

Champaign County Racial Justice Task Force (RJTF)  
Meeting Minutes  
Thursday March 24, 2016  
6:30 pm

**I. Call to Order**

Facilitator Samuel Byndom called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

**II. Roll Call**

*Members Present:*

M. Ar-Raheem, L. Branham, K. Bryan, P. Burnside, S. Byndom, A. Felty, D. Harber, R. Hughes, A. James, E. Patt, C. Randolph, H. Ross, K. Schneider, G. Walter, E. Dee, R. Byrd.

*Members Absent:*

S. Balgoyen, B. Butts, A. Evans, W. Feinberg, S. Silver, D. Turner, F. Turner.

**III. Approval of Agenda**

David Harber moved to approve the agenda. Kevin Schneider seconded the motion. Samuel Byndom noted that the meeting minutes from the Feb. 25<sup>th</sup> meeting need to be approved, and this needs to happen as an item on the agenda.

Kevin Schneider moved to approve the agenda with the amendment to approve the minutes from the Feb. 25<sup>th</sup> meeting. Maryam Ar-Raheem seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Esther Patt moved to approve the Feb. 25<sup>th</sup> minutes. Kevin Schneider seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**IV. Approval of Minutes**

Artice James moved to approve the meeting minutes from the March 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. Pam Burnside seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**V. Public Participation**

1. Linda Turnbull - She stated that lots of people have been affected by this issue and she has placed a formal complaint with the Champaign Police Department (Chief Cobb). The Police Department said nothing could be done because they didn't know who was doing it. She stated there are unidentified flying objects in our community which fly over the houses and flash lights in windows, possibly taking photos. She believes the City of Urbana should pass an ordinance prohibiting drones. She spoke of other citizens who claim to also have seen flying objects and are also scared. She believes they are invading privacy and harassing the community, and she asked the facilitator to read a formal statement she typed. The statement was read aloud.
2. James Kilgore – He stated that he is a member of First Followers, a re-entry assistance program, and they are having a celebration Friday, April 1<sup>st</sup> at 6pm at 301 E. Park St.,

Champaign. He invited the task force to come and said that they are hosting a speaker from a similar program at St. Leonard's in Chicago.

## **VI. Task Force Member Updates**

Volunteers who were working on brainstorming for the community outreach updated the task force on their work. Artice said they met at the library as volunteers, and they summarized their ideas on a summary sheet which was passed out. He mentioned that he wants to get it going as soon as possible.

Pam clarified that they don't want the entire task force to be at the community outreach meetings because that could be intimidating, but they would like each member to commit to attending at least one. Artice hopes that sponsors will generate conversations while task force members could be responsible for listening and taking notes. Kevin asked if more contacts for sponsors are needed, and Artice spoke of NAACP and First Followers but also asked for more help. Kevin mentioned the Champaign County Bar Association which he is a member of. Artice asked the task force members to try to get commitments from sponsors. Pam asked members to reach out to pastors at churches and stated they would like to see three sessions complete by the end of May. Maryam said she has spoken to community members and heard that people want to come and tell their stories first. She doesn't want to have questions prepared because if the task force hears stories first, these can guide the task force's work. Artice agreed and said that the format could go two ways: 1) tell the community who we are and share some data on racial justice and then break into groups to tell stories or 2) tell stories as a large group without a rigid format. Gerry asked how the task force would facilitate gathering all of the stories and suggested organizations could pick which stories to share. Pam asked if we want to focus on stories or have open ended questions which can maintain the truth of the info being shared. Esther shared that she doesn't like too open ended questions and wants to get an understanding of what the most pressing issues are. She thinks the task force should ask the question like that and listen to stories. She also asked to clarify how organizations would pay for a sponsorship since the task force has no formal budget. It was decided that organizations could pay for individual items such as food or a room fee.

Artice asked what the thoughts regarding structure were. Kevin said he doesn't like full structure and expressed concern about having to have Open Meetings. He thinks the task force should have the opportunity to have four or five members present and listen to the community and begin picking out themes. Lynn Branham explained the context of what she shared with the volunteers regarding questions and shared an example of an open ended question. Her vision was breaking up in circles to give everyone the chance to speak. In small groups, they might ask what the most important steps to be taken in the criminal justice system are. Outside the criminal justice system? And anything else? She thinks stories can come from the small groups.

