



SPD SPECIAL REPORT

Addressing the Issue of Racial Profiling – One Year Later

What we have done:

Seven days after becoming Chief of Police, I issued a policy statement, defining and banning racial profiling. I promised that this would not be merely a statement, but that I would initiate a comprehensive program to address this issue. Four areas were outlined: data collection, training, accountability, and policy. A year has passed since that policy statement was issued. In that time, these are the steps we have taken to see that this program is accomplished:

August 2000 Statement on Racial Profiling Issued

This statement was announced to the public and disseminated to every member of the Department to set the tone for the kind of policing and officer conduct expected in our organization. In addition, I personally give a copy of the Statement to each new officer and use it as a basis for a discussion of professional policing.

November 2000 City Council Task Force on Racial Profiling Established

The City Council established this task force by ordinance. It is charged with developing a data collection instrument to gather information on traffic stops and working with the Department to address racial profiling issues in training and supervision. I have designated eight Department personnel (including an Assistant Chief, a Precinct Captain, the Director of Professional Accountability, and the Department's Legal Advisor) to serve on this Task Force and a number of other employees have been assigned to provide staff support.

January 2001 Training Seminar for Commanders & Supervisors Held

Dr. Daniel A. Thomann, a national expert and consultant on racial profiling in law enforcement agencies, was commissioned to provide an eight-hour training seminar for sworn and civilian commanders, managers, and supervisors in the Department. The purpose of the seminar was to give Department leaders the most current information on racial profiling from a national perspective, on how the issue is perceived within minority communities as well as the community at large, and on how other law enforcement agencies are addressing the issue.

January 2001 Office of Professional Accountability Established

The new Director of the Office of Professional Accountability, Sam Pailca, was confirmed and began work to provide civilian oversight of the citizen complaint process. The Director has recommended and I have approved a new tracking system to identify complaints of racial profiling and other biased policing allegations not only in formal investigations, supervisor referrals, and contact logs, but also in lawsuits and public disclosure requests. This initiative is described more fully in the Director's first report to the Mayor and Council presented in July 2001.

March 2001 City Council Racial Profiling Task Force Staffed/Supported

The Task Force began weekly meetings that are expected to continue through the Fall of 2001. As part of its work the Task Force has held four community forums, has had speakers from community advocacy groups, and has hired a research consultant to advise on data collection instruments. The Department has been an active participant in the work of the Task Force and fully supports the need to gather reliable data bearing on the racial profiling issue in traffic stops.

April 2001 Discretion v. Discrimination Forum Held

The Department presented this forum at the State Law Enforcement Training Center in Burien. Moderated by television commentator Ken Schram, the forum featured a group of panelists and focused group discussions. The panelists included representatives from the Seattle Police Management Association, the Anti-Defamation League, the American Civil Liberties Union, the University of Washington, the Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Association, and Mount Zion Academy. Community members and law enforcement personnel from throughout the region were invited to participate. The forum was well-attended and many who were there commented that it was probably the most frank and open discussion of racial issues that has occurred in Seattle in many years.

May 2001 US Justice Department Office of Civil Rights Briefing Hosted

The U.S. Attorney and King County Sheriff joined me in hosting a briefing by the Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Justice, on police use of force and discrimination. The purpose of the briefing was to reinforce the importance of responding effectively to complaints involving the use of force and bias in policing contacts. This one-day discussion was directed to command staff and captains and also involved the court-appointed monitor for the Los Angeles Sheriff's Office, Mr. Merrick Bobb.

July 2001 Video Cameras in Police Cars Demonstration Proposed

The Department has been examining the cost and feasibility of placing video cameras in police vehicles in order to document officer/citizen encounters in traffic stops. In consultation with the Mayor and Council, a pilot program that would place 14 cameras in selected traffic, DUI, and patrol vehicles has been developed and will be formally presented this month. The Department plans a careful evaluation of the program, its effect on officers and officer behavior, and citizen response to video recordings. Contingency plans for further expansion of the program are available, should that prove

warranted. As has been the situation elsewhere, we expect that video tapes will only serve to validate the competent and professional policing behaviors that SPD officers exhibit on a daily basis.

