

Howard County Racial Equity Task Force
Personal & Public Safety Meeting Minutes (Approved)
Chair: Allison Sayers
January 7th 2021

Panelists Present – Allison Sayers, Richard Gibson, Jonathan Branch, Zikora Akanegbu, Rahel Petros, Marcus Harris, Maya Carey, Eduardo Ribeiro, Karla Morrison-Brooks (Facilitator), Theo Wimberly (Council Staff), Ashley Alston(D2), Michael Harris (D2)

Not Present: Gus Bibum, Jumel Howard, and Zainab Chaudry (all arrived after start of meeting)

Opening:

Allison Sayers completed attendance and introduced the meeting.

Discussion Points:

Allison started with the approval of last meetings' minutes

- Moved to approve the meeting minutes from December 10th
 - Second by Eduardo Ribeiro
 - Approved by the subgroup

Allison facilitated check-in: Reflection on the events that occurred at the Capitol

- Marcus- Recognizes that if minorities were the ones protesting, there would have been a different outcome.
- Rich- Agrees with Marcus. Thinks that part of the problem historically in this country is the equal value of life and the way in which people of color are perceived. There is an unequal tolerance for the resistance of some groups and intolerance for the resistance and protesting of other groups.
- Jonathan- Agrees with Marcus and Rich. He was surprised but also not surprised
- Rahel- Agrees with everything said. Has personally witnessed the Metro Police handle young black people in a negative way. She is frustrated because this event showed the country's hypocrisy.
- Eduardo- Agrees that if this were people of color the outcome would be different. He also had a curiosity to see how far these people were willing to go. They can push how far as they want to and there are little consequences.
- Maya- Uplifts everything that was said. They are exhausted of the hypocrisy and the "gas-lighting."

Karla began the discussion by reviewing the discussion topics from last meeting

- Finding data on a measurement of the excessive use of force towards communities of color
 - Human Rights Committee
 - Physical accounts
 - Arrests for custody
- Finding data on rights violated
- Metrics on Police stops
 - Where police stops are occurring
 - What communities are they occurring in
 - Excessive force
 - Who it is used towards as far as POC vs. Non-POC
 - Marijuana stops by race and ethnicity
- Training of the Police Force

- Seeing documentation of training
 - Cultural competency
- Presence of police
 - Where are they conducting surveillance?
 - Where they congregate
 - Schools
 - School Resource Officers (SROs)
- Overall Police Department stats disaggregated by data
 - Disparities in reports in police data
- Mental Health
 - When police are making arrests and mental health is involved, how does race intersect with that
- ICE
 - How many stops get immigration enforcement involved
 - Detention centers
 - Are ICE guidelines being followed?
- Accountability
 - How are bad cops dealt with?
 - Process of reporting

Karla asked if there were any other areas that people were interested in gathering data on

- Maya- Interested in the criminalization of survivors of intimate partner violence and sexual violence. With their experience in HopeWorks, Maya has seen many times when the police are called on the victim and they are getting punished instead of receiving help.
 - Racial breakdown
- Allison- Finding data on complaints of police officers. How often are complaints made, and what happens when a complaint is made?
 - Ideally broken down by race
 - Maya- Also interested in the accountability aspect.
 - Accountability of the police who receive complaints
 - Where does the investigation go to?
 - Are there similar laws in Howard County that protect police officers? (Rich is able to answer some of the proposed questions)
 - Who is investigating them? Outside group or inside the police department?

Karla addressed how the group will find research for each topic

- Excessive use of force for communities of color, Police Metrics, Training, Police Presence, disparities in reports, marijuana stops, and how mental health is handled
 - Possible Sources:
 - Police Department
 - Chief Meyers or another representative
 - Rich noted that the police will probably share areas that considered “hot spots;” however, they won’t share active investigation locations. They should be able to answer areas they deploy and at what times based on intel.
- Police Presence in schools
 - Possible Sources:
 - BOE study

- State department of Education report
 - Data from the focus groups
 - Parents and students
- Check with Education subgroup
- Department of Juvenile Services (DJS)
- HCPSS- James LeMon
- Connect with Education Subgroup
- ICE
 - Possible Sources:
 - Police Department
 - Marcus doesn't think they would have a lot of data, but he can double check
 - Jack Kavanagh – previous Detention Center Director
 - Eduardo raises concern of Jack being replaced. We do not want a new person to speak on this issue.
 - Marcus- Jack has retired, so we would have to use his replacement.
 - Karla-Questioned is Jack's replacement in yet?
 - Marcus-Doesn't think so, but the replacement will be there most likely by the end of the month.
 - Looking at outside activist groups
 - The Coalition
 - Rahel suggests asking questions before they come and present. Does not want to rely on rough number or estimates. She wants them to come prepared
- Rich suggested staggering meetings because some presentations will be longer than others (i.e. the Police Department)
- Rahel wanted to make the presentation more straightforward and not so much curated and open for possible conversation
- Jumel agreed and wanted to make sure we can have conversation after presentations and not just fed information
- Rich reminded the group that they control the narrative and pose the questions to the guest. There's a certain amount of live action between people which drives discussion.
- Karla asked if it is possible to ask for the data in advance of the meeting so the group can have that while listening/watching the presentation
 - Marcus thinks it is possible. Make this an open forum, but give the presenters an idea of what exactly they will be presenting/asked of
 - Rahel agreed and even suggests asking the presenters guided questions so they can be more prepared. Voices her concern that are giving equal time to all presenters so they can hear all the perspectives
 - Allison agreed with having the data beforehand.
 - Theo- structuring the meeting could help alleviate these concerns. First half could be presentation and that the second half could be Q&A