Carolyn Randolph thinks that the questions shouldn't be too leading. She thinks they should be more open ended and likes the idea of breakout sessions to be used for workshops on how to build off the stories. She thinks the task force should also reach out to beauty and barbershops,

high school groups, and the Boys and Girls Club. Amy Felty thinks that small groups and outreach should be focused on the mission statement and look at racial disparities in the criminal justice system.

Kim Bryan agrees with Maryam about giving a space for the community to talk, but she also thinks that some structure including questions is needed. The task force also needs to be careful that it doesn't look at people as sources of data. Questions should be geared toward solutions and small groups are a good idea. She also suggested having a paper survey at the door with specific questions for people to fill out. Maryam said that stories are data and that the task force needs to be conscious of cultural differences because those will dictate the ways the meetings will go. Cultural competence is important and meetings need to be conducted to make the public comfortable. She stated that the reason the task force was created was because of a lack of social and racial justice and a lack of cultural competency. Kim clarified that data is good and thinks that organizations could help run the meetings because they know their communities the best. She also believes flexibility in structure for meetings is good. Artice noted that he liked the idea of having organizations facilitate based on general points or questions that the task force provides. Gerry Walter asked who the point of contact should be. Sam stated that Sara Balgoyen should be contacted. Lynn said co-sponsored meeting should still be considered, and Kim said to be cautious about having the bar association co-host with other groups.

## **VII. Interns and Logistics**

Sam then talked about getting additional help from interns, which the task force has spoken about before. He also stated that some organizations are gearing up for summer internships. Carolyn stated that she feels uncomfortable about not paying someone. Sam said that the task force could work with organizations who sponsor youth internships. Esther thought that the task force was looking to get interns for research who have research experience. Kevin stated that a lot of work has already been done and he doesn't see the task force having to conduct lots of research. Maryam stated that she believes the task force should collect some present data and that interns would be useful. Gerry emphasized that interns must be paid. Kevin brought up the point that the task force does not yet know what it doesn't know, and more work needs to be done. Lynn said she thinks the task force will definitely need help and it should tap into the university. Gerry and Carolyn noted concerns regarding paying and developing work for interns. Pam said she is interested in getting data on court records and wants to investigate the practice of overcharging by attorney which would be a good task for an intern. Kim also stated concern about supervising and paying interns.

Gerry moved to suspend the discussion of interns, but Sam pointed out that this does not need to occur. Interns and logistics will not be place on future agendas until necessary.

Public Participation – Rohn Kester is a court watcher and was requested to speak to the task force about what type of data is gathered. He said that they don't look at DUI or theft, they look at assaults and felonies. They create reports which are submitted to the Public Eye and Smile Politely. He stated they are working with Representative Ammons' office to collate more data.

Ester asked Rohn if he knew how many people were in jail because they could not pay bail. Rohn responded that they have this information as stories but not data.

Kevin moved that the task force discuss these at a different date. Sam stated that no motion is needed to do this.

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

Amy recommended reading both reports from the ILPP and the Community Justice Task Force. Lynn would still like to present and said they will present at the next meeting along with Build Programs Not Jails.

Kevin volunteered to write a letter to the editor of the News-Gazette to encourage more public participation at meetings.

Artice asked how many people are planning on contacting someone about sponsoring a community meeting.

Amy told the task force that the Racial Taboo documentary will be shown April 6<sup>th</sup> at the U of I Arc Auditorium from 6pm to 9pm and at Urbana High School April 14<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm.

Kevin volunteered to talk to the Champaign Bar Association and Canaan Baptist Church.

David Harber asked the task force to think about July 2017 and what product the group would like to have. He asked if it would be another long report that is passed to the next group? He challenged the task force to keep the focus on what it wants to achieve, even though getting started has been slow.

Kevin motioned to adjourn the meeting. Artice seconded the motion. The chair adjourned the meeting.