



EMPLOYEE DISCUSSION: COMMUNITY/POLICE RELATIONS AND RACIAL DIVIDE AFTER FERGUSON



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

**WHAT IS IT ABOUT THE SYSTEM THAT
PEOPLE DISTRUST?**

**WHAT CREATES THE
RACIAL DIVIDE?**

PHOTO: THE OREGONIAN

Institutional and systemic problems

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

Inequity and Bias

- Portland is a non-representative democracy – the 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 / Criminal justice system

- 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 the 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

SUGGESTIONS FOR SOLUTIONS

Office DEPOT

- Non Represented democracy
- Repeated history
- Proactive action by police dep
- Empathy + understanding
- Disconnect between police and community
- Police are not part of the community
- System in place : institutional
- Police training
- Imbalance of power in Ferguson
Police do not represent the community
- 100+ years of US history
- System + History (face our history)

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SUGGESTIONS SPECIFIC TO POLICE



Police: Improve officer training

- Bias training is critical: bias must be owned and faced.
- Have the courage to create conversations to talk specifically about fear and distrust on the part of both the community and the police.
- Continuing education for officers on bias, de-escalation techniques, and inter-personal skills, not just one-time in-service sessions

Police: Culture/policy changes

- Need to change policies about engagement and expectations of interactions.
- Internal zero tolerance policies – visibly holding officers accountable for behavior that is unacceptable

Police: Culture/policy changes

- Create a culture where peer reporting does not lead to ostracizing.
- 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.

Police:

Improve community interaction

- Meet communities face-to-face and regularly (not only after incidents or at events). Engage in true community policing.
- 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.

Police:

Improve community interaction

- 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.
- Neighborhood structures, organizations or groups should be involved more in community policing.

Police: Diversify PPB

- 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).
- 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.



SUGGESTIONS FOR ALL CITY EMPLOYEES AND ELECTED OFFICIALS

Citywide

- 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.
- Hold managers/bureaus accountable for outcomes in hiring as well as outreach in order to hire more broadly – Performance measures.

Citywide

- Cultural awareness in the workplace should be evaluated. Bureaus should conduct climate surveys to understand the impact of race at work.