

From: [Kristy Anti-Racist Project](#)
To: [ercommittee](#)
Subject: Bias/Equity training for PCSD a necessity in light of use of force data
Date: Tuesday, March 1, 2022 8:55:37 AM

Dear Equity Review Committee Members,

First, thank you all for your service on this Committee. I see you putting time in to study the materials presented and work through complex issues with objective curiosity and reason in the meetings. I applaud your efforts, as someone who has followed [Resolution 2020-43](#) from its beginning in 2020.

I'll make this short because I know you have a lot of work in front of you. I've been thinking about the issue of implicit bias/equity training for law enforcement officers all week, and then [the Op-Ed in this morning's News Tribune, submitted by your fellow committee member Andre Jimenez](#), helped me decide to write to you (... And I will paste in the copy below here in case you run into a firewall.)

At Monday's Public Safety Committee meeting, the committee was presented with a report on the Sheriff Department's recruiting, hiring and training. (The meeting packet containing that report can be found [here https://online.co.pierce.wa.us/cfapps/council/iview/committeeMeeting.cfm?committee_cd=ps&meeting_dt=Feb%2028%202022%20%201:30PM](https://online.co.pierce.wa.us/cfapps/council/iview/committeeMeeting.cfm?committee_cd=ps&meeting_dt=Feb%2028%202022%20%201:30PM)) It struck me that the Sheriff Department can speak explicitly about how many hours of firearms and other training are provided for recruits and to officers on an ongoing basis. But they are much less explicit about their bias/equity training hours requirements. In light of the fact that their own data (which is reported by officers themselves, so likely subject to bias that favors the department) show they use force disproportionately against people of color, I think they should be **much** more focused on figuring where that bias comes from and how to recruit and hire and train it out of their officers.

I know your predecessors on the [Public Review Committee](#) had questions about DEI training for all county staff, but I don't know that they focused their comments and suggestions specifically on the PCSD. I urge you to pick up that thread ... one which is directly related to the use-of-force statistics ... and push the department to engage in rigorous, third-party, frequent and ongoing equity/bias training.

Thanks for listening, and again, thanks for all you do,
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PS:

Here's the 3-1-22 Op-Ed by Andre Jimenez of the Equity Review Committee:

Pierce County Sheriff's Department has a use-of-force problem. The data says it all
BY ANDRE JIMENEZ MARCH 01, 2022 5:00 AM
Andre Jimenez is the District 4 representative for the Pierce County Equity Review Committee, and chair of Tacoma's Human Rights Commission.

As the second anniversary of the Manuel Ellis murder nears, many of us are still searching for answers. Heightened by the death of Moses Portillo — who was fatally shot by a Pierce County deputy during a Jan. 16 traffic stop — and six other police shootings so far this year, including three by Pierce County deputies, cries for police accountability have become deafening. After Ellis' murder, elected city and county officials were quick to address community concerns using words like “re-imagine,” “anti-racist” and “community support.”

Our community — and specifically communities of color — have grown accustomed to elected leaders inviting us to rebuild trust in law enforcement, promising transparency and accountability — if only we are willing to wait. Such responses prove all too well that the word “wait,” as expressed by Martin Luther King Jr., has “always meant never.” Yes, we've seen a ban on chokeholds and the implementation of body cameras, but these reforms miss the mark if the goal is safe and just communities for all.

Last November, the Pierce County Sheriff's Department released its first Use of Force Analysis, focused on uses of force by Pierce County deputies between the years of 2016 and 2020. Commissioned by the county's Criminal Justice Work Group, the analysis proves that maintaining the status quo is still the county's primary objective. The report looked at where, when and to whom use-of-force incidents occurred.

As the District 4 representative on the county's Equity Review Committee, I was one of 15 representatives who reviewed it. The purpose of the report was to discover the demographic proportionality of how force is used. In short: are people of color in Pierce County more likely to be harmed by the police?

However, if you think the report provides a transparent, objective analysis of this important question, you're mistaken. While the findings are alarming, so are the holes and inconsistencies in the data it relies on. The report found that “disproportionate force is experienced consistently across all age brackets by the Black or African American population,” with Black residents experiencing police force five times more frequently than white residents.

With national reports stating that Black people, on average, are three times more likely than their white neighbors to experience unjustified force, it's clear the Pierce County Sheriff's department has a serious problem.

But the report continues with the equally alarming discovery that Black youth experience force more than 10 times more often than white youth. This is roughly four times the national average.

Furthermore, Black people experienced deadly force three times more often than their white peers. Despite such disparities in the policing of Black Pierce County residents, a closer examination of the report reveals a serious, unaddressed concern. No surveillance, dash cams or community or victim reports are evaluated. Body and dash cams weren't even implemented until recently.

Even more troubling, the facts and figures in this report rely solely on officers' reporting of their use of force, including the characteristics of the people with whom force was used. In other words, the picture the report paints is based solely on the perceptions of the officers involved. It's easy to imagine that the (alarming) rates of force are much higher than what's

captured.

When confronted with concerns over Pierce County Sheriff's reliance on self-reporting to determine the prevalence of force against people of color, Chief Kevin Roberts acknowledged that "human error" can skew the data. It's a glaring problem — even if it's standard practice among law enforcement agencies — and one county policy should do more to address. .

Unfortunately, even efforts to increase transparency within the sheriff's department so far fall short. Currently, the county is proposing to push through an ill-conceived Civilian Review Board with the stated purpose of increasing the public's confidence in policing. But this board would have no real oversight power, no regulatory authority and would lack the ability to compel the sheriff's department to conduct an investigation. Instead, this committee would only review evidence provided by the sheriff's department after it had completed its investigation.

Again we see the county and the sheriff's silent refusal to change the system that contributes to disproportionate force being used against Black youth and Pierce County residents of color.

As the father of three young Black girls, I want to see a sheriff's department that fulfills its charter to "serve and protect," and county officials who uphold their commitment to create a safe and just county. For this to happen we must no longer hide behind poor data, cease with performative measures and address the real issue at hand. Real change requires independent sources of data on police use of force practices that are no longer dependent on officers' self-reporting. We need a civilian review board with real oversight authority and independence from the sheriff's department, ensuring that the police who investigate their fellow officers are held accountable.

And finally, when Pierce County claims it is striving for "safe and just communities," it needs to move beyond performative proclamations. Our community deserves more. I will continue calling upon our county leaders to do better, and I hope you'll join me.

Andre Jimenez is the District 4 representative for the Pierce County Equity Review Committee, and chair of Tacoma's Human Rights Commission. He is majoring in Law and Policy at the University of Washington Tacoma, where he serves as its student body president.

Read more at: <https://www.thenewstribune.com/opinion/article258898908.html#storylink=cpy>

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The South Sound Antiracist Project is building an active community of white people who are committed to understanding, adopting, employing and promoting anti-racist ideas, policies and actions in all their spheres of influence.

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