August 2001 Briefing on Citizen Complaint Handling Held

I arranged for Robert Davis, of the Vera Institute of Justice in New York, to come and brief the Department's Command Staff on projects he is working on, regarding the investigation of citizen complaints by police and an evaluation of the Pittsburgh Police Department consent decree with the U.S. Department of Justice. These projects involve monitoring of citizen complaints, how precincts handle them, and the outcomes associated with complaint-handling practices. The Department is exploring the possibility of a similar project here with the help of some grant funding.

August 2001 Assistant Chief John Diaz Named to National Advisory Board

The U.S. Department of Justice has commissioned the Police Executive Research Forum to convene a National Advisory Board on Racial Profiling to examine data collection efforts. Assistant Chief John Diaz has been appointed to this Board in recognition of the Department's work in collecting and analyzing information on traffic stops. The Board will meet for the first time in August.

Forthcoming September 2001 Culmination of Project REAL

Under the auspices of the National Coalition Building Institute, the Department has for the last five years, participated in a project in consensus building called Project REAL (Recconciliation, Education, Action, and Leadership). The Project has trained more than 100 community members and about 15 police employees in a model designed to build coalitions between the police and communities of color. This September the two groups will come together to map out effective responses and approaches to dealing with ongoing problems as well as flash point events.

Forthcoming Fall 2001 Strategic Plan on Racial Profiling Drafted

In consultation with the citizen members of the Task Force on Racial Profiling, the Department is developing a strategic plan to address the response to this issue across the organization. The plan will document current and planned efforts in such areas as training, employee counseling and management, misconduct prevention and early warning systems, the citizen complaint process, and community relations and education. The Department has been working in each of these areas and welcomes citizen suggestions that will improve on our efforts.

Forthcoming Fall/Winter 2001 OPA Community Forums to be Held

The Office of Professional Accountability Director Sam Pailca has planned a series of community forums to hear public concerns about barriers to making citizen complaints and other issues involved with police accountability. For many in the community, police accountability is a key ingredient in effectively addressing racial profiling. These forums will be held at Garfield Community Center, September 13th from 6:00–7:30pm, North Seattle Community College, October 17th from 6:00-7:30pm, Gethsemane Lutheran Church, November 7th from 6:00-7:30pm, El Centro de la Raza, November 2001 from 6:00-7:30pm [date to be arranged], and Rainier Beach Community Center, December 11th from 6:30-8:00pm.

Forthcoming 2002 CPAC "Study Circles" Model to be Employed

The Study Circles Resource Center of the Topsfield Foundation has worked with the Community Policing Action Council (a citizen advisory group to the Chief of Police) to use the study circle methodology to bring police and community members together to talk through issues of mutual concern. The study circle technique seeks to build common understanding by sharing stories. Rather than seeking consensus, study circles attempt to open up avenues of communication and permit meaningful dialogue to take place. The Department is planning to utilize the study circle approach in early 2002 as a way to get officers and commanders talking about race relations, officer discretion and use of force, and other issues of concern both to officers and the public.

Ongoing Community Forums Attended and Planned

I have attended and been visible at over 200 community forums and events to discuss concerns and answer questions regarding the Department. Among those specific to racial profiling have been; the Loren Miller Bar Association, Immaculate Conception Forum on Racial Profiling, Temple DeHirsch Sinai Forum on Racial Profiling, Seattle Neighborhood Association, Bias Crime Forum, the Seattle Human Rights Commission, and Seattle Talks. I will continue to engage the community in open and frank dialogue on these difficult and important issues.

Conclusion

This report has highlighted the many initiatives of the Seattle Police Department and activities in which the Department is participating to address the important issue of racial profiling in policing. Not included here are the daily efforts of employees throughout the Department to respond to citizen problems, to intervene in crisis situations, and to strengthen and improve neighborhoods and communities throughout the City.

We have made significant progress in a very short period of time - yet more needs to be done in Seattle and throughout our region. The SPD leadership, which brought these accomplishments about, remains committed to achieving justice and fairness in law enforcement.

R. Gil Kerlikowske
Chief of Police