

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

MINUTES

03/17/08 Meeting

Persons present:

Judge Harper, Andrew Moseley, Deb Fuller, Donald Green, Fran Carino, Gary Roberge, Glenn Cassis, Jeanne Milstein, Judith Rossi, Kay Berris, Maureen Price-Boreland, Merva Jackson, Pat Hynes, Werner Oyanadel, Winston Johnson, Bill Rosenbeck, Hakima Bey-Coon, Aileen Keays, Andrew Clark, Lyndsay Ruffolo

Meeting commenced at approximately 12:45pm

I. Welcome – J. Harper

II. CCSU review of activities/project update

- Meetings with police chiefs
 - CCSU discussed their meetings with Chief Norwood of the Bridgeport Police Department and Chief Roberts of the Hartford Police Department.

Discussion:

- For the Bridgeport Martial Arts Program, try the following for meeting locations:
 - The new juvenile detention center in Bridgeport
 - Schools (Parks & Rec.)
 - YMCA
 - Boys and Girls Club
- CT Juvenile Justice Advisory Commission (JJAC) will be offering a grant of about \$10,000 for chiefs initiating unique programs for youth.
- Would the private industry assist with funding transportation?
 - Liability issue; speak with insurance agencies, CBIA, etc.
- Would a donation of bus passes be beneficial?
- Website
 - Aileen Keays has been granted System Administrator access by DOIT which is required to edit the state website.
 - The REDCJ website can be found on the state website under “State Agencies”.

- Conference

Discussion:

- Are there other groups like ours that may have been down this road before and could share their insight?
 - Will look in to
- Concern focusing on youth is watering our agenda; many groups are working on youth, we have the chance to put this issue out there but by focusing on youth we may be losing our purpose.
 - The problem of disparity is huge: economical, political, etc., our commission can't solve all of those issues at this time, but we can help by focusing on the front-end of the problem. Once youth are in the CJ system, they are then the adults in the CJ system.
- Glenn Singleton from Board of Education may be a great keynote.
- Maybe get young people to assist with planning the conference.
- IS CJ could put together a video of youth discussing the issue
 - Can be shown at the beginning of the conference to put a face to the problem.
- Suggestion of creating an advisory committee to focus on the conference
 - Include kids on the planning committee.
 - Could add the conference as a component of the Steering Committee so don't have too many committees.
- Training Initiative
 - Southern Poverty Law Center has curriculum information online – videos, DVDs

III. Update on Sentencing Task Force

- H.B. 5924, An Act Establishing a Sentencing Commission
 - Public Hearing will be held on 03/20/08
 - If Commission wants to support the bill, we could submit written testimony.

- Andrew Clark gave background on the purpose and function of a Sentencing Commission.
- Look at the previous Sentencing Commission
 - What were their issues?
 - Did they have funding problems that would only be re-created if we passed this bill?
- Concern raised by some Commission members over the suggested make-up of the permanent Sentencing Commission on the proposed bill
 - If the Commission formally supports the bill, would like a comment about the proposed members of the Commission.
 - Need people that understand the issue, look into the financial impact, include racial issues.
- Shall include a racial disparity impact component.
- *Vote taken to formally support the bill*
 - Concern raised that some members' employer may be submitting their own testimony; therefore must refrain from voting.
- *All others voted to support the bill*

IV. Synopsis of Pew Charitable Trusts' "One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008"

- Andrew Clark gave a synopsis
 - Nationally, 1 in 9 black men between the ages 20-34 is behind bars. Significantly different than white males over 18 years old: 1 in 106; Hispanic men over 18 years old: 1 in 36.
 - Burgeoning population among women: black women now 1 in 100 (between 35-39 years old). America incarcerating at a rate much higher than rest of the world; 750 per 100,000 adult Americans, Denmark 67 out of 100,000.
 - Report includes suggestions for reducing crime and prison population:
 - Changing how deal with technical violations and promoting alternatives to incarceration.
 - Length of stay has really driven up the population in CT
 - CT has highest rate of incarceration in New England

- Report includes very illustrative maps and charts
- CT is one of 5 states spending more on corrections than higher education
- CT, as compared to other states in the U.S., ranks in the middle, however we're the highest in New England.
- Increased cost of health care in the prison system is another issue due to geriatric health problems (aging prison population), HIV, etc.
- Estimated that in Hartford, 1 in 4 males somehow connected to CJ system; on probation, parole, etc.

Discussion:

- Maybe we can work with Pew to isolate CT numbers and present them at our conference?

V. Synopsis of "Capital Punishment in Connecticut, 1973-2007: A Comprehensive Evaluation from 4600 Murders to One Execution", Professor John J. Donohue III

- Judith Rossi gave a synopsis of the report authored prior to "Capital Punishment in Connecticut, 1973-2007: A Comprehensive Evaluation from 4600 Murders to One Execution" and posed concerns over the validity of the study the second report is based upon.
 - Public Defenders had been looking for someone to conduct a study on the death penalty and race.
 - Public defenders commissioned and paid for a study, report didn't say what they wanted it to so they didn't publish it.
 - That unpublished report is the first one that Judith reviewed with the group.
 - They then found Prof. Donohue who was a previous public defender and outspoken against death penalty.
- Preston's response
 - Original issues were intended to be part of litigation, the litigation never took place, determined not enough data to make a statistically reliable finding.
 - The second report was requested by special public defenders – private attorneys handling conflict matters.

- A judge had said all cases should be brought together and handled in habeas manner; needed a study for the case so special public defenders paid for it and commissioned it.
 - Conducted for persons on death row to bring a suit of habeas corpus
- Preston's synopsis of the second report, "Capital Punishment in Connecticut, 1973-2007: A Comprehensive Evaluation from 4600 Murders to One Execution"
 - In our system, historically speaking, crimes most punished involved a black perpetrator and white victim.
 - Least punished crime has always been white on black crime.
 - Not enough statistical data in CT on white on black crime, but do for black on black.
 - Death penalty is pursued less frequently if black on black.
 - Disparity in this manner has become so common it is not noticed, it is in our culture.
 - Urban League has done fantastic studies – reviewed all NY papers, black perpetrators (?) make up 65% of crimes in NY, but black perpetrators make up 85% of all printed perpetrator photos in newspapers.
 - Last paragraph of the report is very telling.
 - The Commission's mandate does not say we're to look for *whether* there is disparate treatment based on race, it says there is disparate treatment and we are to look at it.
 - Certain factors are intended to determine whether a crime is a capital offense
- Commission shall read both reports to see if either have any implication for this Commission.

VI. Other business

Meeting adjourned at approximately 1:50pm