diversity."

16 What motivates you to educate about that
17 and that changing that perspective?

18 DR. YEE: Sure. I love teaching that
19 class. Actually, behind me, you see the plaque,
20 Oakland, and its iconic oak tree. That's actually
21 -- it was a student project. A student made that
22 for me, and I love it, from that class.

23 What motivates me? I guess at two levels.

24 One is just personally, you know, I love
25 my city, the same way I love California. And I

1 want it to be understood. I want it to -- I want
2 to correct incorrect ideas about it, you know? I
3 want to -- I want people to be able to learn from
4 it.

5 I want people to visit it. You know, the
6 college where I teach that class is St. Mary's
7 College of California, which is in Moraga, you
8 know, right over the hill, right through the
9 Caldecott Tunnel from Oakland. And so my feeling
10 is that these students are going to spend four
11 years there at St. Mary's College and they should
12 get to know the largest city they will spend those
13 four years next to and, you know, so that they'll
14 be invited, feel that, you know, as part of their
15 college experience, spend time in Oakland and learn
16 from Oakland and, you know, get a better education
17 because of that time in and next to Oakland. And
18 then I hope it will expand their imagination as
19 they think about their futures and their
20 opportunities.

21 And the motto of St. Mary's is, "Come to
22 learn, go to serve," you know? And so, of course,
23 Oakland, like all big cities, has an especially
24 wide range of opportunities to serve, you know, if
25 you think about nonprofit careers, you think about

1 volunteer opportunities that these students may
2 pursue. And so that motivates me a lot.

3 But a lot of it is just because I love
4 stories, and I love diversity, and I love history,
5 and I love teaching about those. In my class
6 evaluations, one of the feedback items I frequently
7 get is simply that the professor is very
8 enthusiastic. It makes coming to class more
9 motivating. And that's a very genuine enthusiasm
10 and so I love to share that and it motivates me to
11 teach the class.

12 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

13 You've talked, also, about being a runner.
14 What have you learned from running outside of
15 Oakland in visiting in those communities that will
16 assist the Commission in reaching out to
17 communities in the various regions of California?

18 DR. YEE: Right. So I think, you know,
19 when you run you just have a very granular sense of
20 a place because you see it, you know, right up
21 close. You know, you're not just whizzing by in a
22 car. And so you see houses and front yards and
23 people's, you know, cars and what's on their front
24 porches. And you see, also, the condition of
25 public works. And you get very intimately

1 acquainted with the condition of the roads,
2 sidewalks. You can tell, you know, instantly
3 whether a setting is pedestrian friendly.

4 You see places in town that are thriving.
5 You see places in town that will be fading away.
6 You read signs. You read plaques. I love finding
7 history plaques and reading them, you know,
8 learning the story of places.

9 You also get an intimate sense of
10 geography and boundaries, you know? And you can
11 really feel viscerally how it feels like to cross a
12 freeway, you know, to cross a train track, and how
13 the neighborhood changes.

14 You also notice a lot of landmarks, you
15 know, the schools, the churches, city hall,
16 businesses, you know, businesses that are thriving,
17 businesses that are not, and so forth.

18 And so I think that sensitivity, that
19 sensibility, that perceptiveness about a community
20 that you really can't get just from numbers, or
21 from reading a report, hopefully can help the
22 Commission in its work.

23 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

24 So in the class you teach about Oakland,
25 you talk about looking or using historical census

1 figures. And then you also talk about enjoying
2 geography trivia.

3 So have you done any work or any trivia
4 where you've combined those two, census data and
5 maps or geography?

6 DR. YEE: I have not combined census data
7 and maps and geography professionally. But
8 certainly in the teaching for the Oakland class,
9 you know, we look at maps. And I show different,
10 you know, patterns of housing. And, you know, it's
11 just, it's a golden age for maps and data and you
12 can -- there are maps available where you can show,
13 you know, the race of every voter in a city and you
14 can, you know, analyze that and discuss that, and
15 so I do that in class.

16 Other ways? Just out of curiosity, I
17 suppose, just, you know, as kind of a hobbyist
18 level, looking at cities, looking at California,
19 and learning. And then most recently, working
20 through some of those U.S. Census Online Academy
21 modules and learning how to use their system to
22 analyze maps and data, so --

23 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: So given your joy
24 of geographic trivia, you also talked about some of
25 the boundary lines --

1 DR. YEE: Sure.

2 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: -- in your essay.

