

**Over-Representation Of Minorities
In The Criminal Justice System (ROCS) Task Force
First Meeting Minutes
November 20, 2000**

Members In Attendance:

ROCS Co-Chair Rev. Ronald Williams, Bethel AME Church
ROCS Co-Chair Mike Schrunk, Multnomah County District Attorney
Daniel Binns, Citizen
Tiffany Brandreth, Citizen
Woodrow Broadnax, Citizen
Hongsa Chanthavong, Asian Family Center
(Joanne Fuller for) Elyse Clawson, Mult. Co. Dept. of Juvenile and Adult Community Justice
Serena Cruz, Multnomah County Commissioner, District 2
Jim Ellis, Multnomah County Courts
Bill Feyerherm, Portland State University
Bernie Giusto, Gresham Police Chief
Art Hendricks, Portland Office of Neighborhood Involvement
Jim Hennings, Metropolitan Public Defenders
Y'Beth Iglesias, Oregon Council for Hispanic Advancement
Roy Jay, African American Chamber of Commerce
Donna Johnson, Citizen
Mark Kroeker, Portland Police Chief
Ray Mathis, Citizens Crime Commission
Dan Noelle, Multnomah County Sheriff
Tawna Sanchez, Native American Youth Association
Pedro Sosa, VOZ Workers Rights Education Project
Oscar Sweeten-Lopez, Centro Hispano/Hispanic Access Center
Kay Toran, Volunteers of America
Michael Ware, Out Front House, Inc.

Members Absent:

Jackie Mercer, Native American Rehabilitation Association
Kris Olson, U.S. Attorney
Ronita Sutton, Citizen

Others in Attendance:

JoAnn Bowman, Oregon State Representative
Rev. Felton Campbell
Andy Madden, Citizen
Liliana McNair Scott, Oregon Council for Hispanic Advancement
Virginia Rusk, Citizen

ROCS Staff in Attendance:

Christine Kirk, District Attorney's Office
Peter Ozanne, Public Safety Coordinating Council
Suzanne Riles, Public Safety Coordinating Council

SUMMARY MINUTES

1. Welcome and Introduction of Members

Following a half hour of refreshments and greetings, the Co-Chairs opened the meeting. Mike Schrunk reviewed the history of the Working Group on Over-Representation of Minorities in the Justice System that preceded the creation of the ROCS Task Force. This Working Group is part of the activities of the Local Public Safety Coordinating Council of Multnomah County (LPSCC). (*Visit the LPSCC web site to learn more about the LPSCC: www.lpscc.org.*)

Mike Schrunk referred to the 150-page report analyzing justice agency statistics on whether there is over-representation of minorities at certain key decision points of the system. Over-representation was defined as

a greater percentage of a particular racial or ethnic group within a community's criminal justice population than that group's percentage within the community's general population.

Mike Schrunk emphasized that the Public Safety Coordinating Council has high hopes that the ROCS task force will be able to identify some short-term and long-term strategies for what to do about over-representation in the Multnomah County criminal justice system. It is anticipated that continued statistical monitoring of racial and ethnic group proportions at key justice decision points will be important, and the Council believes strongly that members of minority communities need to play a major role in deciding what else needs to be done.

Reverend Ronald Williams welcomed everyone in attendance with a promise that this Task Force will do more than have its members simply participate on a committee. Rev. Williams stressed that over-representation of minorities in the justice system is a serious and long-standing problem that needs to be addressed in constructive ways by this Task Force. Rev. Williams said that he felt special satisfaction to see the different members of the Task Force seated around the circle next to each other, including those who might not normally be expected together. Rev. Williams said that the work before the Task Force will be difficult, it will call on us to work closely together with people of different views, and with everyone involved, we can indeed make a difference in addressing this difficult problem effectively.

Following the introduction, those in attendance introduced themselves and identified the organizations they represent, or their reasons and hopes for attending.

