

**Community Forum on Racism & Interactions with Police in Petaluma**  
**July 18-19, 2020 via Zoom**  
**Petaluma, California**

**REPORT**  
**SEPTEMBER 2020**

Petaluma Chapter of the North Bay Organizing Project  
Sonoma County Black Coalition  
Indivisible Petaluma  
Petaluma TIDE (Team for Inclusivity, Diversity and Equity in grades K-12).

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## **Introduction**

The nation and the world have been reawakened by the senseless killing of George Floyd, Ahmaud Aubery, Breonna Taylor, Andy Lopez (2013 Sonoma County) and so many others by police. We all hear the cry of “Black Lives Matter” and “Justice for Black and Brown People”. What really does all of this mean?

### **Black Lives Matter**

What do we mean when we say Black Lives Matter? We are not saying that African American lives should be valued more than others. The idea is to understand that black lives matter just as much as other lives. Black Lives Matter is about fighting for justice and equity for black people, in education, employment, housing, healthcare, and other ways that black people have been oppressed for 401 years because of the color of their skin.

### **The History of Black and Brown People and the Police**

We know that police were present in other countries prior to slavery in the U.S. colonies, however, it is true that slave patrols were created in slave states and they were the early form of policing in this country.

The history of police work in the South grew out of this early desire to monitor and control African American enslaved people by white patrollers. Most law enforcement was, by definition, white patrolmen watching, catching, or beating black enslaved people.

In the North, police worked to protect white spaces by containing and controlling the rising black population that had been propelled into the industrial belt during the Great Migration. It was not unusual for Northern police to join white mobs as they attacked black homeowners attempting to move into white neighborhoods, or black workers trying to obtain jobs historically reserved for white laborers.

The effect of the physical and psychological violence of the slave patrols still lives on today both in unchanged aspects of police culture, in the generational trauma passed down from historical injustice, and the current lived experience of injustices experienced and witnessed today by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Too often people look at contemporary injustice, the issue that is going on right now, but they do not understand that what is happening today is steeped in 401 years of injustice to black people. These past grievances, past harms by law enforcement, need to be understood, addressed, and corrected before progress toward a more just society, and just policing, can be made.

The death of George Floyd and the others mentioned above are common in our country. According to the research group Mapping Police Violence, African Americans are 2.5 times more likely to be killed by a police officer than a white person.

**What does all of this have to do with Petaluma?**

Overall we are a predominantly white community (78.7% in 2019, U.S. Census Bureau), but our schools are more evenly split between white students and BIPOC students (56% white, based on Casa Grande and Petaluma High Schools combined 2019-20 enrollment as reported by ed-data.org). This pattern indicates a shift toward a more racially and ethnically diverse student population that is also reflected across California and the United States.

While the Petaluma Police Department has had no individual significant event or pattern of police brutality like those that have sparked calls for change in other cities, many questions have been raised by community members about police practices, policies, training, equipment, budget, oversight, etc.

There is a concern within our community for answers to these questions and a desire to hear what BIPOC have to say. We want to work with our City leaders and Police Department to find answers together.

We know that our community is not without racism, because we see it in articles in the newspaper, on social media, and sometimes in the actions of members of our community. Many of our community members have also spoken out and said they want to be better, by being allies to our BIPOC community members.

In June 2020, Petaluma City Management held a Petaluma Policing Town Hall Virtual Meeting in response to recent public gatherings (protests) and actions about policing and social justice. For many, this meeting did not meet the needs or concerns of the citizens who wish to be heard. The format included the Police Chief going over the policies for the police department with very little time for questions and answers. There were over 300 questions with a very small number of those addressed during the forum. Many community members, and particularly BIPOC voices, felt that they were not heard. While our City Council has recognized the peaceful protests that have been held in Petaluma around these issues, the initial response via their policing forum was not enough.

Around the same time, police from Petaluma and other cities across Sonoma County were called as mutual aid for the Santa Rosa Police Department at protests in Santa Rosa in June, 2020. The use of tear gas and rubber bullets against protesters were reported on by the Sonoma County Commission on Human Rights in July (“Human Right Violations in Santa Rosa California:

Policing the Black Lives Matter Protests”

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LVXjxmUYsBaS2PRpg0snXpKiEUJDeNvv/view>). Concern that our police department was involved in an aggressive use of force in the form of mutual aid indicated the need to facilitate listening to community concerns about policing.

Several community organizations decided to respond to the call of the community to be heard by initiating a community-sponsored Listening Circles event. This would provide a space where all members of the community could speak in an atmosphere of acceptance and safety.

We started designing our Listening Circles without knowing that City Management was designing their own plan for a series of actions, including community listening events, to address community concerns about racism and policing. When we became aware of the City plan, our group asked the City to put their plan on hold and let the community-led plan go forward, which the City agreed to do.

### **Community Forum & Listening Circles**

The forum was designed to provide space for the people of Petaluma to voice their concerns brought on by the current events happening in our community and the country. Specifically, the community was invited to a “Forum on Racism and Interactions with Police in Petaluma”.

Our goal was to provide community input and constructive feedback to the City on the experiences, concerns, and recommendations of the community, particularly BIPOC members, on racism and policing in Petaluma, and to work with City Management in creating next steps based on the results of this initial community listening activity. Our motivation was to begin a dialog with the City on the following topics:

- Interaction with Petaluma Police
- What quality of life do community members want from their City
- How should City Management react to community concerns
- The current and future of policing in Petaluma
- Safety within our community
- Racism within our community

The planning and execution of the Listening Circles were led by Petaluma Blacks for Community Development (PBCD) and the Petaluma Chapter of the North Bay Organizing Project with participation from additional sponsoring organizations including the Sonoma County Black Coalition, Latinx Student Congress of Sonoma County, Indivisible Petaluma, Petaluma Community Relations Council (PCRC), and Petaluma TIDE (Team for Inclusivity, Diversity, and Equity in grades K-12).