3 Would a district that was shaped oddly
4 give you concern? Why or why not?

5 DR. YEE: Indeed. So an oddly shaped
6 district, of course, the question is: What is
7 oddly? And I've read some of the discussions and
8 essays and reports that have tried to, you know,
9 define oddness.

10 And, you know, I think the Commission will
11 be bound by the six constitutional criteria, range
12 criteria, you know, population, Voting Rights Act,
13 communities of interest, contiguity, and then
14 fifth, you know, which is pretty low down the list,
15 is compactness. So I think the language is that,
16 you know, there should not be pockets of population
17 farther out included to the exclusion of pockets of
18 population that are farther in. So, you know, but
19 that is a consideration, that is a criterion, that
20 will be in tension sometimes with communities of
21 interest; right?

22 So would it bother me aesthetically? Of
23 course, you know, one can -- you know, there seems
24 to be a human propensity to like tidiness and
25 symmetricalness. On the hand, in terms of the

1 constitutional redistricting criteria, oddness is
2 not a criteria. So it's just balancing the
3 criterion of compactness with all the other
4 criteria.

5 So, basically, no, not in and of itself,
6 not oddness in and of itself. Of course,
7 gerrymandering, there's a whole long history of
8 gerrymandering. Oddness isn't part of that, you
9 know, under that, you know, I know it when I see it
10 kind of criterion. And so, you know, there's some
11 of that, but not inherently, no.

12 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

13 You mentioned communities of interest
14 being one of the criterion. That is on the same
15 level with cities, counties, and neighborhoods.

16 DR. YEE: Yes.

17 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: What can the
18 Commission do to ensure that when it's weighing
19 those different things, when they come in conflict
20 with each other, that they're making the right
21 decisions?

22 DR. YEE: I think that's, you know, that's
23 an excellent question. That's probably going to be
24 the \$64,000 question for the Commission.
25 Communities of interest, I think, of the six

1 criterion -- criteria, that's probably going to be
2 the most challenging one because it's the most
3 fuzzy one.

4 So on one hand, you have clear existing
5 boundaries, you know, city, county boundaries. You
6 have natural, you know, features, lakes, rivers,
7 the bay here in the Bay Area, and so forth. But
8 when it comes to some of the other considerations,
9 economic activity, and historic voting patterns,
10 you know, those are going to be difficult, and so
11 it's going to take a lot of research.

12 How to make the right decision? I don't
13 think, you know, I don't think it's going to be a
14 question of right or wrong so much as a question of
15 better or worse because there's going to be lots of
16 options.

17 I think I would be guided a lot by -- I
18 mean, the first thing I would do, probably, for any
19 given decision is look at the 2010 Commission's
20 work and look at the discussions they had, look at
21 the considerations that they lined up, weigh those,
22 you know, see if they still hold the same weight,
23 make adjustments where populations have changed,
24 you know, and then try to make a good decision.

25 I like the phrase, let's see, it was in

1 the -- so part of the language for the Voting
2 Rights Act section 2, talks about the "totality of
3 circumstances," I think it's the jingle's
4 preconditions, "totality of circumstances," and I
5 like that phrase. And I think for communities of
6 interest, that's part of the challenge will be to
7 try to take in the totality of circumstances and to
8 make a better decision, a good decision, you know,
9 not the only right decision because I don't think
10 there will be an only right one or only right
11 decision.

12 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

13 What do you see as your role the
14 Commission, should you be selected?

15 DR. YEE: My role on the Commission, as I
16 mentioned, number one, to show up, you know, and my
17 intention to show up to 100 percent of the
18 Commission meetings, and even to be available if
19 extra, you know, extra trips or extra duties become
20 necessary. I intend to be available for that.

21 I intend to be an excellent listener. I
22 take notes as I listen and I love to summarize
23 what's been said. I see my role as trying to
24 clearly state, you know, what's been said and try
25 to clearly summarize what's been said, summarize

1 arguments, point out things that may not have been
2 -- things that might have been missing.

3 I see my role as trying to steer the
4 Commission back to its goal if we get distracted.
5 You know, the goal is to have these public input
6 meetings, to hear from the public, and then to draw
7 these four maps on time using the six ranked
8 criteria. That's the goal. And there's lots of
9 other interesting things we can be doing, lots of
10 other things to be discussing, but to steer the
11 Commission back to that.

