

Civil Rights Commission (CRC) Meeting Minutes  
April 25, 2017

*This is to affirm that the regularly scheduled meeting of the Princeton Civil Rights Commission has been duly notified and is being conducted in compliance with all provisions of the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act.*

In attendance: David Campbell, Molly Chrein, Susan Fiske, Leticia Fraga, Karen Hernandez-Granzen, Kiki Jamieson, Tommy Parker, Afsheen Shamsi, Tim Quinn

Absent: Donna Tatro

Open public meeting called to order at 6:30pm in Council chambers

Ms. Fraga announces task of CRC to assembled audience and invites comments, which were offered by:

Those in attendance included: graduates and current students of PHS, a school board member, members of NIOT, and other members of the community.

Issues raised include:

- A sense that issues related to discrimination at PHS are generally ignored
- Students have daily experience with oppression at school and in the community and there are no consequences for racial slurs
- There is a need for more translators at PHS; for example, there are six ESL students but one translator for Biology class. Language ought not to be a reason that students don't get a good education
- Teachers must do more to develop the skills to interact well with diverse populations
- Students of color, students without economic privilege and ESL students are seen by faculty as not capable and are rarely encouraged to participate in accelerated classes at PHS
- Students of color feel targeted when shopping at some shops on Nassau St.
- Students at PHS segregate by race, economic background and language; the student population requires more education about the diversity of peers around them. People use racial slurs without consequences.
- White students don't seem to care when students of color are pigeon holed as receiving affirmative action grades. There is a lack of attention regarding the dynamic between Asian-Americans and White Americans at PHS. Asians are burdened by the ideal minority stereotype. Education at PHS regarding the African American experience in the US stops at 1965 resulting in ignorance and the sense among white students that racism is history.
- Students of color and low SES students are damaged by oppressive and discriminatory forces at PHS. Students feel that they are more readily penalized and would be expelled if they uttered racial slurs like the recently publicized comment on Snapchat.

- An adult African-American male stated that PHS is being asked to recognize students of color and low SES students in the classroom; to teach black history; to enable opportunity for advance placement for students of color and low SES students and prevent them from being tracked into low expectation course of study; and to give these students an opportunity equal to those who arrive on campus with economic privilege.
- An adult white male expressed concern that the students' voices are not being recorded at this meeting and questioned whether or not their concerns will actually be heard by the CRC. It is imperative that students are taught about the history of white male power and privilege in the US and here in Princeton. Teachers and CRC members should have training to address their own racism and implicit bias. Students need safe, trustworthy people in school who will hear their concerns. A truth and reconciliation committee is needed to understand and rectify Princeton's racist and slave owning history, which continues to inform the discriminatory ways that African Americans are treated here. Young people should be on the CRC [Ms. Fraga notes that a youth advisory committee will work with a CRC sub-committee].
- An adult white female stated that white people have caused the problem related to the Snapchat racial slur and have the obligation to solve it.
- An adult white female asserted that black students are treated with suspicion in Nassau St stores. The issue of racism should be discussed in Princeton schools starting as early as second grade.
- An adult Asian female asserted that weight is placed on students of color to explain themselves repeatedly. White members of the community must understand the pain they cause and stand up as allies for racial justice.
- A comparison was made between the school's response to the Nazi beer pong episode last year and its response to the Snapchat racial slur, which has apparently yielded no teaching moment for the PHS community. Being referred to as 'n-----s' is traumatic for students and there should be counseling available for those students. Students of color have a right to a learning environment that leaves them feeling secure and valued like their white peers.

