

FERGUSON COMMISSION

Second Commission Meeting
December 8, 2014

Community Discussion
Report

*Prepared by Commission Consultants & Staff
December 14, 2014*

*Second Meeting
Community Discussion Report
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Meeting Overview

On Monday, December 8, 2014, fifteen members of the Ferguson Commission met for their second meeting at Mullanphy-Botanical Garden Investigative Learning Center from 5:00 pm to 8:30 pm. Three hundred and thirty-six community members joined them as they:

- Shared findings from the first Commission meeting;
- Held an open mic comment period;
- Listened to presentations on Citizen / Law Enforcement Interactions & Relations;
- Invited public discussion of community policing, racial profiling and use of force in small group breakouts; and
- Conducted administrative business.

This document provides a summary of the meeting's findings and serves as a record of the insights and suggestions that emerged from community input.

Attendance

Commissioners in attendance included:

Co-Chair Rev. Starsky Wilson
Brittany Packnett
Scott Negwer
Gabriel E. Gore, J.D.
Grayling Tobias, Ed.D.
Felicia Pulliam, J.D.
Patrick Sly
T.R. Carr, Ph.D

Co-Chair Rich McClure
Daniel Isom, Pn.D.
Bethany A. Johnson-Javois, MSW
Rose A. Windmiller
Becky James-Hatter
Sgt. Kevin Ahlbrand
Rasheen Aldridge, Jr.

Public Discussion Summary

I. Public Open Mic Session

One of the first items on the Commission's agenda was a public open mic session that gave community members two minutes to share their insights, ideas and concerns with Commissioners and other meeting attendees. Eight community members addressed wide-ranging remarks to the Commission in the time allotted. A summary of their comments is presented below.

OPEN MIC COMMENTS

Educational Disparity

- Commission needs to have the power to make change happen, particularly with regard to educational equity
- If the community opened more high performing schools, it could close many of its prisons
- Obtaining access to capital is difficult for African American business owners and social entrepreneurs
- The black community has got to educate its own. It must operate its own institutions

OPEN MIC COMMENTS CONTD.

Educational Disparity contd.

- Schools in Greater St. Louis are segregated. In 1957, President Eisenhower sent the 101st airborne to Little Rock, Arkansas to stop this. We have 22 school districts. We should have ONE GOOD school district covering all 2.9 million people of our region. How can we still have schools that are 99% white and 99% black in 2014 Greater St. Louis? All U.S. citizens should be able to attend a good school and that **SCHOOL SHOULD BE INTEGRATED AND ACCREDITED**. Plantation owners never wanted blacks to be educated. 22 school districts are a SHAM. Earl Warren, Dwight Eisenhower and Thurgood Marshall would be ashamed of St. Louis, St. Louis County and St. Charles County if they were alive today. In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court said schools could NEVER SEGREGATE again! Our 22 school districts should be made into one district **TODAY!!!**

VonDerrit Myers

- Grand juries do whatever prosecutors tell them to do. The court system does not act impartially in these types of cases
- VonDerrit Myers was shot at close range eight times, six times in his back. The kill shot was to the side of his head. A special prosecutor is needed for this case

Law Enforcement

- Commission needs to find out what efforts are being made to weed out law enforcement officers who are biased. They should not be suspended with pay. They should be held more accountable for their actions
- Police crisis intervention teams are resources for families. These officers are trained to bring peace and to protect those who are in agitated states. They are trained to respond with compassion and to deescalate intense situations. Other law enforcement officers can learn much from them
- Police need more and better training and education
- Police officers should live in and know their communities

Miscellaneous

- Municipal court reform is needed. Municipal courts should be committed to justice, not to money
- Commission needs to convene city and county organizations that work to improve the region. These groups have never addressed issues of race in St. Louis substantively. Please bring these groups together to find out why they have not acted before now
- If the Commission expects any legitimacy, it must stand loud and proud on behalf of Rasheen Aldridge, Jr. as he faces harassment by the police. Rasheen was chosen because he is a powerful voice for the voiceless. The Commission must stand up for him to the governor and press the issue until he is treated with the respect that he deserves
- St. Louis is making history and is having birthing pains. This crisis has exposed white privilege and systemic injustice. Our collective work is to build a community of caring and respect in policy and law. We are hurting and can help one another heal. We must not be immobilized by shame, blame and guilt. We are in the process of evolving
- The late 1960s bore witness to riots and killings. Here we are 50 years after the Kerner Commission report and we are back at the same place. The Commission's findings were relevant and accurate then and remain so today. We do not have time to restudy the issues. It is time to act
- To bring about change, people are going to have to exercise their right to vote
- Community members need more time to speak

II. Small Group Discussions

Following presentations by St. Louis City Police Chief Sam Dotson and Commissioner Dan Isom, meeting attendees broke into facilitated small groups to discuss community policing, racial profiling and the use of force. Each group had 35 minutes to discuss two questions, with participants reporting out their discussion highlights to the collective at the meeting's end. Findings from the discussions are captured in the following tables.