12 I'd certainly just try to contribute to
13 the Commission's good judgment when it comes to
14 hiring and directing staff and consultants. You
15 know, that's going to be a lot of the work, so to
16 try to add to those discussions, be an asset to
17 those discussions.

18 And, as well, simply to, you know, to
19 enjoy the experience, to the enjoyment of the
20 experience, and to find ways for the Commission to
21 enjoy each other's work and company and, you know,
22 to make it a positive year for everyone. I want to
23 contribute to that.

24 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

25 You mentioned early on, earlier in our

1 discussion, that one of the things you would like
2 to see is that the six Commissioners be selected
3 early in the process.

4 If you were selected as one of the first
5 eight, what would you look for in those six
6 individuals?

7 DR. YEE: Right. So, you know, right off
8 I would look for trying to fill any obvious gaps in
9 the range of Commissioners, so especially for
10 geography, urban, rural, suburban, men and women,
11 so, you know, try to fill those gaps, racial
12 backgrounds, try to fill those gaps.

13 I would look for, you know, the qualities
14 you've emphasized, impartiality and analytical
15 ability, appreciation for diversity.

16 I'd look for a team player. Look for
17 someone who's motivated and available to do the
18 work necessary.

19 Technical skills, of course, those are
20 valuable. You know, I just, I can't get over that
21 the 2010 Commission was fortunate to have Vince
22 Barbera [sic], you know, a former U.S. Census
23 Director, two-time Census Director. I think he was
24 actually picked in the lottery. If he had been
25 available for one of the six, the chosen six, I

1 think he would have been a very, very attractive
2 candidate to bring that kind of background to the
3 work.

4 But, certainly, you know, legal
5 background, data background, mapping background,
6 community work backgrounds, to look for how those
7 might add to the Commission.

8 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

9 MS. PELLMAN: We have 2 minutes, 50
10 seconds remaining.

11 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay. Thank you.

12 Mr. Coe, I don't have any further
13 questions at this point.

14 CHAIR COE: Thank you, Ms. Dickison.

15 We'll go ahead and turn the time over to
16 Mr. Belnap.

17 DR. YEE: Thank you, Ms. Dickison.

18 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Good morning, Dr.
19 Yee.

20 DR. YEE: Mr. Belnap.

21 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: I want to start my
22 questions with just going way back to the early
23 '80s.

24 You studied nutrition. And, well, you
25 graduated with a Bachelor's in Nutrition in Food

1 Science from UC Berkeley.

2 Why did you go into that degree and what
3 was your intention in terms of career in that area?

4 DR. YEE: Wow, way back. Thank you, Mr.
5 Belnap. It is throwback Thursday, isn't it?

6 At the time, I didn't have a clear idea at
7 all of a direction professionally. I was among a
8 lot of high school peers who were interested in
9 science professions or medicine, perhaps, careers
10 like that, and so that seemed interesting to me. I
11 had a personal friend who had -- a few years older
12 -- who had done an nutrition program at UC
13 Berkeley. And at the time, it just seemed to me
14 that, you know, no matter what else I did in life,
15 nutrition would be part of my life, you know, part
16 of the world, something worth understanding. And
17 so I went into that, you know, maybe with some pre-
18 medical thoughts and it was worthwhile. I had a
19 good experience in it.

20 But I did discover later that even though
21 it was able to do the science, and science is very
22 interesting and I'm glad I did that, I'm especially
23 glad now because, as it happens, my wife is a
24 physician. And so having that science background
25 helps me understand her work and the things that

1 she does better. But I found, actually, that my
2 interest and my temperament and personality
3 actually was more towards things like writing, and
4 things like history, and things like culture, and
5 narratives, and things like that.

6 And so I would chalk it all up to
7 youthfulness and some influences in my life and the
8 availability of the program at Berkeley, just kind
9 of the sense that this is something worth knowing
10 about, and that's what motivated me at the time.

11 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Okay. Thank you.

12 I know you graduated with a Master's in
13 Old Testament from the Dallas Theological Seminary.

14 DR. YEE: Um-hmm.

15 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Does that mean --
16 and the number of years attended was four. Does
17 that mean you lived in Texas for those four years?