**Approach**

(See Appendix 1 for detailed methodology)

We gathered community organizations to host a listening circle and forum that would hold space for voices from the BIPOC communities of Petaluma. The listening circles consisted of small affinity groups based on self-reported race and ethnicity during registration. Small circles of 4-7 people were led by a trained volunteer facilitator and supported by a volunteer note taker. Over the course of two days, more than 150 people participated in the event. During the facilitated conversations that took place, participants were asked questions about their experiences interacting with the Petaluma police department, how it affected them, if they feel safe in Petaluma, if they had called the police or had the police called on them, and what actions they would like from the city (see Appendix 1 for complete list of questions that may have been covered in each circle).

Our community feedback offered multiple personal stories and comments that fell under a few themes that have been voiced by communities all over the United States. The stories and comments are indicators of areas that need to be changed in order to dismantle the historic, complex, and entrenched systems that have allowed our country to hold one group with privilege while systematically taking away the rights of others. The white supremacy and bigotry that our country was built on is being challenged. The community of Petaluma has voiced its desire for change.

## **Report Recommendations**

Based on comments and recommendations provided by community members we make the following recommendations. <sup>1</sup>Complete reference to comments from the individual circles are included in Appendix 4.

### **Recommendation 1: Defund<sup>1</sup> the police and reinvest in communities.**

- 1) **Allocate a portion of the police budget to a separate department or organization(s) that would address community needs** including but not limited to mental health services, addiction recovery programs, housing, and education. These efforts can improve existing conditions of suffering from systemic racism that impacts the mental health, incarceration, housing security, and overall well-being of our BIPOC community members as well as our community in general. The police department represents 38.7% of Petaluma's approved 2021 General Fund budget (\$20,994,795 of a total \$54,302,101; see pg. 2 and pg. 166 in <https://storage.googleapis.com/proudcity/petalumaca/uploads/2020/07/FY-20-2021-City-of-Petaluma-ADOPTED-Operating-and-Capital-Improvement-Budget-7-27-2.pdf>). We recommend the specific amount of divestment from police be discussed and reviewed by an independent committee.
- 2) **Create an unarmed first responder unit composed of social workers and mental health professionals, including evaluating the feasibility and community interest in adopting a CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets) style program.** The community is interested in responding to mental health crises and other non-life-threatening situations in the community with unarmed, more aptly trained individuals. An example of this is the 30-year-old CAHOOTS program that was developed in Eugene, Oregon, and diverts nonviolent, often mental health-related 911 calls to a medic and a mental health professional instead of law enforcement. The program is currently being considered by at least eight cities, including Santa Rosa, because it provides a system to decriminalize and improve the treatment of people with severe mental illness while saving the city money.
- 3) **Eliminate campus police programs and replace them with qualified counseling teams that reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the student body.** Although the City claims no jurisdiction in schools, the provision of school resource officers makes the

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<sup>1</sup> *Note: We acknowledge that the meaning of the term "defund" will vary along a spectrum from reform to abolition, and can be difficult to define. The key concept is investing in our communities. We understand and refer to the term "defund" as a way to lift up the community's recognition that the money spent on policing in Petaluma has a disproportionately negative impact on our BIPOC community and that alternative uses of this money would be more effective at promoting the safety and well-being of all community members.*

City complicit in enabling the school to prison pipeline in our educational systems and reinforcing racial profiling of students on campus. Although there are currently no school resource officers in Petaluma City Schools due to lack of funding, the program needs to be formally rescinded by the City and the Schools to prevent future placement of officers in schools.

- 4) **Demilitarize the police by reviewing the purchase of arms for the police department and the use of military-grade vehicles.** The recent purchase of assault rifles has caused both BIPOC and white community members to feel unsafe as was recorded in public comment at a City Council meeting earlier this year.

*Comments from BIPOC Groups:*

- In such a small community, why is there such glory in such a high powered fleet of weapons? Low crime, is it truly a necessity? Who wins in moments of opposition? What message does this send about Petaluma and police culture?
- City officials need to take divesting in police budgets and re-investing into community programs seriously or they need to be replaced with people who are willing to support that movement
- Criminal justice and the police force should be recreated for a better future
- Transparency in police budget and report to the community
- Defund and reinvest funds in other areas

*Comments from White Groups*

- I want to know how the City will redirect funds so that social services and oversight can happen
- I don't understand what police do. The Chief has said that 94% of calls are not criminal calls. What are our patrols actually doing? Would there be better resources to send to those calls?
- Defund the police and redirect that money into social services and programs
- The \$80,000 for assault rifles was not a good investment. I'd rather see money put toward other services to help the community
- Redistribute police resources to schools, addiction recovery, housing for all and more effective social services
- Demilitarization of the police force and defunding
- Allocate funds to different places in our community that need it the most
- Cut police budget in half and create programs to create "true safety"
- Divest from police and invest with a focus on what makes a healthy community
- Put money towards bias, sensitivity and de-escalating training
- Want to invest in support plus community services such as mental health



**Recommendation 2: Establish Independent Oversight Committee**

- 1) **Form an independent oversight committee for policing in Petaluma.** An oversight committee will ensure our City has updated practices on training and hiring officers, that policies are in place to protect the public's access to information about misconduct, and that a structure is provided to host and evaluate community input about policing accountability in Petaluma. This approach will benefit the BIPOC community because it builds trust and provides a bridge-building mechanism between the citizens and the police department that serves them. The Committee can be led by a board of community volunteers that is established through a memorandum of understanding with the County's IOLERO (Independent Office of Law Enforcement Review and Oversight) or through a joint Powers Authority.
- 2) **Ensure that the oversight committee oversees and manages a hotline or online reporting system** so that complaints of misconduct are reviewed independently of the law enforcement agency.
- 3) **One percent (1%) of the City's current police budget should be dedicated to establishing and maintaining an independent oversight committee.** This amount for 2021 would be \$214,518 (1% of total police budget, including grants: \$21,451,815) and is based on what is currently recommended to fund the oversight of the Sonoma County Sheriff in Sonoma County's November 2020 Measure P: The Evelyn Cheatham Effective IOLERO Ordinance.
- 4) **Advise the Police Department to form a trusting relationship with the community** by creating opportunities for officers to engage with community members to increase their understanding of societal causes and consequences of problems that arise from historically racist policies. Implement policies for engagement with specific groups (BIPOC) and policies that recognize the value of community input.

