

Howard County Racial Equity Task Force Personal & Public Safety Meeting Minutes

**Chair: Allison Sayers
December 10, 2020 at 5 PM**

APPROVED

Panelists Present – Allison Sayers, Richard Gibson, Jonathon Branch, Zikora Akanegbu, Rahel Petros, Marcus Harris, Eduardo Ribeiro, Karla Morrison-Brooks, Zainab Chaudry, Augustin "Gus" Bibum, Ashley Alston (D2), Michael Harris (D2), Trish Hammond (Council Staff), and Theo Wimberly (Council Staff).

Not Present: Jumel Howard and Maya Carey

Opening:

Allison Sayers completed the roll call and introduced the meeting.

Discussion Points:

Allison started with the approval of last meetings' minutes

- Moved to approve the meeting minutes from November 18th
 - Second by Jonathon Branch
 - Approved by everyone

Allison facilitated check-in question: What is one value that guides your life and why?

Allison- values compassion, especially in her line of work

Gus- empathy, especially in his line of work; empathy allows him to humanize his clients

Eduardo- *unable to hear the audio/wifi signal was low*

Jonathon- fairness; treating everyone fairly and compassion

Marcus- values good character; treating people fairly; compassion

Rahel-community; having strong connections with people

Richard-accountability; equity; fairness

Zainab-justice; making sure as a society we honor justice to fight the many injustices

Zikora - values compassion; important to understand the suffering of others in order to try to change it

Karla- empathy; seeing things from other's perspective

Theo-hard work; never let anyone outwork you

Karla began the discussion by reviewing the kickoff

- The purpose: Must recommend legislative actions to the County Council that remedies racial disparities and equities in the community by indicating disparate incomes, applicable studies, best practices and local data to ascertain pertinent information on issues related to racial equity and identifying metrics for measuring progress and improvement of racial equity. #2 identifying new county policies that will help racial equity. #3 recommending legislation. #4 recommending action for other county entities that use county funds can implement to improve upon racial equity.
- Roles and responsibilities
 - Attending meetings
 - Doing pre-reading
 - Conducting research/identifying different research areas
 - Developing recommendation that are in accordance with the task force goals
 - Richard asked a question about reaching out to Police Force and adding them as a liaison to join our group
 - Michael H. gave a thumb up to contacting a liaison
 - Karla suggested inviting them to speak, perhaps not a full sub-group member
 - Theo stated that they cannot add any new members, but they can present

- Rahel asked that they invite others to present about safety in a community, not just the police (create an unbiased space)
- Eduardo- *unable to hear the audio/wifi signal was low*
- Richard wants to make sure that they are bringing in facts and quantitative data
- Allison agrees with Rahel and wants to refrain from giving the police a platform
- Eduardo- making sure we are valuing the different voices and experiences and acknowledging the fact that these data points aren't neutral
- Karla does a recap- The value of having different voices, including a member on the police force to present to this group and any other information that is relevant to this group
- Addressing any questions or reactions from the Kickoff presented by Karla
 - Karla says that self-identification is important
 - Everyone can use the terms that most directly describes them and their identity; no coding
 - Terms will be used throughout the entire report to make sure it is a cohesive voice
 - Gus asked a question about using the word BIPOC and whether it was a choice
 - Karla answered that yes, their group can come up with their own term that they deem is more inclusive
 - Eduardo- BIPOC perpetuates the idea that race is binary concept and it encompasses everyone's experiences into one (sweeps things under the rug)

Sub-group work style presented by Allison

- Participant agreements
 - Respect each other's time, resources, identities, and experiences
 - Place technology on silent; stay engaged
 - Connect to our core values and speak from the heart; don't be afraid to say your opinions
 - Be accountable with your commitments and honest about your limitations
 - Give each other grace
 - Keep meeting purpose in mind
 - Continue to raise hands
- Sub-group roles
 - Could not get a full Vice Chair, so we will have Co-Captains: Gus(research portion) and Richard (analytic portion)
 - Assist Allison when she isn't available (two people split the responsibilities)
 - Assist Allison in ensuring everyone has done their research
 - Assist in analyzing the data
 - Co-own part of the work
 - Co-facilitator- Gus
 - Volunteers to take the Open Meeting Acts (OMA) Training
 - Allison and Gus
- Rahel asked if BIPOC was being used as a conversation term or as a lens for analyzing data
 - Karla answered- BIPOC can be used in both instances

