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**City of Petaluma ADHOC
Community Advisory
Committee: Final Report on
the ADHOC's Work on
Racism, "Otherism", and
Community Relations with
the Police**

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Draft Report: City of Petaluma: The ADHOC Committee’s Work on Racism, “Otherism”, and Community Relations with the Police

Executive Summary

I have had the privilege of working with the city administration and the community members of Petaluma for over one year as we partnered to improve race relations, police and community interactions, and to create a more inclusive city. The journey has been one replete with many twists and turns, as is often the case with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work.

DEI engagements are often fraught with challenges, both in framing the work and in the execution. The difficulty stems from the triggering that arises from deep-seated racism and other “ism’s” that have existed in the United States since this country was formed, and before. The long history of racism and “otherism” pre-dates even 1619 when the first slave ships landed on these shores. Widespread genocide on American soil began with the attempted eradication of Native Americans. This hatred of “the other” has continued in many heinous forms throughout the history of this land. These scars are seared into the DNA of those who have been considered “the other”, as well as into the unconscious and conscious bias of those who have historically perpetrated hate.

DEI work brings up all of the angst, fear, anger, and confusion that is part of this country's history. The work is challenging, draining, exhausting, and it is critically important to any entity or organization that wants to move forward with a path centered on inclusiveness, anti-racism, and a sense of belonging. Petaluma can only be its best when all of its community members feel safe and feel that their voices and lived experiences matter.

This work began with a review of the Listening Circles work completed last summer by several community organizations. It continued with interviews of key community members, a city-wide survey, and formation of the Ad Hoc Committee. The work was precipitated by the killing of George Floyd, as well as other murders of African Americans by the police and civilians. In response to the events in Minneapolis, the Petaluma Mayor along with all mayors and law enforcement leaders in Sonoma County, supported the Obama Foundation's "Mayor Pledge" to examine race and police relations in their respective jurisdictions.

City staff, city leadership, and the committee members have been dedicated to examining issues of race, police/community relations, and "otherism" in Petaluma. This work is always a learning experience, because most of us carry scars from our fractured history, whether we realize it or not. Those who have been privileged by virtue of their race (and sex in many cases) often do not recognize their own privilege, thus the term "unconscious bias". Those who have been on the receiving end of the hatred borne out of this historical privilege carry deep wounds that are often triggered during the crucial conversations necessary to deeply engage in this work. And then there are those who want to use DEI platforms as political theater for self-aggrandizement, versus engaging in meaningful conversations where all sides are making a sincere attempt to hear one another and to progress forward together.

Fortunately, the Ad Hoc committee was able to progress through the key phases: Storming, forming, norming, and performing. The first several meetings were challenging as we worked to find a means for each committee member to be able to express their points of view, and those of the organizations that they represent where appropriate. I had suggested to the city council that the ideal size for such a committee is really 12-14 participants to enable robust dialogue during our allotted three hour time frame. However, the council noted that all of the original 28 members were necessary so that we had a broad representation. The council was correct in their assessment—we needed all of these diverse points of view. The original methodology was to have each committee member speak for approximately 2 minutes on the topic of the day. As a facilitator, I found the methodology to be cumbersome and clunky. It felt far too regimented without time for meaningful cross-dialogue.

We moved to a more succinct means of gathering in-depth opinion from the committee: Homework was assigned that was to be completed approximately ten days prior to the next meeting in order to allow time for synthesis of the input, and for population of a graphic that summarized the different proposals. This change allowed for more time for discussion.

We had a sea change during our last session on October 19. Committee members told their stories with such clarity and authenticity that some have told me that they were reduced to tears upon reflection after the meeting. Stories connect us with the "why" of this work. When we really stop and hear others tell their lived experience, and when we allow our hearts to connect with their souls, we understand the "why" around the importance of this work.

Committee members told of being dehumanized, of not being seen, of being harassed, and of being afraid. We were able to reach this level of authenticity at the end of our formal committee process because people courageously spoke up, and their colleagues listened.

The audience listened. We were all moved. Hopefully, that last meeting demonstrated the continued need for this work. Petaluma is on this continuous journey to be changed, to become inclusive, and to fight against hate with deliberate dialogue and precise action.

What, How, Why

Simon Sinek has many great Ted Talks, but one that rings particularly relevant in the case of DEI work is called, “How Great Leaders Inspire Action”. He discusses the importance of the “why”, which ties us directly to the Limbic system of the brain—that part of the brain that registers emotion. People connect and are inspired by the “why”, not by the what, and to a lesser extent by the how. The “why” of this work in Petaluma is straight forward: to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in the city because it is this plurality that will enable the city to become more innovative, more inviting, safer, and will allow the total community to thrive.

Representation Matters

One of the key takeaways from the October 19th meeting was the concept of representation. The group put forth 19 recommendations on the topic of diversity in city hiring, as opposed to the maximum of five for previous topics. We would normally whittle down the 19 suggestions to 3-5, but the group collectively insisted that all of the recommendations need to go to council. Representation means having a seat at the table where decisions are made. If there aren't more BIPOC, Asian, LatinX, and LGBTQ++ people employed by the city, then how can people from these groups feel that they are being accurately and fairly represented and in turn feel welcome? The group put forth targets and detailed strategies, particularly in the homework, which provides a blueprint toward more diverse representation within city government and staff.

