



PUBLIC SAFETY

MULTNOMAH COUNTY COORDINATING COUNCIL

Racial Over-representation in the Criminal Justice System (ROCS)

Task Force Meeting Notes February 22, 2001

NOTICE: THE PUBLIC IS INVITED TO ATTEND ALL ROCS TASK FORCE MEETINGS

Next Meeting: Thursday, Mar. 22, 7-9 p.m.

Task Force Members Attending (19): Daniel Binns, Tiffany Brandreth, Hongsa Chanthavong, Serena Cruz, Bill Feyerherm, Bernie Giusto, Art Hendricks, John Connors for Jim Hennings, Roy Jay, Mark Kroeker, Ray Mathis, Jackie Mercer, Dan Noelle, Tawna Sanchez, Mike Schrunk, Ronita Sutton, Pam Kelly for Kay Toran, Michael Ware, Ronald Williams.

Task Force Members Absent (8): Woodrow Broadnax, Elyse Clawson, Jim Ellis, Donna Johnson, Y'Beth Iglesias, Kris Olson, Pedro Sosa, Oscar Sweeten-Lopez.

Others Attending Who Signed In (19, including 5 press reps., 3 reverends, and 3 from outside of Multnomah Co.): Tivon Abel (Self-Enhancement, Inc.), Sanja Adams, Kareem Ali, Ruth Ascher (*El Hispano News*), Rev. A. Bailey, Quintoshia Bell, Rev. Felton Campbell, Roberto Cruz, Philip Dawdy (*Willamette Week*), Katia Dunn (*Portland Mercury*), Doris Evans, Gillian Gaynair (*Oregonian*), Gloria Harris, Carol Lee, Dave Mazza (*The Portland Alliance*), Melissa Mills, Rev. Victor Reynolds (Washington Co.), Julie Smith (Clackamas Co.), Bill TenEyck (Clackamas Co.).

Support Persons Attending: Joe Hertzberg, Christine Kirk, Peter Ozanne, Suzanne Riles.

Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Task Force members and others attending introduced themselves. Members discussed the January 22 meeting in small groups, and then reported back to the full Task Force.

Reverend Williams reported that one work group has begun to meet for the purpose of planning outreach to the community. Task Force member Art Hendricks, Crime Prevention manager for the Portland Office of Neighborhood Involvement, has agreed to chair it. The group has met once to develop the following proposal for the Task Force to consider.

Outreach Work Group Proposal (Art Hendricks, Chair)

The work group recommended the following points (summarized):

1. Outreach to the community should come from **trusted sources**, be proactive, to existing groups, and cover identified topics and issues.
2. The Task Force needs to identify **key questions or issues** that require community input in order to find more effective policy or procedures.
3. Establish a **mechanism for handling complaints** and concerns received from the public at ROCS meetings.
4. Develop an outreach strategy with the Multnomah County Public Affairs Office that would **educate people about the justice system**, in part by summarizing the report already published by the Over-Representation Work Group that preceded this Task Force.
5. Outreach should be **targeted to specific communities** and employed for general information and **to get input on policy issues identified by the Task Force**.
6. The Outreach group should be **adopted by the ROCS Task Force and expand its membership** to ensure adequate representation from the community.

The Co-Chairs accepted public comment on the Outreach proposal. Summary of remarks:

Comment that although it is exciting that this group of decision makers is tackling this subject, there are many “no-brainers” already known about what causes people of color to be over-represented among offenders. Justice agency heads themselves probably already know a lot about what should be done, and they should waste no time to implement the needed changes.

Asked for more information about the mission of the Task Force, and were told that its purpose is to reduce over-representation by making recommendations for change in the policies and procedures used by justice officials. Sign up sheets were distributed for people to request copies of the report “Ensuring Equitable Treatment in the Criminal Justice System.” Hongsa Chanthavong called for developing broad goal statements and specific objectives for reaching those goals. Sheriff Dan Noelle stressed that we want to develop solutions, and the mission statement should be added to the Outreach plan. Chief Bernie Giusto stated that things are going to have to change and it will take courage. Felton Campbell said that although the process is confusing, attending meetings regularly helps to make more sense of it, and he encouraged members of the public to continue attending. Co-Chair Williams read the mission statement.

Citizens and Task Force members discussed public input and what response to make to complaints. Serena Cruz expressed the desire to hear people’s stories about their experiences in order to put a face on how the justice system affects people. Bill Feyerherm said that we need to hear the stories to identify the “no-brainers” referred to earlier. Jackie Mercer said that Indians

are tired of being studied and do want to tell their stories, and that there should be community-specific formats. Tawna Sanchez said that each ethnic group must be comfortable. About the complaint process Roy Jay cautioned that many will not want to make their complaints to the agency that they see as having injured them. Another body needs to collect these complaints. Art Hendricks stated that the Metropolitan Human Rights Center currently collects complaints and can help with this.

Dan Noelle moved and Michael Ware seconded that the Outreach work group be adopted by the ROCS Task Force. Members approved unanimously.

Proposal for a Working Group Structure

A proposal was distributed to create three working groups to focus on specific problems and potential solutions, and access professional expertise and community perspectives on these topics. These working groups would deal with three major areas of the justice process:

1. Stops and Arrests

Decisions governing street encounters

2. Court Processes

Decisions to bring formal charges before the court, pretrial release, plea bargaining, and sentencing.

3. Corrections

Decisions affecting conditions of probation and parole, access to programs and treatment, sanctions under supervision, and early release.

Members discussed the pros and cons of addressing crime prevention in the context of this Task Force dedicated to improving the criminal justice system itself. Ronita Sutton advocated a focus on how to keep crime from occurring in the first place. Ray Mathis agreed that prevention is important but that we can't take everything on, and the justice system needs changes. Chief Mark Kroeker asked that we see a summary of the data and the mission statement at every meeting, that we avoid slipping into the abyss of process, and that we can't ignore prevention entirely. Chief Kroeker moved and Ray Mathis seconded accepting the working group structure proposed. Members approved unanimously.

Public Comment

Melissa Mills: Lack of jobs and poverty create crime, but African Americans get treated worse than whites when they do get into trouble with the law.

Tevon Abel: There are glaring inequities in the criminal justice system, and prevention won't cure that. The big question is whether the local criminal justice system has a rehabilitative intent or not? There is a special need among those who are re-entering the community after prison.

James Posey: Justice agency heads are here tonight, and he wants to know what their solutions would be. People do not want to do crime. They need more support systems and help. We should put more resources into changing things.

Julie Smith: Having everyone here together is very important. She has been a foster mother, but lost her job. She wants to do outreach.

Melissa Mills: There is a need for a strong support system for people coming out of prison. Parole officers arrest people too often for picky little, technical violations.

Rev. A. Bailey: His church is creating a program called Mentoring Man to Man. It helps men out of dysfunctional behavior. Men report to the church twice a week and get help with their GED's and how to dress. Had hoped there would be federal funding available through this Task Force, but realizes now that there is not.

Quintoshia Bell: She hates it that police will break up a group of young people having fun outside at night if they are African American, but they don't worry about noisy young white people out after dark.

Kareem Ali: He was attacked by a Caucasian man in downtown Portland. The female police officer made the judgment that Kareem Ali was responsible because he was the bigger man. But the incident had been videotaped and he was exonerated.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m. Next meeting will be held on March 22, location not yet decided.