Karla asked if the subgroup would like to invite the presenters for the February 11th meeting or have a separate meeting

- Allison voted for second meeting if it means hearing Chief Meyers

- Maya agreed with Allison (second meeting)
- Jumel agreed
- Karla asked the group if they would like the police to present on a separate date along with the detention center
 - Marcus agreed for separate days in case the police needs more time
 - Karla suggested having a representative from Jack's office, not necessarily Jack himself since he is retiring.
 - Rahel asked about the implication of the separate meetings
 - Karla reiterated her recommendation of having one or possibly two separate meetings, but she doesn't want to overwhelm the group.
- Voting for separate meeting for Police Department
 - All in favor
 - This meeting will be after February 11th
 - February 18th from 5pm-6pm

February 11th meeting

- Inviting other presenters to present
 - Allison agrees because they might give ideas of what to ask for the February 18th
 - Rich thinks that we should ask questions ahead of time to the community groups
 - Office of Human Rights and ACLU will present

Finalizing what's needed

- Excessive force
 - Howard County Office of Human Rights
 - ACLU-Zainab suggestion
 - Eduardo and Rahel agree
- Detention Center
 - Data will be available, but the representative might not be available until spring

Karla shifted gears and opened the floor to new curiosities that would like to be discovered

- Zainab- Data on hate crime investigations within the County; there is a specific definition of "hate crime" and having data on the investigations, would assist with seeing how much work is done to investigate these crimes
 - Karla-who has that information?
 - Zainab- Police department or States Attorney
 - FBI field office
 - Marcus- Police department
 - Rich- Department of Justice and his office have the data
- Rahel- Restorative justice attempts/efforts within the County.
 - Rich's office takes the restorative justice approach when handling cases. If they deny a case, they try to use an alternate system. The police wouldn't have data on that because it gets implemented at Rich's level. The Lead Program will create data that both Rich's office and the police will have related to criminal actions that could have gone towards prosecution but instead went through diversion; the program is not up and running just yet though.
 - Karla's friend who studied restorative justice at HCC might have some input on this issue

- Maya- Voiced they are against restorative justice and would rather have transformative justice. Looking into crisis response teams (drugs/alcohol, domestic violence, gender-based violence). Focusing on alternatives to having police units go out for non-violent offenses, ones that don't necessarily involve legal action. Would love to look at the police training curriculum. Lastly, human trafficking.
- Jumel -Expands on what Maya said and wants to look into human trafficking.
 - Maya- Human trafficking just got more funding so now is the perfect time to look into it. Focusing on youth in regards to human trafficking
 - Karla- Would HopeWorks be able to provide data
 - Maya would get in contact with the person in charge
 - Jumel-Similar to HopeWorks, Maryland Legal Aid does not collect data about the circumstances of the trauma. Perhaps, looking at the housing situation for people who have been human trafficked in Howard County
 - Karla suggests looking at what services are provided to survivors in Howard County and if they are lacking, the group (if they all agree) could pose this in the recommendation
 - Maya-HopeWorks is underfunded so they don't have the capacity to do more
- Rich- would like to get data that examines what demographic breakdowns in the community that are most often victims. Are there demographic imbalances to who the victims are? Also, break this down by crime.
 - Police could provide contact information
 - Jumel-be mindful of how we bring this as a recommendation. He doesn't want this to lead to over-policing in certain areas
- Allison- agrees on Rich's earlier point to not presuppose anything. Looking for data in parole and probation to see any disparities (Parole and Probation offices in Howard County). Echoed Rahel's earlier point of entry programs at the detention centers.
- Marcus has a domestic violence advocate in his office and possibly provide stats
 - Maya-HopeWorks has 3 contact Attorneys that police could report to
 - Jumel- Maryland Legal Aid could also help
- Eduardo- would like to know if there was a way to cross reference the victims of human trafficking with the perpetrators. Focus on preventative law enforcement on the perpetrators. How much is the county producing and consuming in terms of human trafficking?
 - Rich- His office has data on human trafficking
 - Maya notes that not all trafficking involves movement, but it is hard to find the statistics
- Zikora, Jonathon, and Gus agree with all the topics

Research Roles

- Zainab will do outreach for gathering data on hate crimes
- Rahel and Maya are interested in researching in alternatives to policing/response teams
- Maya is willing to conduct research on gender-based crimes
- Jonathon volunteered to look at more information on human trafficking
- Rich will try to gather data on the demographic breakdown of crimes and victims
- Allison will look into Parole and Probation Office

- Rahel is also willing to help with any areas under the “umbrella of imprisonment”

Karla reviewed and recapped what was discussed and reminded the group of the February 11th meeting

Allison reminded the group of the March 11th meeting as well

Eduard asked when the representative of the detention center come in

- Karla answered- date is to be determined

Allison facilitated the final check out

- Eduardo- It is disturbing to see the degree of violence used for certain groups. Recognizes that Maryland has blind spots to racism

Allison adjourned the meeting at 7:01 pm