Ms. Fraga paraphrased the issues to be addressed by the CRC as follows:

- The need for additional translators at PHS
- For teachers and students at PHS, more resources for education and skill development to interact effectively with diverse populations
- Teachers need to encourage minority students to excel at PHS
- There is a need to hire more teachers of color at PHS
- There is a need to empower PHS students of all races to speak out when they see/hear racism/discrimination.
- There is a need to enrich the PHS curriculum regarding the history of racism, slavery and discrimination in Princeton and in the US
- Training about unconscious bias and macroaggressions is needed for all those working with or advocating for a diverse student body at PHS.
- Counseling spaces at PHS are needed to support students affected by the Snapchat incident

All individual members of the CRC addressed the assembled community to:

- Acknowledge, affirm and appreciate student's courage to speak and express their concerns
- Assert the CRC intention to reach out for further discussions with students
- Encourage students to continue to make their voices heard and to let students and other community stakeholders know that the CRC hears their concerns and seeks to take action to address them
- Affirm the CRC's intention to utilize members' expertise and motivation to make progress on the issues raised because of our interest to promote civil rights in our community
- Encourage and promote the cultivation of white allies to support social justice for students at PHS
- Request stakeholders' specific suggestions to address the problems raised

Mr. Quinn informed the community that he will share the concerns raised in today's meeting with the Princeton Council and he underscored the need for White people to be educated to avoid use of the N word. Additionally, he affirmed that everyone is valued in Princeton and has a place here regardless of how much money they have, the color of their skin, where they come from, who their parents are or what language they speak.

At 7:50pm Ms. Fraga welcomed the community to remain for the rest of the CRC meeting and invited them to be present for the Stand Against Racism rally at Hinds Plaza on Friday April 28<sup>th</sup> 4-5pm.

#### Brief Committee Reports

##### Chairs Report – Ms. Fraga

- Stand Against Racism legislative breakfast at Nassau Inn on Thursday April 27<sup>th</sup>. CRC members invited to participate and volunteer to lead small discussion groups. Mr. Parker will participate.
- Loteria was fun with a good turnout with request for another, which will take place on Sunday May 7<sup>th</sup> at the YWCA in Princeton
- CRC members who wish to participate on the YWCA mission committee are invited to reach out.

##### Policy Committee – Ms. Jamieson

- Meeting held by conference call
- Immigration is a substantial issue of interest
- Need to arrange a structure for listening sessions to explore obstacles and barriers

##### Education and Outreach Committee – Ms. Shamsi

- Meeting held by conference call
- Stakeholder meeting to be organized to hear the issues that need to be addressed

- Bonner Foundation is doing work on Cradle to College to Career road map to address the academic achievement gap and we will see whether opportunities exist to work with them.

Ms. Fraga to facilitate the connection with the Bonner Foundation Director, Robert Hackett.

#### Bylaws Committee – Ms. Chrein

- Meeting held by conference call
- Seeking to clarify mission statement, goals and objectives
- To explore rules of engagement and processes to adjudicate complaints & CRC practice
- Will put ordinance from Council and Board of Commissions on website
- Next meeting is tentatively scheduled for May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

#### Mediation and Conflict Resolution Committee – Mr. Parker

- Meeting held in person
- To document complaint process and distribute for discussion at next CRC meeting
- Clarify the process by which individuals may file a complaint with the CRC and the impact that will have on the 180 day period in which to file a legal complaint. Can both happen simultaneously?

Ms. Fraga will reach out to the Council to clarify procedures and Mr. Parker to consult with Mr. Dashield on this issue.

#### Action items:

- Education Committee will meet and offer recommendations to the CRC addressing today's conversations with the public.
- Education Committee will share student's feedback with the School Board and consult regarding solutions. Furthermore, the Education Committee will understand the PHS protocol in place to address students' complaints, how it is administered, what is covered and what the measurables are.
- CRC to gain additional information from the School Board about what's being done to address students' concerns
- Ms. Chrein suggested that the CRC provide a more relaxed way for the public to voice concerns to the CRC; perhaps developing an individual meeting time for the public with a CRC representative at the library. We need to quickly develop a system to process issues that are raised as well as a record keeping process.
- Mr. Quinn informs that the Library is planning a program about the history of slavery in Princeton.

- Ms. Fraga will write a letter to Committed and Faithful; Corner House and Not In Our Town to thank them and provide reassurance that the CRC will follow up their concerns as we develop process and procedures.

Movement to adjourn at 8:45pm