*Comments from BIPOC Groups:*

- Adopt a Citizens Committee – include all races, all voices, equal representation.
- Community trust in the police force needs to be improved
- Look at police policies and practices from different lens to see the language that is being used. This process can be informative. Old policies may be outdated
- Empathetic way to treat people healthily rather than punish, beat, enforce citations
- Citizens Committee to look at union contracts and police policies to see if there are areas that could negatively affect black and brown people.
- Maybe need to restructure police all together

*Comments from White Groups*

- Create civilian oversight, transparency, want to see public response on action items regarding defunding police and civilian oversight
- Listen to different points of view and work cohesively with what the community wants and need

**Recommendation 3: End Police Violence**

- 1) **Revise Petaluma’s police use of force continuum including immediate and permanent removal of the carotid hold from police policy manuals.** We make this recommendation on the basis of concern for the BIPOC community members who feel unsafe in Petaluma due to both explicit racism and undertones of racism from the community and incidents of police violence in neighboring communities and across the country. An announcement was made suspending the use of this hold, but it was included in the most recent update of the policy manual.
- 2) **Immediate expansion of the de-escalation portion of police policy.** Our white community members reported that the use of de-escalation techniques by police were not always used. For our BIPOC community, the comments revealed concerns about existing police tactics that were experienced as aggressive and intimidating with the potential to lead to escalation.
- 3) **Increased transparency around the reporting of the use of force in situations of mutual aid in other jurisdictions.** We have not heard how our Police Department participated in the June 2020 protests in Santa Rosa as detailed in the Sonoma County Human Rights Report “Human Right Violations in Santa Rosa California: Policing the Black Lives Matter Protests” and would like to hear from the Police Chief on this matter.

*Comments from BIPOC Groups:*

- Empathetic way to treat people healthily rather than punish, beat, enforce citations
- Training for professionalism versus racial microaggression
- Being followed by police car, stopped and asked unnecessary questions – Do you live here, how did you purchase this car? What do you do for a living?

*Comments from White Groups:*

- 5-6 years ago there was a big interaction where police stopped a car with POC, rifles drawn extremely tense, wanted to witness but not get shot but seemed important and he thought it was pretty egregious, doesn’t remember if he talked to the 2 kids later, but there were 4-5 officers on the block, using bullhorn to issue commands, no attempt to de-escalate
- Several members of the group described experiences where officers responded with many cars, 3-4 at a time. This causes intimidation, doesn’t seem necessary. It’s a bigger show of force

**Recommendation 4: Hold Police Accountable**

- 1) **Establish departmental policies that implement and update police accountability guidelines, including but not limited to** (see Appendix 5 for additional recommendations from the Grassroots Law Project):
  - a) **laws that make it illegal to hire officers who were previously fired or resigned due to misconduct**
  - b) **Define and evaluate the rules and causes for the police stopping of BIPOC residents.** To achieve this will require the establishment of public data systems to track critical information about policing (arrest information, demographics, charges, conviction history, and jail and prison population information).
- 2) **Host community listening sessions via the newly established Independent Oversight Committee.** This approach will build and maintain a system of trust between residents, the City, and the police department.
- 3) **Post an anti-racism statement about “zero tolerance for hate”** on the City and police department website and promote adoption by City businesses to model for the community the importance of being anti-racist.
- 4) **Review hiring practices to ensure the recruitment of a more ethnically, racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse police force.** The majority-white police force of Petaluma does not reflect the ethnic/racial makeup of Petaluma. The police force should also be more accessible to the Spanish speaking community by hiring bilingual officers and having current officers learn Spanish that would apply to their work. The community expressed a lack of understanding of other cultures in the police department that would improve with a more diverse police force.

*Comments from BIPOC Groups:*

- Skate Park with police arriving (not warranted but they did), all of the youth were briefly questioned but the one black male was interrogated, separated from the group, had his ID scrutinized and backpack searched three times over
- Immigrants more likely to be stopped and questioned by police more than others, mostly traffic stops, “mistaken” identity
- Racially profiled
  - Young men with melanin in their skin, jeans and t-shirt common dress make us look like a threat or a suspect or like we don’t belong
  - BIPOC target for “random” stops
  - Do best to avoid, do not have benefit of looking ‘exotic’ vs “dangerous”
  - Stopped and asked unnecessary questions – “How did you purchase this car?”, “Well, what do you do for a living?”, “Are you from here or did you move here?”

