

**Commission on Racial & Ethnic Disparity in  
the Criminal Justice System**

**MINUTES  
March 16, 2009 Meeting**

*Persons in Attendance*

Judge Lubbie Harper (Chair), Deborah Fuller (Judicial), Shawna Johnson (Judicial), Maureen Price-Boreland (CPA), Ann-Marie DeGraffenreidt (DCF), Hakima Bey-Coon (OVA), Judith Rossi (DCJ), Fran Carino (OCSA), Andrew Moseley (BOPP), Glenn Cassis (AAAC), Paul Fitzgerald (CT Chiefs of Police for Berlin), Tracey G. Gove (House Appointee), Werner Oyanadel (LPRAC), Preston Tisdale (OCPD), Aileen Keays (ISCJ), Andrew Clark (ISCJ), Bill Dyson (ISCJ), Shoshanna Silverberg (public).

Meeting commenced at approximately 12:30 pm

**I. Welcome**

Announcement: the Judicial Branch will no longer be able to provide lunch for the bi-monthly Disparity meetings. Therefore, the meetings will now be “brownbag” lunch meetings.

**II. *Disparity in Connecticut* conference**

- Recommended action steps

Aileen Keays reviewed how the Commission acquired the recommendations from the Disparity conference.

- Working groups
  - Nominate/appoint Chairs for each working group
    - Discussed creating working groups, each focusing on a different identified topic stemming from the recommendations, and nominating chairs for those groups. The Commission could invite working group members from outside the Commission membership.

*Discussion*

- Members want to make sure that something comes from the recommendations.
  - One Commission member asked if a check system should be created to ensure action will take place.
- Member expressed concern over the recommendation under item #2 “Education/Training/Cultural Competence” suggesting the hiring of

more bilingual and bicultural staff. Is this ignorant during the current economic state? Not realistic? Do we want to include unrealistic goals?

- Another member suggested that item #5 “Serve as a Source of Information about Ongoing Initiative”, doesn’t need to pertain solely to youth. The Commission should just re-frame the recommendations.
- Could include an introductory statement acknowledging the challenge of the economy and overall difficulty in creating change.
- May not want to choose chairs for the working groups yet; all Commission members are present and the Commission should think hard about where each person’s talents may be best fit.
- People are at different levels of acknowledging racism/disparity. Commission must be realistic and acknowledge in order to gain credibility.
  - e.g., new Attorney General made comment that later someone had to quantify but others said we’re no longer there; we shouldn’t need to have to do that anymore.
- Keep recommendations in context, these came from the attendees at this conference on this day and were the feelings/thoughts on this day, two weeks prior to the historical election of the first African-American U.S. president.
- Frame it in a non-accusatory manner; not accusing an institution of acts, but there may be individuals within those institutions who engage in these acts.
  - Include in introductory statement as well as Maureen Price-Boreland’s comment.
- Develop strategy/structure so each group addresses what the Commission is interested in.
- Education needs to be involved in these groups for K-8 and higher education
  - SERC was upset after the conference feeling their voice was not heard. Try to reach out to education groups: SERC, RESK, CREC, ACES, CES.
- The third bullet under Media, add independent, local media
- Dr. William Howe at SDE would be a good contact. Anne-Marie DeGraffenreid has his contact information
- Member asked if we need to work on #4 “Legislation” now because we’re currently in-session? Answer was yes.
  - Should we add SRO legislation trying to implement cultural competency for SROs?
  - Sentencing Commission
  - One member questioned the source of the legislative suggestions
  - One member asked if possession of small amounts of marijuana a racial/ethnic issue? More of a youth issue
    - In response, Bridgeport-based RYASAP’s recent survey was discussed in which it finds that substance abuse among

suburban youth higher than urban and increased in every drug except alcohol.

- Important in terms of arrests for substances: arrests for minorities not suburbanites
- Arrests of even small amounts of marijuana can preclude someone from receiving higher education student loans

### **III. Annual report**

- a. Suggestions
  - CCSU will send outline for Annual Report to members
  - Will include contacts made (e.g., the meeting between Ryan King of the Sentencing Project and Connecticut's OLR)

### **IV. Legislative update**

- a. Racial impact statements
  - CCSU met with OLR and Ryan King to discuss the process and procedure for writing racial impact statements. Reports will come from bills coming out of the GF.
- b. Sentencing Commission
  - Nothing's happened with the proposed permanent Sentencing Commission bill yet
  - If it must be passed without funding then so be it, it's more important to create it than to not.

### **V. Other business**

Meeting adjourned at approximately 2:10 pm