GREETINGS

Command Sgt. Major Dennis King

The State of Black America Town Hall: *Portrait of the Black Male*

Thank you for that warm introduction, _____. Good afternoon, Everyone; and thank you for participating in this important discussion.

Everyone in America has a vested interest in the successes and failures of African American males because, one way or the other, that success or failure impacts us all: Rich and poor, professional and working class, Black and White, women and children.

What happens to Black men in America impacts every community and every city in this nation. I suspect that's why this room is packed today. You're not simply looking for solutions, you want to be part of the solution. You want to take an active role in turning this situation around.

That's why the United States Army is here, as well. We are extremely proud to sponsor this dynamic dialogue and we're just as proud to be a part of the solution.

The role that the Army has played in strengthening our communities has been blurred in recent years. Many have forgotten that the decision to wage war is not a military decision. It never was. At no time during the history of America has the Army ever declared war on any nation. That is not what we do.

Soldiers make a commitment to protect America and her citizens. We promise to defend our Constitution. It is America's Soldiers who guarantee the freedoms in our Bill of Rights—including the freedom to assemble.

There are places in this world where forums such as this would not be allowed, where participants might actually be prosecuted or persecuted.

Your Army makes sure that we maintain the right to gather, to speak freely when we are together, and to publish whatever is said. That is why we have an Army—and why we must always have Soldiers.

There probably isn't anyone in this room who doesn't have someone in the family tree who was or is in the military. Many in our families bought that first home, obtained college, graduate school, medical or law degrees or a Ph.D. with military benefits. Many learned job skills that landed excellent jobs in the civilian world.

Millions of African American families and communities are stronger today because someone served. THAT's what the Army does, which is not to be confused with the footage on the evening news.

Army service makes individuals stronger, which makes our communities and our nation stronger. That's why this town hall meeting is so important. We are only as strong as our weakest link—whether it's our families, our neighbors, communities, our companies or our nation.

On behalf of the U.S. Amy, I'd like to offer special thanks to each of today's panelists. We look forward to you sharing your expertise, your research, your concern and your solutions.

And we appreciate each of you in the audience, who have demonstrated your willingness to be part of the solution.

Thank you so much!