



Orange County Human Relations Commission

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Mission: Seek out the causes of tension and conflict, discrimination and intolerance, and eliminate those causes

Commissioners

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Commission Plans Police Community Dialogues

An African American woman shared that her kindergartener asked, “Mommy, why don’t police like Black people like me?”

- This anecdote earlier this month symbolized the reach and impact of the national media attention to a series of conflicts between African American young men and police officers resulting in violence and death.
- In California Proposition 47 passed aiming to reduce the number of people incarcerated for non-violent offenses.
- In Anaheim destructive demonstrations followed after a series of shooting deaths of suspected gang members by the police.
- In Santa Ana activists demonstrated at city council meetings with profane messages on their hats and shirts targeting the police.
- The OC Interfaith Clergy Alliance and OCCCO hosted a forum with key law enforcement leaders and a couple hundred African American and Latino community members in Lake Forest.

The OC Human Relations Commission convened on 12.11.2014 and discussed what can be done to address the fear and mistrust that escalates confrontations between law enforcement officials and boys and men of color, into violence and even death.

Following on the OC Interfaith Clergy/Law Enforcement Forum that the Commission collaborated on, were requests that the Commission organize some dialogues to bring these groups together to build understanding and trust, as well as dispel stereotypes that can only add to the tension and escalate confrontation.

Irvine Police Chief and Human Relations Commissioner, David Maggard, shared that his officers partnered with Pastor Mark Whitlock’s Christ Our Redeemer AME Church to offer a session for African American youth on how to avoid conflict and potential arrest when stopped by police. The Chief indicated that the sessions turned out to be as educational for his officers as it was for the young men.

This concept spurred the Commission to vote to reach out to partners in the community and law enforcement to explore the possibility of organizing dialogues between the police and diverse communities, around small tables. A similar dialogue was successfully facilitated by the Commission for the Anaheim Police Department and the West Anaheim Arab & Muslim business community and residents.