USE OF FORCE	
Issues: How would you describe excessive use of force by law enforcement?	Improvements: What concrete actions need to be taken by police departments and / or community members to address excessive Use of Force?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Biased and Preconceived</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Minority, LGBT and mentally ill populations are treated harsher than others and there is an automatic reaction to them ○ Physically disabled are roughed up ○ Protestors are gassed, thrown on ground • <i>Fear-based</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Residents fear police based on past interactions and react in a way that leads to excessive force ○ Police fear the communities served and approach residents in a negative and disrespectful manner (systematic, regardless of situation) • <i>Ego-based</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cowboy mentality among officers to show their worth to department; fail to call for back-up in escalating situation • <i>Retaliatory and Punitive</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Warrant checks are ran on people reporting crime ○ Victims are punished from past arrests • <i>Excessive and Disproportional</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Police only know one way (physical) to address suspected criminal behavior ○ Reaction doesn't match offense ("if you only have a hammer, you only use a hammer", "hand grenade to swat a fly") ○ Unbalanced apprehension (8 officers to subdue one suspect) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Police Department</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Enforce policy of calling for back-up (unless under attack), this may reduce trigger happy mentality ○ Train officers in working with physical and mentally ill, crisis de-escalation, crowd control and protecting 1st amendment rights of protestors ○ Employ hostage negotiation techniques to deescalate situation ○ Train officers to apprehend and restrain suspects in cuffs, then they can discuss (or argue) without threat on officer's life (how else could women become officers, if unable to restrain) ○ Have two officers per vehicle; one carries gun other tazer ○ Refrain from physically touching suspect unless arrest is warranted ○ Follow golden rule – do not physically or verbally abuse suspects ○ Give perpetrator time to comply with directions ○ Use deadly force for officer's protection, not property ○ Shoot to wound, not shoot to kill ○ Do not use excessive force just because someone is "mouthing off" ○ Require that rookie police officers spend first year in community served without guns and cars; will only carry baton and taser ○ Carry an arsenal of tools, including taser ○ Practice consistently departmental protocol – provide space and time to make decision ○ Enforce rules of engagement and ensure accountability ○ Fire or suspend officers who consistently fail to follow protocol and/or rules of engagement

USE OF FORCE CONTD.

Issues: How would you describe excessive use of force by law enforcement?

- ***Excessive and Disproportional contd.***
 - No effort to defuse or de-escalate the situation, no conversation
 - Randomly grabbing protestors, regardless of their actions
- ***Disrespectful***
 - Belittling comments of police to suspect leads to excessive actions by suspect, especially teens
- ***Based on Apprehension and Not Protecting and Serving***
 - Trigger happy police who view community as the enemy
 - Military based tactics rather than community-based

Improvements: What concrete actions need to be taken by police departments and / or community members to address excessive Use of Force?

- ***Police Department contd.***
 - Withhold salaries of officers involved in shooting until review determines the results. If shooting is unjustified, officer faces charges
 - Use special investigator for all police related shootings (police officers shouldn't investigate themselves)
 - Consider a community funded organization that polices police
 - Use school resource officers (more trusted by youth) to develop relationships with police officers
 - Re-institute DARE program
 - Have 24-hour mental health and multiple language teams on standby
 - Increase and enforce residency requirement for officers
 - Ensure officers always have ID badges in visible sight
 - Call emergency medical personnel expediently to address protestors' medical needs
 - Work cooperatively with street medics (volunteers trained in first aid)
- ***Community***
 - Reduce the number of guns (proliferation of guns among young people is contributing to fear-based mentality)
 - Work to build better relationships with police officers through community and youth-based programs
 - Emphasize the need to follow police directions (respect is mutual)
 - Comply with officer's instructions, these are not suggestions
 - Seek opportunities to learn about officers' perspective; especially how gun proliferation is impacting the community and their work
 - Follow golden rule – do not physically or verbally abuse officers
- ***Legal Defense***
 - Increase the number of public defenders to provide quality and free legal defense
- ***Department of Defense Equipment***
 - Require police departments receiving military equipment to: practice true community policing, train 100% of officers on de-escalation tactics with 40 additional hours of cultural competency, communications and conflict resolution training

RACIAL PROFILING

Issues: In what ways has racial profiling by local law enforcement impacted the community?