- Why are you parked here (in a legal space)? What are you waiting on? (Was parked outside a clothing donation box waiting for it to open)
- She was pulled over because her husband (black man), felt like it was for sure racial profiling
  - The root of all experiences were through traffic stops, followed by police cars and obvious profiling
  - Called police to report 2 white men attacking white women, still questioned by cops, called 911 to make sure white woman was okay
  - Police speak English (and keep speaking) even when people do not understand sometimes as intimidation practice
  - Left him feeling violated, resentful, irritated
  - Lifestyle changes to prevent interaction with police
    - He doesn't go out at night or walk around by himself
    - Higher likelihood of health problems and diminished life expectancy
    - Experience of feeling like a threat in your own community
    - You're black in a very white town, you learn to find ways to try and be non-threatening deflect attention and yet still end up in scenarios where you are confronted with police
  - Mom said when she hears sirens and helicopters, she calls her son to check if he is okay

*Comments from White Groups:*

- In biracial families/relationships had same experiences as BIPOC
  - Her husband had been pulled off the road on the way to the coast to enjoy nature. Was later approached by police officers who began to question motives and actions
  - Black husband and Latino friend taking pictures at a parade and stopped and questioned for "theft"
  - Had a mixed race teenager in car. Police followed them out of the garage and pulled them over. Think it was because of an expired license tag, police spoke aggressively and treated us disrespectfully
- Frequent racial bias training along with non-violent crisis intervention, ensuring this is not just a one time program and making this certification be mandatory

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

### **Recommendation #1 Defund the Police & Reinvestment in the Community**

Across the U.S., the movement to reinvest funds from policing into community services is gaining support. For many years, funding for social services has declined while law enforcement budgets and spending on police and prisons have risen dramatically. Investment in community mental health and well-being can stop crime before it happens while simultaneously taking the responsibility and burden of solving mental health crises away from police and law enforcement. The 2019 case of Nino Basco's suicide in the custody of Sonoma County Sheriff's Office is a tragic example of why the community so sorely needs mental health professionals rather than the police to handle individuals who are suffering from mental health issues. We have the opportunity to invest in our community first and handle some of our most vulnerable citizens with the services they actually need with a first responder unit of social workers and mental health professionals.

### **Recommendation 2: Establish Independent Oversight Committee**

Today there are more than 200 citizens oversight committees across the country, according to Liana Perez, director of operations for the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement. State Bill AB 1506 by Assemblyman Kevin McCarty, D-Sacramento, would create a new division within the State Department of Justice that, if requested by a local law enforcement agency, would investigate an officer-involved shooting or other use of force that kills a civilian. The department could also prosecute an officer it found had violated state law. Obama's Task Force Report on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing, Pillar Four: Community Policing & Crime Reduction states that law enforcement agencies should work with community residents to identify problems and collaborate on implementing solutions that produce meaningful results for the community.

### **Recommendation 3: End Police Violence**

Like so many other changes to law enforcement, demands for civilian oversight of police often have their roots in outrage. Right now people are angry about the many killings of black and brown men and women in recent months by police. Oakland's first citizen review board came in the wake of protests over the 1979 police killing of a teenager named Melvin Black. In Los Angeles and San Jose, new accountability offices in the 1990s followed the videotaped beating of Rodney King. Oakland's police commission is one of the most powerful in the country, with the authority to fire the police chief and sworn officers. Although community members in Petaluma did not share stories of strong physical violence by our police department, we recognize that racial profiling and bias create conditions of fear and harassment, which are forms of police brutality experienced by our BIPOC community members. We must address how trust gets built if there is fear of the police.

**Recommendation 4: Hold Police Accountable**

While the complaints of our BIPOC participants are not as egregious as in many other communities in our region, they did feel that they are stopped and questioned more than their white counterparts by our Petaluma Police. African-American males are disproportionately targeted, stopped, and searched by law enforcement officials based on race and gender. Many of the white group participants in biracial families/relationships shared stories of partners and children being treated with less respect than a white person. The process of improving police accountability by reviewing existing policies, making public statements against racism, engaging the community through listening, and hiring a more diverse police force will support the building of trust in our community.

**Moving Forward**

This Report expresses a desire to collaborate with the city to find solutions together and to figure out the next steps together. We believe this process can ultimately take place through the establishment of the Independent Oversight Committee that is proposed in the recommendations. Given that might take some time to set up, in the meantime we encourage the City to reach out to the groups involved in hosting the listening sessions and writing this report for further discussion of our findings and how to move forward together.

## **Appendix 1: Listening Circle Methods**

### **Listening Circle Format for Saturday, July 18, 2020:**

- Zoom meeting, 1.5 hours with 15 minute introduction, 45 minutes for listening and 30 minutes report back
- Multiple circles arranged by race and ethnicity demographics self-reported during registration
- Police not invited, Mayor, Councilmembers and City Manager encouraged to participate
- Circles included approximately 5 participants, 1 note taker and 1 facilitator to ask questions and engage participants in conversation, and record notes about responses to questions. Each Circle contained people of the same race/ethnic/cultural identity
- The structure outlined could accommodate 100 people for a single session, with Sunday Circles possible if needed
- Languages provided: English and Spanish
- Facilitator and Note Taker Training took place in advance; both were advised to verify information reported pertained to Petaluma
- Registration questions were prepared to include required questions on race/ethnicity/cultural identity
- We recruited a large number of community volunteers through partner organizations to implement the listening circles, the community provided the service of facilitation, note taking, and tech support for the online format.

### **Shared community agreement – conversation protocol**

1. Respect
  - a. Make space/take space: Be conscious in a conversation about who is speaking
  - b. WAIT: Why Am I Talking
  - c. To summarize/reflect what others are saying so they know you are listening
2. Respect of emotional reactions
  - a. Give time and space to hear before moving on
  - b. Respect or be conscientious of others identifiers (pronouns)
3. What's learned here leaves here, what's said here stays here (confidentiality)

### **Questions participants were asked to answer**

1. What are your experiences interacting with the police department in Petaluma?
2. How did it affect you?
3. What did you do when this happened?
- Follow up questions might include
  - Have you ever called 911 to get the police?
  - Have you ever had the police called on you?

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- Have you ever been pulled over?
  - Did you know which department it was? Petaluma Police or Sheriff?
4. Do you feel safe in Petaluma?
  5. What do you want from our City, for yourself, your family, community, congregation or organization?
  6. What actions should the City take to achieve what you want for Petaluma?

Because of time constraints, before the end of the question and discussion section, the group was asked what were their three most important things they wish to share with the larger group. All comments were compiled and included in this report.