Unconscious Bias

Racism and “otherism” are learned behaviors that some of us aren't even aware that we practice. Some of us have never explored our own biases and equate being a good person with being anti-racist. The two concepts could not be farther apart. One can treat one's family and friends with absolute grace, but can dehumanize another person who is different from them because of unexplored and unsurfaced beliefs. It is critical that all of us take bias tests in the privacy of our own homes to examine our shortcomings, which can have horrible impact on others. Those who were born into the most privileged group in America (white males, followed by white females) should make it a priority to examine their personal history to understand the toll that their privilege has taken on others. There are good bias tests readily available online.

The goal is to become consciously competent about others of different racial, ethnic, or sexual orientation. The goal is not tolerance, but rather to work toward becoming culturally competent, by listening, reading, taking self-assessments, many of which are available online. The final session of the Ad Hoc provided a glimpse into what the journey to conscious competence entails: Listening for the spoken and for the unspoken. Always remember that those who have been harmed often tire of educating others, so when they do speak up—listen with your whole heart. This is the “why” of this work.

Equity Not Equality

Equality ostensibly denotes everyone having an equal chance. If you give everyone in the city a laptop, that is an equal distribution. But if you provide no computer training for people who lack the resources to secure computer skills on their own, you are not operating with an equity lens. Equity is about doing an assessment of who may need a boost to level the playing field. It is not about preference; it is about righting a ship with appropriate ballast that has been allowed to list to one side for far too long.

All of these are key DEI concepts that the council should consider as they decide which actions to sponsor in the coming months. Although the work of the committee has concluded, key interest remains in making Petaluma a more inclusive city. All participants in this collective process would be well-served by keeping in mind the above concepts, and steeling themselves for the journey forward. This won't be easy, but it is critically necessary for Petaluma to continue to build a more inclusive community.

The People, the Process, and the Proposals

The Ad Hoc Committee began with the following 28 members:

Joe Sturdivant	100 Black Men of Sonoma County
Rabbi Ted Feldman	B'nai Israel Jewish Center
Angeles Cruz (removed herself)	Committee on the Shelterless (COTS)
Kinyatta Reynolds	Indivisible Petaluma
Erin Wilkins	Japanese American Citizens League
Joanna Paun	NAACP Sonoma County
Stefan Perez (removed by City of Petaluma)	Nominated BIPOC Community Member / Graton Rancheria
Eric Leland	Nominated Community Member
Sadie Martinez	Nominated Community Member
Mark Scott	North Bay Animal Services
Zahyra Garcia	North Bay LGBTQ Families
Anthony Franklin	North Bay Organizing Project –Petaluma Chapter (NBOPP)
Sonjhia Lowery	Old Adobe Unified School District
Katherine Wells	Petaluma Chamber of Commerce (DEI)

Faith Ross	Petaluma Blacks for Community Development (PBCD)
Liz Chacon	Petaluma City School District
Lou Zweier	Petaluma Community Relations Council
Pedro Toledo	Petaluma Health Center
Ramona Faith	Petaluma Health District
Johana Garcia	Petaluma People Services Center
Hanan Huneidi	Petaluma Pride
Fabian Romo Macias	Petaluma Youth Commission
Risa Tinsley-Green	Petaluma Youth for CAHOOTS
Ann Marie Daniels	Sonoma County Black Coalition
Claudia de la Pena	Sonoma County Black Forum
Julia Mayne	St. Vincent's De Paul High School
Mike Miller	Team for Inclusivity, Diversity, and Equity (TIDE) in K-12 Schools
Joel Brunner-Dequine	Waugh Unified School District

The committee experienced attrition and the removal of one member, Stefan Perez, concluding the sessions with an official roster of 24. This proved to be a robust group with varying points of view that emanated from many different parts of the community.

The Process

We held six meetings with the following tasks and outcomes:

1. 4.20.2021

No homework was required, however the committee voted regarding the list of identified options (from the survey and from the interviews, as well as from the Listening Circles); each person was given 2 votes.

2. 5.18.2021

Committee members were asked to come up with 3 key points and 3 innovative ideas to implement change concerning: Community Engagement to Improve Race Relations / Restorative Justice. The results of the work are included in the notes in the appendix, ***but the definitions of success for this work were as follows:***

