



**OFFICE of EQUITY
and HUMAN RIGHTS**
CITY OF PORTLAND

Realizing Equity. Enhancing the City of Portland.

Commissioner in Charge:
Charlie Hales, Mayor

Bureau Director:
Dante J. James, Esq.

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Hales, City Commissioners

From: Dante J. James, Director

Re: Employee discussion of community/police relations and racial divide after Ferguson

Date: January 14, 2015

On three separate dates (December 3 and December 10, 2014, and January 7, 2015), a total of approximately 200 City employees came together to discuss the aftermath of the Ferguson grand jury decision. Topics of discussion revolved around: institutional and systemic racism; implicit bias; community/police relations; police training; the feeling by people of color of disempowerment and fear; as well as how these issues were created and fostered the tinderbox that exploded in the days following Ferguson. Subsequent to Ferguson and the death of Michael Brown came other deaths in other cities that were high profile deaths of Black men or teenagers at the hands of police. The Office of Equity and Human Rights felt it important to provide a space for voices to be heard and frustrations to be expressed. By and large, attendees were not the people out protesting, but are your employees who felt the need to be able to speak, or just be in the presence of the conversation.

The discussions were attended by a wide spectrum of City employees of diverse backgrounds and races. There were also police officers in attendance, their numbers increasing each time. The discussions began with thoughts of Ferguson and racism globally, and turned to discussions about Portland and how Portland can improve police accountability and community relations.

The discussions were excellent, usually passionate while always respectful, and constructive in looking at systemic issues of racism and offering suggestions on how Portland can serve all in the most equitable and safe way possible. You can see a brief video overview at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MAW6EtQDiJY>

The commitment of OEHR was to present these thoughts, concerns, suggestions and expectations to the Mayor and City Council. It was attendees' real expectations that you hear, understand, and take action toward these expressed desires for a safe and equitable Portland, where the color of one's skin, specifically where being Black, is not of itself dangerous nor a predictor of disparate service or disrespectful interactions by police.

The issues and items presented below represent some of the unfiltered comments of the attendees. Some of the problems, suggestions or recommendations are not specifically within the purview of Portland City Council, however I thought it important to honestly re-present the totality of thoughts.

The discussion of institutional and systemic problems revolved around four key areas:

1. Inequity and bias
2. Policing and the criminal justice system
3. Historical and cultural injustices
4. Denial and fear

What is it about the system that people distrust? What creates the racial divide?

- ❖ Inequity and Bias
 - Portland is a non-representative democracy – the elected leadership of the city is not reflective of its population
 - The system in place continues to foster institutional racism through its policies and practices
- ❖ Policing and Criminal Justice system
 - There is a continuing disconnect between police and community, and Police are not considered part of, or don't feel part of, the community they police
 - Police training is insufficient and inadequate
 - Words and images are powerful – language is often dehumanizing and offensive
- ❖ Historical and Cultural Injustices
 - System and history – We don't often address our history
 - Slanted systemically unaware media
 - Lack of cultural integration continues to create inability to hear and interact with each other
- ❖ Denial and Fear
 - There is often an inherent fear or distrust of African Americans. Implicit bias exists but we deny its existence and impact
 - Denial of the nation's race problem

SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS:

Suggestions Specific to Police

1. Improve training for officers (necessary but *not* the panacea)
 - a. Bias training is critical: bias must be owned and faced
 - b. Have the courage to create conversations to talk specifically about fear and distrust on the part of both the community and the police
 - c. Continuing education for officers on bias, de-escalation techniques, and interpersonal skills, not just one-time sessions

2. Culture and Policy changes within the police bureau:
 - a. Need to change policies about engagement and expectations of interactions
 - b. Internal zero tolerance policies – visibly holding officers accountable for behavior that is unacceptable
 - c. Create a culture where peer reporting does not lead to ostracizing
 - d. Conduct psychological exams more often, instead of only upon hiring or after a police-involved shooting, in order to root out possible changes in officers' psyches after several years on the job

3. Improve police and community interactions:
 - a. Meet communities face-to-face and regularly (not only after incidents or at events). Engage in true community policing
 - b. Create requirements or incentives for police to live in communities they serve, e.g., Portland used to have a home-buying incentives program for officers
 - c. Create police/fire/ranger education programs and relationships for youth in schools and through grassroots efforts to better attract officers of color, not just depending on individual officers who do it on their own
 - d. Neighborhood structures, organizations or groups should be involved more in community policing

4. Make better efforts to diversify the Police Bureau:
 - a. Review criminal background check policies (e.g., if my cousin sold drugs years ago, it can prevent me from being hired by the city for public safety jobs)
 - b. Create a process where police work with Park Rangers to create a pipeline to becoming an officer; the police can benefit greatly from learning about rangers non-weapon carrying tactics

General Suggestions for All City Employees and Elected Officials

1. There should be an extension of a program to aggressively diversify the workforce. Every bureau has an Affirmative Action Plan. Evaluate and report on them
2. Hold managers/bureaus accountable for outcomes in hiring as well as outreach in order to hire more broadly – Performance measures
3. Cultural awareness in the workplace should be evaluated. Bureaus should conduct climate surveys to understand the impact of race at work

Agenda No.
REPORT
Title

Office of Equity and Human Rights report on city-wide employee discussion of institutional racism and police/community relations in the aftermath of Ferguson (Report)

<p style="text-align: center;">INTRODUCED BY Commissioner/Auditor: Mayor Hales</p>	<p>CLERK USE: DATE FILED <u>JAN 23 2015</u></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">COMMISSIONER APPROVAL</p> <p>Mayor—Finance and Administration - <u>Males</u></p> <p>Position 1/Utilities - Fritz</p> <p>Position 2/Works - Fish</p> <p>Position 3/Affairs - Saltzman</p> <p>Position 4/Safety - Novick</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Mary Hull Caballero Auditor of the City of Portland</p> <p>By:  Deputy</p> <p>ACTION TAKEN:</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">BUREAU APPROVAL</p> <p>Bureau: OEHR Bureau Head: Dante J. James</p>	
<p>Prepared by: Dante J. James Date Prepared: 1.20.15</p>	
<p>Impact Statement Completed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amends Budget <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>City Auditor Office Approval: required for Code Ordinances</p> <p>City Attorney Approval: required for contract, code, easement, franchise, charter, Comp Plan</p> <p>Council Meeting Date 1.28.15</p>	

AGENDA
<p>TIME CERTAIN <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Start time: 3:00</p> <p>Total amount of time needed: 1 Hour (for presentation, testimony and discussion)</p>
<p>CONSENT <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>REGULAR <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Total amount of time needed: _____ (for presentation, testimony and discussion)</p>

FOUR-FIFTHS AGENDA	COMMISSIONERS VOTED AS FOLLOWS:		
		YEAS	NAYS
1. Fritz	1. Fritz	✓	
2. Fish	2. Fish	✓	
3. Saltzman	3. Saltzman	_____	_____
4. Novick	4. Novick	✓	
Hales	Hales	✓	