Improvements: What concrete actions need to be taken by police departments and / or community members to address and put an end to Racial Profiling?

- **Personal Testimony**
 - I've been pulled over for bogus reasons on multiple occasions, at least seven times, and I am a successful, law abiding African American man
 - Police frequently say, "Your car fits the description..."
 - When I challenged the police, I was told that I was lying
 - Officers usually stereotype people
 - People who are the targets of profiling become traumatized
- **A Widespread Practice**
 - Racial profiling is about more than traffic stops. It includes pedestrian stops as well
 - People are intimidated into consenting to searches
 - Whether blacks consent or not often does not matter. Police do not respect their wishes
 - An ACLU report reveals wide practices of disparate policing and state law does not address this
 - Blacks are stopped, searched and arrested more often than their white counterparts, but they are found with contraband less
 - The data on profiling is extensive. No more study is needed. It is time for ACTION
- **Economic Impacts**
 - Racial profiling hurts the black community economically. People do not have money to pay for infractions
 - Blacks are being stopped for unjustifiable reasons and then have to pay for their freedom. This keeps many in the black community impoverished - trapped in a vicious cycle
- **Profiling Is Bigger Than The Police**
 - Reports to police come from biased community members
 - It takes a village to raise a racist (police officer)
 - Private security like CGI harass, just like the police Interventions need to involve these groups as well
 - Media feeds the problem by focusing negative public attention on impoverished black communities

- **Improve Police Practices**
 - Representatives of the police need to meet with the community regularly to understand their issues, experiences and concerns
 - Require that police obtain written and/or videotaped consent for their searches
- **Limit Economic Hardships**
 - Throw out warrants
 - Legal aid has a warrant removal program
 - Stop fining people for small infractions and minor offenses
 - When individuals are found to be innocent, they need to be repaid for their expenses. Police and court mistakes are costly and make it difficult to get employment
- **Increase Police Screening & Training**
 - Establish anti-racist screening for police candidates
 - Require anti-racism training in every police department
 - Provide cultural awareness and sensitivity training along with cross-cultural communication training to all police officers
 - Involve the community in police screening so that community members have a greater say in police hiring
- **Enforce Missouri's Racial Profiling Law**
 - Get better data to determine compliance with existing statutes. Data collection methods often reflects biased policies and practices
 - Compare traffic stops to the driving populations of areas, not the residential populations
 - Hold police departments accountable for enforcing their racial profiling policies. They have the policies but rarely enforce them
 - Have racial profiling violations by police officers result in loss of pay and promotions
- **Address Community Bias**
 - End racial profiling among community members and residents
 - White people need to share the realities of racial profiling with their friends and family members
 - Get the whole community to take responsibility for both its biases and police practices. Visit www.compassionatestl.org

RACIAL PROFILING CONTD.

<p>Issues: In what ways has racial profiling by local law enforcement impacted the community?</p>	<p>Improvements: What concrete actions need to be taken by police departments and / or community members to address and put an end to Racial Profiling?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profiling Perpetuates & Results From Racism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Racial profiling is not just an outcome of racism. It also perpetuates it as people come to believe that blacks are inherently more criminal and dangerous. Profiling is not based on real crime difference ○ Racial profiling destroys trust in and among community members ○ There is a disturbing depth of racism in a number of police officers • Miscellaneous <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cameras by themselves will not stop police abuses. There are ways to avoid observation ○ The black community needs police officers, but members are scared because of what is being done to them ○ Profiling extends beyond race to socio-economics. Police see difference as out of the ordinary and are trained to respond to this ○ Recent tragedy in the Bosnian community has been portrayed by the local news as a hate crime. What is the truth? Things are not adding hp 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address Community Bias contd. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hold news media more accountable for its biased reporting and racially slanted features