**Analysis of notes by the organizing committee**

- For analysis, responses were pooled separately for all BIPOC groups and all white groups
- Through group discussion and analysis we identified the most common responses and used the community feedback that rose to the top to guide and prioritize recommendations for taking action



**Appendix 2: Information for Notetakers**  
**Community Forum on Racism and Police in Petaluma**  
**Saturday, July 18 & 19, 2020, 3-4:30 pm**

- Please arrive at 2:30 to get situated to begin at 3pm
- If you wish to participate in the debrief following the event, plan to stay on at 4:30.
- Meeting Format: 15 min intro, 45 minute small-group listening circles, 30 min facilitated report-back where notetakers return with 3 top comments from their group
- Note taking template will be sent later today (Friday)
- Please take notes on paper, either using the printed template, or blank paper.
- Taking notes on the computer may interfere with your ability to see the other participants and we don't want to have folks distracted by the tech, or the participants feel as though the notetaker is not engaged in the listening.
- Following the listening circle, we ask that you submit your typed notes to Erin directly.
- Due to confidentiality of participants, please don't share the notes other than to send them directly to Erin.
- Do not record names of participants in order to maintain confidentiality
- Please be prepared to report back the comments that the smaller listening group decides they want to be sharing with the larger group. This aspect will be facilitated by Chad Bolla and Karym Sanchez, who are trained NBOP organizers and facilitators
- You will be assigned as a notetaker to an affinity group based on your registration information

**Additional Note taking Tips**

**Write phrases, not full sentences.** Only record the key words that you need to get the idea of the point. Skip words like “the” and “a” that don't add additional meaning to the lecture content

**When needed, paraphrase what you hear** so it makes sense to you—it helps you to understand and remember what you hear.

**If clarification is needed,** repeat back what you heard to the person speaking

**If the police are mentioned,** be sure to ask for clarifying information on if it was Petaluma Police, CHP, Sonoma County Sheriff, and be sure to make a note/record the information.

**Underline, circle, star, etc.** to identify key information or other important points.

**If you miss something,** write key words, skip a few spaces, and get the information later. Leave a space on the page for your own notes and comments.

Note Taker Template

Community Forum on Racism and Interactions with Police in Petaluma/Foro comunitario sobre racismo e interacción con la policía en Petaluma

**Event Date:**

**Notetaker Name:**

**Listening Circle Affinity Group (Based on Race/Ethnicity of participants):**

**Please record notes from the listening circles.**

- Please don't report names of participants to maintain confidentiality
- If needed, verify that an event occurred in Petaluma if someone is telling a specific story.

**Please record your notes that were reported back to the larger group, the 3 ideas agreed upon by the group**

**Please type your notes into this word file and email to Erin Chmielewski**

**Appendix 3: Facilitator guidelines**

Petaluma Listening Circles Facilitator Guidelines for July 18-19, 2020

How to hold a Listening Circle

Circle Conversations (45 minutes – 6 other people)

Need: leader, note taker and up to 6 participants – 8 total

AGENDA FOR THE CIRCLE OF CONVERSATION

1. Introductions: name, preferred pronouns, favorite food this week and what brings you here today?
2. Share community agreements – make sure everyone agrees, explain if necessary.
  - a. Respect
    - i. Make space / take space: Be conscious in a conversation about who is speaking
    - ii. WAIT: Why am I Talking
    - iii. To summarize/reflect what others are saying so they know you are listening
  - b. Respect of emotional reactions
    - i. give time and space to hear before moving on
    - ii. Respecting pronouns/conscientious of people's identifiers
  - c. What's learned here leaves here, what's said here stays here (confidentiality)
3. Repeat why this meeting was organized. We have responded to a call in the community to provide a forum for people to talk about racism and any of their interactions with the police in Petaluma. Our goal is providing collective feedback to the city and a set of recommended actions the city can take.
4. Questions for the group meeting discussion:
  - a. What are your experiences interacting with the police department in Petaluma?
  - b. How did it affect you?
  - c. What did you do when this happened?
    - i. Examples of follow up questions if someone shares an experience:
    - ii. Have you ever called 911 to get the police?
    - iii. Have you ever had the police called on you?
    - iv. Have you ever been pulled over?
    - v. [Did you know which department it was? Petaluma Police or Sheriff?]
  - d. Do you feel safe in Petaluma?
  - e. What do you want from our City – for yourself, your family, community, congregation or organization?

- f. What actions should the City take to achieve what you want for Petaluma?
5. Pursue the answers with “why?”, “what did you do about it?”, “what do you want to see happen?”, “who else cares about this?”, “are you willing to do something about it if you had others working with you?”, “can we follow-up with you?”
6. Thank the group for coming. Decide what the three most important things you all have heard are. The recorder will report back to the group. Head back to the large meeting with three things that you all heard/shared that are important to share with the large group.
7. Tell them specifically that the notes will be compiled in order to weight their recommendations representing collectively what their experiences have been and what they want, these will be sent to everyone. Ask if they will participate in the follow up. Use the information they gave you to encourage participation. Sign them up for the next step.

Goal: Listen to one another. Learn about each person – what they care about, how they benefit, what their interest is.