2. Presentation: Background to Creation of the Task Force

Peter Ozanne, Coordinator of the Public Safety Council, reviewed seven principles that guided the work of the original Working Group on Over-Representation. These are:

- Recommendations must be created with community input.
- Work should focus on issues that we can impact.
- Address both perceptions and the realities.
- There are no quick fixes.
- The concept of “over-representation” must be clearly defined (as greater than the percentage of the group in the population).
- Public policies and resource allocation directly affect the extent of minority over-representation.
- Data relevant to over-representation is limited.

Professor Bill Feyerherm of Portland State University talked about the Working Group’s report, focusing on the data and statistics presented. Questions that the report focused on:

- What is the over-representation coming into the system in the first place (arrest)?
- Does the degree of over-representation change for cases as they move through the justice system?
- What level of detail do we have to look at in order to find changes in over-representation?
- Where can the findings lead to policy changes?

The report analyzed data from four decision points: arrest, prosecution, sentencing, and supervision. Major findings are summarized in this table:

Race/ Ethnicity	Population %	Arrests %	Jail: <i>Offenders Booked</i> %	Prosecution Cases Received %	Court: Guilty Sentence %	Post Prison Supervision & Probation %
Asian	6	2.3	1.6	2.0	2.1	1.8
Hispanic	4	9.5	9.2	9.9	9.9	4.9
African-Am.	8	23.0	23.4	22.2	23.5	22.0
Native Am.	1	2.1	1.5	1.3	1.3	1.2
White	83	63.0	64.3	64.5	63.2	70.1
Total:	100	100	100	100	100	100

- African Americans, Hispanics and Native Americans are over-represented at arrest, especially African Americans. Asians and Whites are under-represented.
- Later in the system, the over-representation of minority groups does not get worse compared to the proportions at the point of arrest.

Bill Feyerherm introduced the concept of “drilling down” or looking more closely at the data, and discussed signs of over-representation that do not appear at first:

- While African Americans are over-represented in most offense categories, they are even more over-represented for drug offenses and drug-free zone trespass arrests (37.9%).
- When judges have a choice to impose a more severe sentence (prison) or a more lenient one (probation), harsher sentences are more often given to people of color and lighter sentences are give to whites.
- African Americans are more often assessed at a high risk to re-offend by probation/post-prison supervision officers.

3. Questions and Answers

A number of questions were raised to clarify the meaning of the tables and how the slide presentation corresponded to the tables in the report. JoAnn Bowman asked why the report did not recommend that policy makers should estimate the consequences to a community of pursuing policies that target problems in that community. County Commissioner and ROCS Task Force member Serena Cruz indicated that it was planned that it would be the job of this ROCS Task Force to make such recommendations. Bill Feyerherm affirmed that over-representation impact statements for policy options is one possible recommendation that this group might want to consider.

4. Charge to the Task Force

Speaking on behalf of the County Chair and Chair to the Public Safety Council, Beverly Stein, Peter Ozanne referred to the first recommendation in the Executive Summary of the report (page iii), charging the ROCS Task Force. In that statement, Chair Stein and the other members of the LPSCC charged the Task Force to “*develop an action plan that identifies effective, immediate, short-term and long-term strategies to address and reduce the trend of minority over-representation.*”

5. Next Steps

The group discussed how often to meet regularly, and when to meet as soon as possible for a special one-day retreat for the purpose of laying out a plan and schedule for Task Force activities in the coming year. It is hoped that the work will be complete after one year. Members agreed to meet monthly in the evenings, for about two hours each time. It may be that some work can be delegated to sub-committees of the group, so that monthly meetings of the entire ROCS Task Force may not be necessary after the first few meetings. December 11 was suggested for the retreat date. Depending on how many members can be available on such short notice, that day or the soonest possible day will be chosen for the retreat. No permanent meeting place was chosen, pending a decision about whether to meet in the same place each time, or to vary the meeting place so as to visit a number of communities.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.