COMMUNITY POLICING

<p>Issues: What concerns do you have with the way Community Policing is conducted in St. Louis?</p>	<p>Improvements: What concrete actions need to be taken by police departments and / or community members to improve Community Policing?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disrespectful & Aggressive Policing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Harassment by police ○ Police officers using inappropriate language while engaging citizens ○ Police officers are often on duty alone, which can cause a rise in fear on their part and reactions out of this fear can be harmful to citizens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen Citizen / Police Connections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Give civilian review boards subpoena power as well as the power to fire police without chief of police's approval ○ Create contracts and agreements between police and community ○ Create partnerships between police and citizens (i.e. internships, jobs) ○ Citizens take responsibility for engaging and building relationships with police officers

COMMUNITY POLICING CONTD.

Issues: What concerns do you have with the way Community Policing is conducted in St. Louis?

Improvements: What concrete actions need to be taken by police departments and / or community members to improve Community Policing?

- ***Disrespectful & Aggressive Policing contd.***
 - Aggressive policing practices like jumping out of a police car to approach a group of youth and chasing those who run
 - How police initiate contact with citizens
 - Fear of calling police due to their potential reactions and the possible harm officers might cause upon their arrival
 - Communicating false policies to citizens (i.e. when police officers turn on their red lights to make a stop, they must write a ticket)
 - Police stereotyping community members to other community members (during community mtgs, etc.)
- ***Internal Police Department Practices***
 - Racism in the police department and police union; bias shown by the Police Officer's Association
 - Police receiving pay when they've killed someone
 - Police officer promotions based on number of cases closed (i.e. drug cases)
 - Evaluations of officers
- ***Police Training***
 - Challenge of training police officers who come with biases
 - Police officer training is led/ facilitated / taught by other police officers
- ***Miscellaneous***
 - Divisions in neighborhood caused by differential policing

- ***Strengthen Citizen / Police Connections contd.***
 - Introduce police Volunteer Coordinators whose roles are to specifically link officers to the community
 - Police live in the community they are assigned to serve during training
 - Police officers being courteous when speaking with and engaging community members
 - Police required to walk the neighborhoods 50% of their on duty time without making an arrest, and focusing on getting to know people (Look into the Buena Clinton in Garden Grove, CA police department as a model <http://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/commserv/familyresource/beunaclinton>)
 - Promotions within the police department being based on community engagement, rather than number of arrests
 - Create a citizen feedback process (online)
 - More community meetings with police
 - Ferguson commission explore the Cincinnati model
- ***Improve Youth / Police Interactions***
 - Require police to work in schools without guns
 - Youth focused non-profit organizations and police collaborate to provide opportunities for positive engagement and relationship building between youth and police
 - Police increase positive interactions with youth (particularly middle and high school age youth)
 - View themselves as mentors like Big Brothers Big Sisters
- ***Enhance Officer Training & Preparation***
 - Police departments address inherent racism through psychological testing and continuous training (realize racism is as pervasive as pollution)
 - Willing white anti-racists need to work with white police officers on eliminating racism (hold seminars, workshops, etc.) – YWCA Witnessing White
 - Require police officers to have college degrees

COMMUNITY POLICING CONTD.

Improvements: What concrete actions need to be taken by police departments and / or community members to improve Community Policing?

- **Reform General Police Practices**
 - Police focus on compliance versus enforcement, and give warnings over tickets and arrests
 - Call and wait for back up before approaching citizens
 - Police target first 15 seconds of interaction between police and civilians on setting a tone of respect
 - Police officers carry/wear video with audio cameras
 - Follow existing police policies
- **Increase Community Policing Funding**
 - Don't spend money to hire more police; spend money to create better relations with the police
 - Transfer money set aside for militarization of police (purchasing of military equipment) and utilize for community policing
- **Miscellaneous**
 - Civilian community needs to improve relationships among its members. We don't need more police. We need better relationships. We need to tackle race and privilege
 - Police demonstrate accountability to community equivalent or greater than the accountability offered to media (i.e. allowing media, but not community members, to enter public meetings)
 - Establish one St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department with 5 chiefs and 1 commissioner; eliminate multiple police departments

Conclusion

The third meeting of the Ferguson Commission will be held on Monday, December 15, 2014 from 5:00 pm until 8:30 pm at St. Louis University's Il Monastero (located at 3050 Olive Street, St. Louis, MO 63103). The focus of this meeting will be on Municipal Court Systems. As with previous meetings, community input is welcomed.