18 DR. YEE: I did. I lived in Dallas, Texas
19 for those four years. And, you know, it's the
20 south, my first time in the south. It's Bible
21 Belt. It's a very different place, you know?

22 And I remember early in my time there,
23 opening up the Dallas Morning News, and at that
24 time President Reagan was in Office, and there it
25 was, a pro President Reagan editorial in the Dallas

1 Morning News. You know, I don't think I had ever
2 seen that in the papers around here. So a very
3 different part of the world. I came to love the
4 people there and love the southern hospitality and
5 the sense of family there. I really enjoyed that.
6 But also came to, you know, appreciate California
7 all the more and realized that what we have here is
8 very special, you know, not to be taken for
9 granted, the diversity, the natural beauty.

10 Certainly, the Asian presence here in
11 California goes much farther back, much further
12 back, and it's much more diverse than what I
13 experienced there in Dallas. So, yeah, it was very
14 eye opening, good experience, but also glad to be
15 back here in California.

16 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: So before entering
17 the seminary, at some point you must have decided,
18 too, that going into being a pastor was where your
19 life was headed. Can you tell us about that
20 decision?

21 DR. YEE: Sure. Part of that was -- so
22 I've mentioned before, I'm, you know, I'm drawn to
23 gaps. You know, what's missing? What needs to be
24 done that isn't being done.

25 And part of my decision to go to seminary

1 in the first place was actually not professional.
2 The church I was at, at the time, the church my
3 family attended and that I grew up in, we had a
4 pastor at the time who encouraged young people
5 there to, you know, as they got their college
6 degrees and, perhaps, graduate degrees, that in
7 that mix that they include some higher education in
8 religion, you know, in matters of faith. And his
9 reasoning was, you know, you're going to get all
10 educated in all these other parts of your life.
11 You should, you know, have some education in this
12 part of your life, as well, you know, no matter
13 what profession you're in.

14 It's similar to, I think, some of the, you
15 know, centuries ago, the origins of some of the Ivy
16 League colleges, Harvard and so forth, you know,
17 that all had, you know, such training, you know, in
18 religion as part of their curricula for all of
19 their students because to be educated, to be part
20 of a community, you know, that's part of what you
21 should know about.

22 So that's what initially voted me. It
23 wasn't, initially, a professional decision. But as
24 I progressed in my seminary career, I came to
25 realize that there was a gap in church leadership

1 among Asian Americans. You know, the majority of
2 Asian American churches in America are still
3 pastored by overseas-born, you know, first-
4 generation immigrant leaders, even though, for
5 instance, for Chinese, you know, we've been here
6 over 150 years and, yet, the majority of Chinese
7 America pastors are first generation, not America-
8 born, pastors. And there's a huge gap because, of
9 course, once the first generation has arrived,
10 every generation after that is American, is born
11 here, so a huge gap.

12 And I saw that gap and it weighed on me.
13 And so that's when I decided to help try to fill
14 that gap and make it not only an experience of
15 enriching my life but as a professional direction
16 as well.

17 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: All right. Thank
18 you.

19 So after getting a certificate in Anglican
20 Studies, it looks like from your employment
21 history, you became a pastor at New Life Christian
22 Fellowship for ten years.

23 DR. YEE: That's right.

24 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: So -- and you were
25 also later a pastor at another church. So that's

1 leads to my next question.

2 How has your experience as a pastor
3 increased your understanding and appreciation for
4 California's diversity?

5 DR. YEE: Yes. So, you know, as a pastor,
6 you circulate in church circles and you talk to
7 people about their spiritual lives and commitments
8 and community involvement in their churches, and so
9 that whole world. And as I mentioned before, for
10 me, it's a wide world, more conservation, more
11 liberal, different, you know, different churches
12 all over. It helps me to understand those parts of
13 people's live.

14 You know, when I look out at Oakland,
15 Oakland has a very diverse religious landscape, you
16 know? I love being -- where I live is, actually,
17 right down the hill from our -- there's a Greek
18 Orthodox -- a large Greek Orthodox Church right
19 next to a Latter Day Saints temple, right down the
20 street from a newer Ethiopian Orthodox Church. You
21 know, we have all our historically Black churches
22 in Oakland, main line churches, Evangelical
23 churches, immigrant churches. And, you know, that
24 whole world is familiar to me and, you know, I
25 circulate in those circles. And I understand

1 people and their attachments and commitments to
2 those settings. And, of course, other religions as
3 well. So in Oakland, you know, we have somewhat
4 newer Buddhist temples and some mosques and so
5 forth.