**Appendix Table 4a: Community comments from listening circle falling into the category of "Defund Police and Invest in Communities"**

| <b>Divert funds from police budgets and invest resources into community-based programs &amp; Pledge decreases in police budgets</b>  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>BIPOC Groups</b>  | <b>White Groups</b>  |
| City officials need to take divesting in police budgets and re-investing into community programs seriously or they need to be replaced with people who are willing to support that movement. | Allocating those funds to different places in our community that need it the most.   |
| criminal justice and the police force should be recreated for a better future  | cut police budget in half and create programs to create "true safety."   |
| Defunded and reinvested in other areas.  | Defund the Police  |
| Disparities and inequalities compared to more affluent communities   | Defund the police and redirect that money into social services and programs  |
| Higher likelihood of health problems and diminished life expectancy for BIPOC  | Divest from the police and invest with a focus on what makes a healthy community   |
| Criminalization of Black and Brown communities, disparity in receiving COVID-19 treatment, and disparity in prison/ jail populations and deaths.   | I don't understand what police do. The Chief has said that 94% of calls are not criminal calls. What are our patrols actually doing? Would there be better resources to send to those calls? |
| empathetic way to treat people healthily rather than punish, beat, enforce citations   | The police budget is high. \$80,000 for assault rifles was not a good investment. I'd rather see money put toward other services to help the community                                       |
|  | I want to know how the City will redirect funds so that social services and oversight can happen   |
| <b>Defund and redirect to specific services; Invest in mental health treatment, housing, schools; Develop 24 hr non-police mental health crisis response capacity</b>                        |  |
| <b>BIPOC groups</b>  | <b>White groups</b>  |
|  | To determine how to redistribute police resources to schools, addiction recovery, housing for all and more effective social services   |
|  | Want to invest in support + community services such as mental health   |

**Appendix Table 4a: Community comments from listening circle falling into the category of "Defund Police and Invest in Communities"**

| <b>Demilitarize the police by banning the federal transfer of military grade weapons, tactical equipment and vehicles to local police forces and ending militarized training programs</b>  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>BIPOC groups</b>  | <b>White groups</b>  |
| Demilitarization of police. They don't need to be out and looking like they're in a war zone, especially when they're working a fair, parade, or community event.  | strong request from a teacher to not militarize the police ESPECIALLY in a school shooting situation, does not think the solution is more guns |
| Stop militarization of police – that assume others (civilians) are enemies, they supposed to be protective   |  |
| In such a small community, why is there such glory in such a high powered fleet of weapons? lower crime? Is it truly a necessity? Who wins in moments of opposition? Again, what message does this send about Petaluma PD culture?   |  |
| <b>End the use of police in schools; End the arrest and handcuffing of juveniles</b>   |  |
| <b>BIPOC groups</b>  | <b>White groups</b>  |
| One participant shared that his children withheld their experiences that they had throughout their time in school. It wasn't until the recent events that they've opened up about the troubling experiences they've had with on campus police and racism in their schools. |  |
| <b>Create an unarmed first responder unit comprised of social workers and mental health professionals that responds to mental health crises and other non life threatening situations in the community</b>   |  |
| <b>BIPOC groups</b>  | <b>White groups</b>  |
| More community service. Spending more time with youth in this town.  |  |
| See more beat cops. Want to see them walking the neighborhoods so that they know us. Less likely to see us as a threat.  |  |
| Police speaks English (and keep speaking) even when people do not understand – sometimes as intimidating practice  |  |
| Police to have interpreters and members of the community that they can call for support (to people stopped by police)  |  |
| The roles of the PPD need to be taken away.  |  |

**Appendix Table 4b: Community comments from listening circle falling into the category of "Establish Independent Oversight Committee"**

| BIPOC groups   | White groups   |
|--|--|
| Approaching citizens committee pushing it forward - included citizens who pay salaries,  | Transparency – Want to see PUBLIC response on actions items regarding Defunding Police and Civilian Oversight. |
| Citizens committee for police, men/women - restructuring police all together   |  |
| local, state, federal ground up involvement  |  |
| Opportunity to change policing policies as a citizen/community (solely in Petaluma) **Would choose to be involved in that action |  |
| Transparency in police budget and report to the community  |  |

| <b>Appendix Table 4c: Community comments from listening circle falling into the category of "End Police Violence"</b>  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Completely redefine and systemize a safe use of force continuum to include new tools and strategies</b>   |  |
| <b>BIPOC groups</b>  | <b>White groups</b>  |
| my mother confronted the Petaluma Police often many years ago because they would harass my younger brother every time they saw him walking in the community.   | “as a white person, sure” but aware with these new weapons, none of us are safe – very against the militarization of the PPD   |
| Raising a black son in Sonoma County talk to him about both the police and gangs “Survive the encounter”   | depends on how you conceive of safety – foundation of safety is everyone in the community having their needs met – when we “prioritize aversion of harm” and instead of putting resources into education and needs, we “arm up,” we are all less safe  |
| Skate park with PD arriving (not warranted but they did), all of the youth were briefly questioned but the ONE Black male was interrogated, separated from the group, had his ID scrutinized & backpack searched three times over  | When I was younger I was playing hacky sack after hours at a school and police came up and pulled guns on us and cuffed us. If we were not white things could have been much worse.  |
| The older ones in the group were comfortable and had no problem with the police. However they have heard of others having problems.- 8-12 years ago. He was approached by 5 or 6 PPD cars. They came at him with guns drawn and before he could talk, they told him to raise his hands |  |
| businesses targeted and escalate quickly to intimidation.  |  |
| <b>Provide regular de-escalation training</b>  |  |
| <b>BIPOC groups</b>  | <b>White groups</b>  |
|  | 5-6 years ago there was a big interaction where police stopped a car with POC, rifles drawn, extremely tense, wanted to witness but not get shot but seemed important and he thought it was pretty egregious, doesn’t remember if he talked to the 2 kids later, but there were 4-5 officers on the block, using a bullhorn to issue commands, NO attempt to de-escalate |
|  | Ive also interacted with them in regards to a “drug dealing operation” on our block. They have been able to deescalate situations effectively  |
|  | Several members of the group described experiences where officers responded with many cars, 3-4 at a time. This causes intimidation, doesn’t seem necessary. It’s a bigger show of force.  |
|  | need better tactics for deescalation   |



