

Washington County Sheriff's Office Latino Advisory Commission
April 7, 2021
Meeting Minutes

Commission Members Present: Olga Acuña, Maria Caballero-Rubio, Juan Carlos Gonzalez, Pat Garrett, Joann Hoffman, Fernando Lira, Ricardo Moreno, Mark Shah

Commission Members Absent: Fernanda Pantoja, Pablo Valenzuela, Daniel Guzman-Catarina

Moderating: Brandon Lee with Training for Transformation (T4T)

Guests attending: Toc Soneoulay-Gillespie

Meeting via Zoom

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Garrett called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m.

Introductions

Approval Meeting Minutes

The members present constituted a quorum. Maria made a motion to approve the March 3, 2021 minutes Ricardo seconded, the minutes were approved.

Public Comment

No public comments

Discussion Topic

The Latino Advisory Commission engaged as a group to discuss an appropriate way to be in solidarity with and make ourselves available to the Asian and Pacific Islander (API) community. Brandon reached out to Toc Soneoulay-Gillespie to join us at this meeting to share her lived experience with us.

Toc was born in a refugee camp in Cambodia but is originally from Laos. Toc says they are not a monolithic community. She is "Southeast Asian" and notes they are the invisible population. Her father called them the "throw-aways". When they came to the U.S. She said her father commented that Americans treat their dogs better than their people. She gave the example of people sleeping on streets. She also said because they speak limited or no English they are not heard. Toc is more of a storyteller because she has two languages in her head, which is not how white people talk.

Toc says she, herself, has not done her job in connecting with the richness of the county and that is something she needs to work on. She lives in Hillsboro, in Washington County, but doesn't feel comfortable reaching out to the available resources the county has to offer.

Co-Chair Garrett expressed his gratitude to Toc for being present and sharing with the Commission, noting the Commission's focus includes work with all communities of color.

Many commission members related to Toc's experience of feeling invisible. Many had immigrated to the U.S. at a young age or were born here and raised by immigrant parents. Most had to learn English as a second language. Co-Chair Acuña said it is time that we, as the Latino community, do something, like engaging with other groups to see how we can support one another.

Everyone feels deeply for the API community after recent events of blame have been placed upon them, both emotionally and physically.

Co-Chair Garrett asked what we, both as an advisory commission and law enforcement, can do for the API community.

Toc gave various examples of past experiences of bringing communities together to break through fears and gain opportunities to get to know each other. One example was when the Portland Police Bureau reached out to them about training their officers on language access and to offer awareness to the minority communities. She taught citizenship classes to the elderly Asian community. Most of whom had been in the U.S. for over 40 years. They brought in Law Enforcement and African American leaders to talk about each other's histories. She also had law enforcement welcoming refugees to our area, breaking the fear of law enforcement. Shaping the idea that law enforcement is here to protect. She posed the question "How do we do more integration?". We don't have to wait for potlucks or create events. Toc suggested that we take advantage of the events (such as classes and meetings) that are already happening. She also told us that she had heard a few of her elders talking about their concern over if they did something, they could get in trouble. They feel they haven't "earned trust" with law enforcement. There's the thought process that you don't invite trouble (LE) into your community and that it's best to just stay silent.

Commission members reminded us that we need to enhance trust between the community and law enforcement. Such as educating the minority community on available resources and current laws so they can become a better, more understanding part of the larger community. "How do we embrace newcomers to this country, to this community?"

Juan Carlos mentioned there are a lot of younger generation (of color) that have a lot of fears and need healing.

Ricardo says there is no other call or engagement to him that matters more than this group and the things that we discuss in this group. He sees that we have an incredible amount of mutual respect for one another and appreciates that the sheriff is genuinely looking for feedback to run the SO. He also suggested offering a type of self-defense or situational awareness classes for our minority communities.

This was typed into the chat during our Zoom meeting. It was worth noting.

From Ricardo: "As I listen to Toc, two words come to mind: **Educate and Humanize.**"

Tom Potter Article

We had originally planned to conclude our discussion of the Tom Potter article, however time was well spent on discussion with our guest speaker and the commission agreed to push the Tom Potter Article to our next meeting.

Next steps

None were discussed at this meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 5:32 PM