6 So I think just understanding that part of
7 people's lives, certainly the more conservative
8 parts of the state, Central Valley and so forth,
9 the large churches and the roles that they play in
10 their communities, their communities of interest,
11 is familiar territory to me and something that I
12 think, if someone from the public who is part of a
13 setting like that, you know, wanted to share, they
14 find, in me, someone who could understand and
15 respond to their interests and their concerns, you
16 know, with some skill and personal background.

17 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Okay. Thank you.

18 So you ended your time as pastor in 2001
19 and then became an associate pastor in 2007, so
20 there's a six-year gap there that I want to ask
21 about. The first ten years is a long time. Maybe
22 your service was up?

23 But why did you end -- why did you stop
24 being the pastor in 2001 for the New Life Christian
25 Fellowship?

1 DR. YEE: Sure. So New Life, by the way,
2 that was the church where we made that big
3 denominational decision that I talked about
4 earlier.

5 Even -- so during those ten years I was at
6 New Life, I was not full-time there. I was
7 actually teaching as well. So after my doctorate
8 studies, I wanted to be mostly pastoring and
9 then -- but also teaching, and so I was teaching
10 that whole time during those ten years.

11 In the course of those ten years, I
12 learned more about myself and learned more about
13 pastoring and teaching and realized that my gifts
14 were actually more towards teaching than pastoring.
15 I think in my life, the way I'm wired, kind of the
16 more structured nature of teaching fit me better.
17 And I had better energy for that and more skill. I
18 was actually able to be more pastoral as a
19 professor, I found.

20 And so near the end of those ten years at
21 New Life, as I looked at the church, they actually
22 wanted me to stay on but it seemed to me that my
23 gifts and interests were not what they needed most
24 for going to the next step. They needed a different
25 leader, somebody, perhaps, with a different skill

1 set than I had. And so that's why I wrapped it up
2 there. I turned to mostly teaching.

3 My later associate pastor position was at
4 the church I'm at now. And I was on staff for a
5 few years when they were younger and smaller, and
6 so -- but still mostly teaching at that time.

7 So I haven't been doing just one thing all
8 those years, some, you know, on paid staff at
9 churches, doing lots of volunteer things, as well
10 as teaching.

11 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Now tell me more
12 about the teaching. I don't know if I see that in
13 front of me. Where were you teaching?

14 DR. YEE: So, you know, as it happens,
15 right now in American higher education, it's hard
16 to believe but the majority of classes are taught
17 by what's called contingent faculty. Contingent
18 faculty are either graduate students or faculty
19 that are not tenure track who are hired to teach a
20 class. And so that's been my role, mostly, mostly
21 in adjunct and in associate appointments.

22 And so teaching in recent years, my main
23 appointment was at Fuller Theological Seminary,
24 which is based in Pasadena, it's actually the
25 largest Protestant seminary in the world, and

1 teaching in-person classes, and then more recently
2 teaching mostly online classes. So teaching there,
3 as well as other schools.

4 I did some teaching for a small seminary
5 in Southern California, and then other settings, so
6 --

7 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: And what were the
8 subjects that you teach or taught?

9 DR. YEE: So at the seminaries, I've
10 taught mostly what's called Pastoral Ministry, so
11 that's the work of pastoring, other than preaching,
12 and so a lot of pastoral care, leadership, building
13 teams. My particular interest is in Christian
14 worship, and so that's the history of that, the
15 cultural nature of it, how it's developed over
16 time, the theology of it, of course, and so I like
17 teaching in those areas. And I find what motivates
18 me most is actually the cultural teaching and
19 trying to help students appreciate it more, have
20 more tools for thinking about it, talking about it,
21 helping.

22 So right now, I'm actually involved with
23 the Asian American Center at Fuller Theological
24 Seminary. And I find a lot of my work there helps
25 students kind of find their own voice and think

1 about their own stories and, you know, what does it
2 mean to pastor or be in ministry in Asian American
3 settings? How does it work trying to integrate
4 themselves to the majority culture? And questions
5 like that.

6 So that's something about my teaching.

7 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Thank you.

8 Madam Secretary, can I get a time check?

9 MS. PELLMAN: Yes. Six minutes, fifteen
10 seconds remaining.

11 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Okay.

