

Champaign County Racial Justice Task Force (RJTF)  
Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, October 27, 2016  
6:30 pm

**I. Call to Order**

Chair Byndom called the meeting to order at 6:35.

**II. Roll Call**

*Members Present:*

M. Ar-Raheem, S. Balgoyen, L. Branham, S. Byndom, A. Felty, D. Harber, R. Hughes, A. James, E. Patt, C. Randolph, H. Ross, S. Silver, D. Turner, G. Walter, S. Lerner.

*Members Absent:*

E. Dee, A. Evans, K. Schneider, A. Shelton.

*Note:* Rosita Byrd has resigned from the task force.

**III. Approval of Agenda**

Artice James moved to approve agenda. David Harber seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**IV. Approval of Minutes**

Esther Patt moved to approve the minutes. Artice seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**V. Public Participation**

There were no public comments at the time of this agenda item.

**VI. Volunteer Group Meetings**

Ryan updated the group on the police practices subcommittee and which police departments have responded with data.

The subcommittees met as groups. See below for minutes.

**VII. New Business**

*A. Vote on RJTF Statement for Data Collection*

Lynn provided context on the proposed statement and shared her positive experience in working with the Sheriff's office. The proposed statement states that the task force formally needs support from local criminal justice officials and organizations to collect data.

Esther moved to approve the resolution. Artice seconded the motion. Maryam stated confusion about why the task force is writing this if it will not be distributed as a public press release. It was noted that the statement would be included in the minutes of the meeting.

Demario proposed an amendment to the motion to add the Secretary of State to the resolution. Maryam asked how including the school districts could be included in the statement.

Esther accepted the friendly amendments. Artice agreed with the friendly motion. The motion carried by a vocal vote. The statement reads:

In order to enable the Champaign County Racial Justice Task Force to complete the work it was charged to undertake by the Champaign County Board, we, the members of the Racial Justice Task Force, request that the Circuit Clerk, State's Attorney, Public Defender, Probation and Court Services Director, Sheriff, law-enforcement agencies, judges, school-district officials, and other local and county officials in Champaign County, as well as the Illinois Secretary of State, work to promptly provide the data and other information requested or to be requested by the Task Force or the data team headed by Dr. Bev Wilson of the University of Illinois. The Task Force also expresses its appreciation to those government leaders who have already moved with dispatch to begin securing the data and information needed by the Task Force.

Voted and Approved by the  
Champaign County Racial Justice  
Task Force on October 27, 2016

### **VIII. Task Force Member Comments**

Henry Ross shared his experience in trying to find help from Champaign County in support of his discrimination lawsuit against the Champaign School District. He expressed his need as an African American for empowerment and stated that any recommendations that he supports from this task force will include that.

Sara encouraged the task force to identify specific people they know who could fill the two vacancies on the task force.

Carolyn asked if the new vacancy postings were revised to reflect the new mission statement of the task force. It was noted that they were not.

Esther asked where the next meeting will be held. Sara responded that it will be at the Huntington Towers on Springfield Ave.

### **IX. Adjournment**

Artice moved to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 8:17pm.

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*Community Engagement Subcommittee*

Members Present: G. Walter, D. Harber, C. Randolph, S. Byndom.

## I. Discussion of Subcommittee Goals

We discussed how we might go about building an audience for the database being developed with the assistance of Dr. Bev Wilson.

It was suggested that we host several roadshows or pop-ups that educates community members on the potential uses of the database. It also was suggested that we host an event or “reveal” that allows for select community stakeholders to interact with the database and provide feedback about its usability before rolling it out to the general public. Additionally, we talked about identifying potential spaces that could house and/or build upon the existing database.

Finally, we discussed the need to expand the database into a digital archive that would provide a historical context for understanding racial disparities in the Champaign County criminal justice system. This would be considered “phase two” of the project outlined by the RJTF. That being said, we talked about a potential collaboration with NPR’s StoryCorps Chicago to collect personal narratives from populations vulnerable to the criminal justice system along with other pertinent information that could help users better understand the relevance of the database along with race, racism, and the law.

### *Legal Process Subcommittee*

Members Present: Demario Turner, Susan Silver, Lynn Branham and Esther Patt.

## I. Discussion of Subcommittee Tasks

The Subcommittee reviewed topics to be examined by each member while we wait for the data being collected by Dr. Wilson’s class at the University.

Lynn Branham will work on cash bail and pre-trial services, Kevin Schneider will work on prosecutorial practices and discretion, Susan Silver will work on diversion programs that avoid criminal convictions Esther Patt will work on public defender office issues and Demario Turner will look into arrests for driving on suspended or revoked driver’s licenses and for Failure To Appear notices. Detail of each of these topics is described in the October 21 Subcommittee minutes.

Four other issue areas which the Subcommittee members felt the entire Task Force should eventually address in its report are:

- Racial composition of juries – has already been studied; evaluate success, challenges and what else needs to be done
- Structural reforms (local level)
  - Criminal Justice Coordinating Council
  - Ongoing data collection and evaluation
  - Outcome measures employed at all steps of the criminal justice process
  - Transparency

- Public reporting/education/input
- Training of all criminal justice officials
  - Implicit bias
  - Restorative justice
  - Community diversion sentencing options
- State laws
  - Elimination of financial release conditions
  - Elimination of mandatory minimums
  - Independent public defenders

### *Structural Subcommittee*

Members Present: Henry Ross and Amy Felty.

#### I. General Discussion

The Structure subcommittee discussed issues of employment and education during the breakout time.

### *Juvenile Justice Subcommittee*

Members Present: Sara Balgoyen, Artice James, Maryam Ar-Raheem, Scott Lerner

#### I. Discussion of Data Needs

Ongoing data needs: SRO arrests, Police arrests, Diversion data (youth assessment center)

Sara will contact YAC & schools for data

Some SRO data available online including report from 2013-2014: Since 2006, in Champaign, 417 at school arrests: 357 black students (85%)

Other questions: What's the training process for SRO's? How do they become SRO's?