| <b>Appendix Table 4c: Community comments from listening circle falling into the category of "End Police Violence"</b> |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Violence, unspecified</b>  |  |
| <b>BIPOC groups</b>   | <b>White groups</b>  |
| avoidance   | Fear has increased immensely in past few months  |
| "Liberal" w/heavy redneck overtone - confed flag – "illusion of safety/liberal"                                       | fearful of safety in Petaluma as an organized protester, a feeling of being unsafe if not in a group, overt racist behavior present in Petaluma, very unsafe due to COVID19 and the lack of masks and concern by community members, fear of repercussions of "political" statement of wearing a mask vs. not (ie. making a sign saying "mask save lives" and having property harmed), fear of walking alone on Lynch Creek Trail due to houseless population and mental illness. |
| Doesn't feel safe in Petaluma   | feels safe because of his whiteness, and when he doesn't feel safe, it because when he's marching he is aware that there is a possibility someone might drive into people, which was NEVER a concern about 10 years ago  |
| Experiences of feeling like a threat in your own community.   | left him feeling violated, resentful, irritated  |
| He doesn't go out at night or walk around by himself. *Childhood/trauma/imposter syndrome*                            | I want our elected officials to do things that result in helping us to feel safe   |
| He was called the N-word while trying to do work. Also refused work in Masonry  | professional interactions, observed a woman being arrested forcibly by P.P.D. and decided to video tape - was approached by police and asked why they were videotaping, what their name was and that they may need the video as evidence themselves. Party felt they were being lied to as an intimidation tactic  |
| No moved away because of racism felt  | tends to feel safe, not when alone on trail early morning or now   |
| Safe is a relative term   | They spoke aggressively and treated them disrespectfully. (black student in car)   |
| suffocated in fear  |  |
| VISCERAL fear relating to some areas & WILL NOT GO  |  |
| When you hear sirens and helicopters, she calls her son to check  |  |

| <b>Appendix Table 4d: Community comments from listening circle falling into the category of "Hold Police Accountable"</b>  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Listening</b>   |  |
| <b>BIPOC groups</b>  | <b>White groups</b>  |
| Everyone felt they wanted more Community Forum like this one. It's important to listen to Black and Brown residents of Petaluma. That means reaching out to the young people. Survey the young people! | have more of these listening circles – let community be part of next steps – police seem to be untouchable – good that they want feedback but they need to be “on our side” as “public servants” |
| Believe and trust Black people   | People of Color should lead the way.   |
| Can there be conversations?  | To accomplish true community-based policing Insuring that listening circles be at the center of future action steps so that deep listening can continue to occur.                                |
| He went to the forum that happened a few weeks ago that was led by the city and PPD and his questions were not acknowledged or answered  | need to identify those people and communities who don't feel safe and work with community members to identify how best to reach out and appropriately engage.                                    |
| Include all races = a joint, all voices, equal representation  |  |
| Listen to and give us spaces to speak freely   |  |
| broaden conversations = important  |  |
| Need to stop talking over us!  |  |
| Respect what we have to say  |  |
| Trust of the community of the police force needs to be improved.   |  |
| We don't feel respected!!  |  |
| White allies need to speak up and not be scared to speak up on our behalf.   |  |
| children's hesitation was to try and shield their parents from worrying about their overall safety and the continued discrimination became normalized behavior.  |  |

| <b>Appendix Table 4d: Community comments from listening circle falling into the category of "Hold Police Accountable"</b>   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Profiling</b>  |   |
| <b>BIPOC groups</b>   | <b>White groups</b>   |
| <p>"How did you purchase this car?", "Well, what do you do for a living?", "Are you from here or did you move here? I haven't seen you before.", "Why are you parked here (in a legal space*) What are you waiting on?" (was parked outside a clothing donation box waiting for it to open)</p> | <p>3-4 traffic stops that were upsetting but positive interactions with officer</p>   |
| <p>Look into racial profiling- How often are Black and Brown people are stopped and harassed and/or ticketed in relationship to White people.</p>   | <p>A black friend was stopped 5 or 6 times coming home from school in Petaluma to her home in Penngrove.</p>  |
| <p>All participants in the conversation agreed they have not experienced anything egregious with police. The root of all experiences were through traffic stops, followed in police cars and obvious profiling.</p>   | <p>Black husband and Latino friend taking pictures at a parade and stopped and questioned for "theft"</p>   |
| <p>Always nervous that police will stop you – being extra careful. Have to go to extra length measures to avoid the attention. Or to demonstrate that we belong to the community.</p>   | <p>community member answered questions calmly as he was aware his black skin made him more of a target for police.</p>  |
| <p>Attitude towards African American isn't good</p>   | <p>had to tell officer to call chief to clear it all up</p>   |
| <p>Called Police direct out of necessity when saw 2 WM trying to take 1WW, still got questioned by cops, called 911 to make sure WW was ok</p>  | <p>knowledge of LGBTQ youth not feeling safe in the community</p>   |
| <p>Culture shock b/c how look vs 'majority'</p>   | <p>MA/WW = P.P.D. handling overt acts of racism extremely mildly and modeling to our community that hate and racism is very present in this community and of no concern to them, Pulled over 1 time in Petaluma for an expired license plate sticker and allowed to leave with warning.</p> |
| <p>Do best to avoid, do know have benefit of looking "exotic" vs "dangerous"</p>  | <p>No, my kids are bi-racial</p>  |
| <p>For example, consciously grabbing a wallet with ID/cash/creditcards to demonstrate -xyz. Assuring you have your cell phone. Bringing a dog to look like a "friendly Black neighbor." All additional weight - emotional/physical - we know others would never have to consider bringing.</p>  | <p>their husband had pulled off the road on the way out towards the coast to step out of the car and enjoy nature. was later approached by police officers who began to questions motives and actions.</p>  |
| <p>Husband went to the bar downtown - the bartender didn't want to serve him.</p>   | <p>There were some black bakers who would deliver to the west side. They were stopped by the police so often that they had to have white employees deliver to the west side for them</p>  |
| <p><i>In general: All agree that there's been a learning/living experience to navigate the duality</i></p>  |   |