12 Now I'd like you to walk us through an
13 example of a complex analysis you've performed in
14 either your work or academic experience.

15 DR. YEE: Conflict? Is that a conflict
16 analysis?

17 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: No, a complex.

18 DR. YEE: Complex analysis? Wow. I
19 suppose my mind immediately goes to my doctoral
20 research, the research of my doctoral program,
21 which was sociolinguistic analysis of different
22 approaches to Christian worship, so looking at
23 Sunday worship and examining the difference between
24 settings that are liturgical, so they have service
25 books they -- I guess you could get all the script,

1 you know, for the service, written prayers,
2 comparing that with all the traditions that don't
3 use written liturgies, that are more extemporaneous
4 in their approach to their worship.

5 And so this was a sociolinguistic
6 analysis. And I used various models, including one
7 called diglossia, looking at different ways that
8 settings use language. And so I had to look at
9 lots of different language, samples and critiques
10 of those and analyses of those, and come up with a
11 theory of the nature of the use of language in such
12 settings and how formal and informal language
13 relate to each other in those settings. So that
14 was a big project.

15 Data analysis, complex analysis, I do
16 think of my running. It's an incredibly
17 quantitative process. Marathon racing and
18 training, there's all these sources of advice and
19 plans and you have to analyze them. You have to do
20 a lot of quantitative work, as well as qualitative
21 work, and look at evidence, you know, not just take
22 things at face value, compare things, talk to
23 people, decide on a plan, execute that plan,
24 evaluate it. And so doing that for myself and
25 doing that with others, a lot of complex analysis.

1 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: So, Madam Secretary,
2 how much time do I have?

3 MS. PELLMAN: Three minutes, fifty
4 seconds, 5-0.

5 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: So I want to come
6 back to the linguistic analysis that you performed

7 DR. YEE: Um-hmm.

8 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Where did you get
9 your information about the various forms of worship
10 and the language used?

11 DR. YEE: It's a very tricky matter
12 because for the liturgical traditions, of course,
13 we have written, published, authorized liturgies
14 and so you have these, you know, these published
15 sources, you know, on paper that you can analyze.
16 And then, of course, you go into their settings and
17 you actually listen and look at those settings.

18 For the extemporaneous traditions, it's
19 much trickier. So, of course, you visit them. You
20 look at transcripts. You talk to people. You ask
21 them how they approach -- you talk to worship
22 leaders and ask them how they approached deciding
23 what they're going to say. And so you collect data
24 that way and try to analyze it was best you can.
25 But that was definitely a challenge.

1 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Okay. Thank you.

2 I have no further questions.

3 DR. YEE: Thank you, Mr. Belnap.

4 CHAIR COE: Thank you, Mr. Belnap.

5 Mr. Dawson?

6 MR. DAWSON: Thank you, Mr. Coe.

7 Good morning -- well, it's now afternoon,

8 Dr. Yee.

9 DR. YEE: Yeah.

10 MR. DAWSON: Just a couple of follow-up
11 questions.

12 In your response to standard question one,
13 you mentioned that you were -- had dived into the
14 Online Academy of the Census.

15 DR. YEE: Yes.

16 MR. DAWSON: Is that intended to help
17 users of census data?

18 DR. YEE: That's correct. So the U.S.
19 Census, it's a little messy right now because
20 they're actually transitioning from their older
21 platform, which is American Fact Finder, to a newer
22 platform, which is at data.census.gov. So it's,
23 yeah, it's for the general public, as well as for
24 any specialists or professionals, to just learn how
25 to navigate census data and make good use of it,

1 and so, you know, helpful videos and tutorials for
2 how to do that.

3 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

4 It's kind of a broad question. What can
5 the history of Oakland teach us about the history
6 of California generally and how would that be --
7 how would that perspective be useful to the
8 Commission?

9 DR. YEE: Wow. Oh, my goodness. You
10 know, I think what the starting point is, is
11 realizing that every place has an incredibly
12 complex and, you know, multifaceted story behind
13 it, really.

14 One of the very first things I always
15 start with in my Oakland class is a unit on
16 dispelling the idea of a single story. You cannot
17 explain anyplace with a single story. And it's not
18 that those single stories are not true necessarily.
19 The trouble is that they don't tell the whole
20 story; right?