Sub-group issues led by Karla

- Policing-What disparities do you believe exist in our community related to it?
 - Zainab asked if they had a list of questions/topics for subsequent meetings
 - Karla answered- they will be proposing topics at the end of the conversation
 - Zainab-excessive use of force, especially in communities of color (BIPOC); retrieve data from the police department as well as utilizing public testimonies as a tertiary source (to try to eliminate bias)
 - What exactly is that data set do we want to see from that police report? – asked by Karla
 - Zainab answered- collect reports of arrests, physical accounts (according to the human rights committee)
 - Richard suggested to begin thinking what they are all curious about as opposed to answering this question that “pre-frames” our mind with a conclusion
 - What are we curious about, what would we like to see?
 - Richard- confirm the idea that (if) there is a correlation between location and the amount of police stops; are these areas predominately white or predominately minority residents?; how many on street/ in person stops are made and is there a correlation with race and/or national origin, gender?; how often do police go “hands on” with POC compared to whites?
 - Zainab- look at the type of diversity training for police; who are the entities vetting these trainings; is there community input in how these trainings are formulated?
 - Rahel-echoed Richard’s point, but in addition to interactions, they should look at the overall presence of police; where are they park their cars for surveillance? ; looking at their surveillance system, even if it doesn’t result in a dramatic; is it more congregated in communities of color?; also looking at the presence of police at the schools
 - Allison- whether police departments even keeps statistics, especially ones regarding race; does the police department keep a list of those who use excessive force; mental health calls and if there are racial disparities; percentage of people being stopped, especially black or brown people compared to white; how many times do police claim to smell marijuana when they stop and search a car
 - Jonathon- have citizens ever witness forceful policing and if they view that as racially motivated; conduct a survey
 - Eduardo- how many stops end up getting Immigration Enforcement involved; have information about follow-up and having transparent data released
 - Zikora- promote the safety of schools without the presence of SRO
 - Marcus-(answers Eduardo) as a part of the Sherriff’s Department, they do not deal with ICE, they only deal with the criminal aspect. When they pull people over, they do not ask immigration status; also agrees to invite experts to provide the stats and facts

- Zainab- have a listening session where we invite grassroots groups that focus on the issue of SRO in schools; how can we amplify those voices from the community, especially the youth
 - Rahel answered- HoCo for Justice can help
- Eduardo- investigate detention centers; they often get overlooked
 - Richard knows people who can come in and answer our questions
- Gus- policing and addressing implicit bias
 - Richard explained how his prosecutors received implicit bias training by Professor McLean and their office is supposed to oversee the police
 - Gus- are police being asked why they search/pull over citizens
 - Richard- the implicit bias training is to look beyond the superficial
 - Marcus- sheriff and police have the training (implicit bias and mental health training). They are instructed to call the mobile crisis line; having deputies go through more frequent psych evaluation
- Zainab- question regarding the content of the training; sometimes there is inaccurate content that is in the training; is it possible to view the training the police are getting or at least look the sources of the content?; agrees with Jonathon to conduct a survey that is distributed through various community partners (to get a gauge of what the experience is for county residents)
 - Theo- a reach outside the focus of the legislation, but it could be a recommendation; public hearings (two) but for the entire Task Force
- Rahel- what is the process for reporting police officers; understanding how they are held accountable, how can the public know more about it?
 - Richard- handled by both the states attorney and police department
 - Marcus- internal affairs will handle and they will be held accountable
- Allison- is the training actually working? ; does it need to be more often? ; acknowledge that there are levels of bad; are the trainings actually trickling down

Moving forward with research

- Richard suggested drafting the questions and deciding on which individuals we want to invite to answer the questions
- Ashley addressed the question: how to circulate information in accordance with the OMA?; suggested to take all the questions and create a document for all members of the Task Force to see and help coordinate who will do each job/research topic; splitting up into smaller groups is also allowed
 - Karla asked if they could refine the questions

- Ashley answered- each person will be able to reply to the email and adjust and they (her and Michael) will adjust the questions accordingly; they will be sending out a list to send to this specific sub-group; feedback is given individually
- Karla- we would come back with the adjustments and figure out the next step in who to invite at the next meeting.
- Timeline
 - January meeting will refine policing topic and leave room for more topics
 - February meeting will invite the guests where they will share

Allison went over upcoming meetings and procedure for Thursdays (5-7pm)

- Next meeting Thursday, January 7th
- Thursday, February 11th
- Thursday, March 11th

Check Out-led by Karla: What do you think about today's meeting (one word)?

- Gus- progressive
- Eduardo- productive/purposeful
- Jonathon- focused
- Marcus- productive
- Allison- honest
- Rahel- interesting
- Rich-direct/honest
- Zainab- optimistic
- Zikora-productive
- Karla-great

Meeting adjourned 6:55 pm by Allison with no further questions.