| <b>Appendix Table 4d: Community comments from listening circle falling into the category of "Hold Police Accountable"</b>  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| <i>Profiling, continued</i>  |                     |
| <b>BIPOC groups</b>  | <b>White groups</b> |
| Mostly traffic stops, immigrants being stopped, "mistaken" identity  |                     |
| Need to be able to talk about differences - being black while driving = dangerous  |                     |
| Petaluma was particularly tough on taking cars from immigrants that had no (driving) licenses- There is a lot of tension   |                     |
| POC target for "random" stops  |                     |
| Pulled over for expired tags - they were loud, drive with DL on seat "I don't need anyone shooting me while I grab my ID"  |                     |
| Racial biases, prejudice, profiling in fatherhood.   |                     |
| Racial profiling is alive and well in our city, and we are not immune to it. Believes there is a real surface level understanding of other cultures (BIPOC) in our city that may contribute to profiling.  |                     |
| she was pulled over because her husband (who is black), felt like it was for sure racial profiling.  |                     |
| Stop and frisk, police brutality, racial profiling like it's no coincidence that we look different than most folks (young man with melanin in their skin, jeans and t-shirt common dress makes us look like a threat or a suspect or like we don't belong)   |                     |
| The Model Minority Myth works to separate us from other BIPOC communities, and there is a real need for our community to show up for other BIPOC communities and that there may be discomfort that is necessary to confront in order to continue showing up. |                     |
| Wanting to be able to comfortably walk around without needing additional support because you Black   |                     |
| Yes, despite know people will judge  |                     |
| You're Black in a very white town, you learn to find ways to try and be non-threatening, deflect attention & yet still end up in scenarios where you're confronted with PD   |                     |

| <b>Appendix Table 4d: Community comments from listening circle falling into the category of "Hold Police Accountable"</b>  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Profiling, continued</b>  |   |
| <b>BIPOC groups</b>  | <b>White groups</b>   |
| Decoy practices to incriminate in business, which seems to be targeted to people of color,   |   |
| Stop being targeted and assuming we are criminals,   |   |
| They were leaving a parking garage after going to an art and garden festival. They had a mixed race teenager in the car from Sweden. The police followed them out of the garage and pulled them over. I think it was because of a license being experience or something like that. |   |
| <b>Other: policy review, training, defund, hiring, showing up</b>  |   |
| <b>BIPOC groups</b>  | <b>White groups</b>   |
| Look at Police polices and practices from different lens to see the language that is being used. This process can be informative. Old polices are outdated.  | a personal experience with feeling unsafe while at a candlelight vigil, some harassing trucks arrived and made people feel unsafe. the Police were called. no-one came. The Chief didn't hear about it until days/weeks later via social media. Who are people to call when they feel unsafe? |
| Is there room for community/ training experts to implement these impressions into the hiring process and initial training?   | Frequent racial bias training along with non-violent crisis intervention, ensuring this is not just a one time program and refreshing this certification be mandatory.  |
| No good cops   | several years ago, her and some friends filmed PPD interacting with POC to make sure all was cool – she remembered officer didn't like that she was filming but she doesn't remember if he asked her to stop"   |
| Known reputation amongst other forces/law enforcement agencies as one of the most racist departments in the state  | put money towards bias, sensitivity and deescalating training   |
| So, how are they recruiting? What is the messages being shared about the town and department that attract (certain) officers   |   |
| . A Diverse Police Force that reflects the community.  |   |
| Spanish speaking officers - bilingual - multi-cultural people on the force   |   |
| Hire a Black officer who speaks Spanish and hire more officers of color.   |   |
| City newsletters contain racist imagery, organize for all city staff to go through several Anti-Racism training.   |   |
| Training for Professionalism versus Racial Microaggression   |   |
| maybe through anti-racist training   |   |

**Appendix 5: Recommended Actions based on Grassroots Law Project's Plan**

*Summary of relevant recommended actions on defund and reinvestment*

- Divert funds from police budgets and invest resources into community-based programs & Pledge decreases in police budgets
- Defund and redirect to specific services; Invest in mental health treatment, housing, schools; Develop 24-hour non-police mental health crisis response capacity
- Demilitarize the police by banning the federal transfer of military-grade weapons, tactical equipment, and vehicles to local police forces and ending militarized training programs
- End the use of police in schools; End the arrest and handcuffing of juveniles
- Create an unarmed first responder unit comprised of social workers and mental health professionals that responds to mental health crises and other non-life-threatening situations in the community

*Summary of relevant recommended actions on independent oversight*

- Establish civilian oversight committees with subpoena powers over law enforcement with powers to investigate and discipline acts of police abuse and killings independently of current law enforcement
- Establish Police Accountability Unit that will review police misconduct and discipline officers for wrong doing

*Summary of relevant recommended actions on police violence*

- Completely redefine and systemize a safe use of force continuum to include new tools and strategies
- Provide regular de-escalation training

*Summary of relevant recommended actions on police accountability*

- Require that police officers and other first responders live in the communities they serve.
- Establish laws making it illegal for police departments to hire officers who were previously fired or who resigned while being investigated for serious misconduct including the use of excessive force, or domestic violence.
- Establish public data systems to track critical information re: policing like arrest information, demographics, charges, conviction history, jail and prison population information
- Require any officer who shoots someone to submit to a mandatory drug and alcohol test within one hour of the shooting.
- Unseal and make public all records of police misconduct and complaints against police
- Ban all union contracts from interfering with police accountability, by
  - Eliminating officers' ability to review evidence before submitting to an investigation

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- Allowing for the investigation of all civilian complaints, regardless of when filed
- Prohibiting the destruction of personnel files and complaints
- Ending arbitration after internal discipline occurs
- Ending indemnification for police abuse
- Grant media and family immediate access to all body, dash and video evidence. (upload to a public warehouse)