21 So right now one of the big debates in
22 Oakland and a lot of our big cities involves
23 gentrification, right, and housing debates. And
24 you could say, well, this is the whole story of
25 Oakland right now, it's, you know, newcomers with

1 money displacing long-time residents with less
2 money, you know? And that is part of our story.
3 But that's, you know, just one fraction of our
4 story.

5 So I think Oakland and its history,
6 immigration, changes, dramatic changes, you know,
7 historically, Oakland actually was a very
8 conservative town and it changed a lot. It's
9 changed, you know, dramatically two or three times
10 in its history.

11 So just an appreciation for the complexity
12 of places and stories, as well as, you know, Native
13 American backgrounds and presence and the
14 importance of all those things apply to the state
15 as a whole as well.

16 MR. DAWSON: All right. Thank you.

17 I have no further follow-ups.

18 DR. YEE: Thank you, Mr. Dawson.

19 CHAIR COE: Ms. Dickison, any follow-up
20 questions?

21 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: I have no follow-
22 up questions.

23 CHAIR COE: Mr. Belnap?

24 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: No further follow-up
25 questions.

1 CHAIR COE: Mr. Dawson, I don't have any
2 further follow-up questions either.

3 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

4 Madam Secretary, how much time is
5 remaining in the 90 minutes?

6 MS. PELLMAN: Four minutes, five seconds
7 remaining.

8 MR. DAWSON: All right. Thank you.

9 Dr. Yee, with the time remaining, I'd like
10 to give you the opportunity to make a closing --
11 make some closing remarks to the Panel, if you
12 wish?

13 DR. YEE: I do wish. Thank you.

14 Thank you all for persevering in this very
15 impressive and long process of the selection phase
16 of the Redistricting Commission. I'm just really
17 inspired by your work and by this process. And I
18 have full confidence that whoever, eventually, ends
19 up on the Commission, the 14, the lucky and the
20 chosen, that they will do excellent work. And, you
21 know, of course, I would love to be part of that
22 work. But if I'm not, I will have full confidence
23 in the work of the Commission.

24 As I think about the work of the 2010
25 Commission, and maybe even further back, the 2008

1 proposition that led to this Commission, it's hard
2 to remember just how unlikely it all was, you know?
3 I think the good work of the 2010 Commission makes
4 it seem inevitable but it was not inevitable. It
5 was not even likely. And I'm just thrilled to be a
6 part of a state where we pulled this off, you know?
7 We pulled it off well once and I would like to help
8 it pull it off well again.

9 And as I look, as I read the news every
10 day, as I'm really heartbroken over the
11 polarization in our nation, the heavy debates, and
12 some of the discouraging developments around voting
13 rights, you know, being a poll worker last month
14 and seeing up close and personal what the low voter
15 turnout that is typical, sadly, for us looks like,
16 you know, as I was at the precinct there just being
17 kind of heartbroken about that low voter turnout,
18 all the debates about the electoral college and
19 sort forth, in the midst of all that we have this
20 success of California citizen nonpartisan
21 redistricting as a lot and as a positive
22 development to our recent history.

23 And so I would love, I would love, love,
24 love to be part of this important work.

25 And so I just thank you, Mr. Coe, Mr.

1 Belnap, and Ms. Dickison, Mr. Dawson, the staff
2 there, interpreters, the secretary, the video, our
3 video friend, everybody, thank you so much for your
4 time. Please be safe and thank you.

5 CHAIR COE: Thank you, Dr. Yee, for taking
6 the time to speak with us this morning and
7 afternoon a little bit.

8 Our next interview is scheduled for 1:15,
9 so we will go into recess until 1:14.

10 (Thereupon the Panel recessed at 12:13 p.m.)

11 (Whereupon the Panel reconvened at 1:14 p.m.)

12 CHAIR COE: The time being 1:14 p.m., I'd
13 like to call this meeting out of recess, back to
14 order.

15 At this time, I'd like to welcome Ms.
16 Denisse Godoy for her interview.

17 I hope I said your name right?

18 MS. GODOY: You did.

19 CHAIR COE: Great. So, obviously, you're
20 here. Okay. Welcome. Thank you for being here.

21 I'd like to turn the time over to Mr.
22 Dawson to ask the five standard questions please.

23 MR. DAWSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

24 Ms. Godoy, I'm going to ask you five
25 standard questions that the Panel has requested