

**Commission on Racial & Ethnic Disparity in  
the Criminal Justice System  
03/17/08 Meeting**

**MINUTES**

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