- measurable amount of change
- increased level of trust and open communication
- committing to change and having a plan
- measurable outcomes (Petaluma community feeling like they're being seen and heard)
- everyone has a voice and share that voice w/o retaliation, feeling respect
- different ethnic groups coming up and talking to each other
- something that is workable, measurable about the community at large so that students are comfortable at school, engaged in the community
- making Petaluma more inclusive for all community members
- re-allocating funds from the PD and back to the community, explore more community resources to fix the harm
- people of color, queer feel safe and acknowledged no matter what their families look like
- metrics and outcomes equitable (meeting the needs of the community)
- people of Petaluma feeling safe/supported, pass the Sadie law, kids a priority to remove racism in schools (maybe coaches get involved)
- more presentation of people of color and different lifestyle on town councils
- when all members feel safe and welcome; free of all forms of diversity
- more voices and community involvement; right now not a lot of diversity
- finding specific sources and investigate the truths and find the best path forward (better PR)
- a community no longer divided by fear
- mutual relationship between the community and citizens; open communication
- increased level of trust within the community (complaints would decrease because they feel safe)
- measurable change w/positive change (common goals, common space, starting with youth)
- reduce health disparities to historically underserved communities; too busy to have a voice; representation matters
- increased level of trust between the business and the community/ Chamber can be seen as a partner

-increased implementation in areas where there isn't any restorative justice practices in place, so the community can engage safely

-building trust between the community members and the City/PD

3. 6.15.2021

We reduced the 5/18 definitions of success to 10 buckets and the 5/18 ideas presented to 11 buckets. Committee members were given 3 votes to put towards the 11 bucket items.

4. 7.20.2021

A homework assignment was submitted and was used to populate a summary table of the proposals. The homework assignment was as follows:

Police and the Community: Review policy for carrying weapons and screening for past misconduct / bias / restorative justice / civilian oversight / reallocation of police funds.

Please provide ONE BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal) under the above section. We need your single best idea that will have the positive impact that this community is striving toward with this work.

The group was tasked to use the SMART goal structure: Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant, and Timebound.

(N.B. All completed homework is included in the attached PDF scans and I strongly suggest that the council read through all of the homework in its entirety, as there are detailed proposals and resources listed in much of the work)

5. 8.17.2021

The homework followed the same format (BHAG, SMART Goals) and was directed at the following topic:

Increased diversity in awareness and visibility in schools / diversity education in schools / restorative justice in schools.

Please see the homework attached.

6. 10.19.2021

The homework followed the same format (BHAG, SMART Goals) and was directed at the following topic:

Diversity in City Hiring

Please see the homework attached.

The Proposals from the Committee

Police and the Community

- Establish Independent, Adequately Funded, Empowered, Civilian / Community (not city staff) Police Oversight Body and fully populated by - End of year – (purpose, membership, charter, standing, authority) - March - populated
- Committee to identify ways to increase dialogue, build relationships, humanize police/community, and embrace restorative justice. Education, engagement, dialogue to build relationships / humanize police & community members
- Committee to review and recommend Ongoing Police Training regarding DEI, Anti-bias, De-escalation, use of weapons

Increased Diversity in Schools

- Review hiring practices to ensure the recruitment of a more diverse workforce (ethnically, racially, culturally, and linguistically).
- City Council should use the pandemic relief funds and partner with our schools in our city to confront disparities that students and their parents contend with in Petaluma.
- The new permanent commission (on race relations and public safety) should engage school administrations, parents, community groups, and local agencies to identify successes and gaps in DEI initiatives for staffing and hiring; the commission should recommend a city-wide standard to create an enduring model for Petaluma.
- All Petaluma public schools would provide multiple, site-based, school-wide assemblies that recognize Diversity Heritage months.
- Re-visit the 8.3 million spending proposal and re-direct some of the city hall renovations to help increase diversity awareness and visibility in our schools.

Creation of Multicultural Center/Restorative Justice

- Creation of a multicultural center by investing in the Lucchesi Center and the Phoenix Theatre (Measure U funds for the infrastructure piece; Pandemic Relief Fund to invest in organizations and multicultural events held at the venues).
- In partnering with all Petaluma public and schools, the Petaluma Multicultural Community Center shall create and promote social awareness, diversity education, and provide support for services for the students of Petaluma.
- A committee of 7 residents shall be appointed to oversee and evaluate the multicultural aspects of the center and to integrate and expand restorative justice programming.
- The space (physical or virtual) should have a design that focuses on healing the trauma of historically excluded and marginalized communities, fosters community

engagement, constructive collaboration, and effective communication regarding the needs and concerns of all community members.

Diversity in City Hiring

- Review site: <https://ideal.com/diversity> -hiring or similar for hiring ideas
- Retain consultant focused on DEI recruiting and hiring
- Retain diverse staffing companies that put forth diverse candidates
- Remove language barriers
- Equal Access Ordinance modeled after San Francisco and Oakland
- Establish an Office of Equity led by the Director of Equity and Inclusion
- A recruitment process that values merit and offers a fair assessment of all candidates
- Continuous anti-racism and bias training for city departments (especially for hiring committees)
- Data report on diversity in all committees, commissions, boards, & City employees
- Hire Equity First Consultants (Sonoma County) to help navigate DEI
- List all job openings with at least 50 LGBTQ++ and POC groups, as well as w/colleges
- Reach out to colleges and high schools to create a pipeline of diverse candidates (in and out of Sonoma County) and include internships
- Mentoring for high school seniors from underrepresented groups, make sure interns are supported and mentored
- Provide housing assistance to help defray the high cost in Petaluma
- More diverse hiring panels
- Look at structural inequities in the City of Petaluma (consultant to review)
- Retention strategies for diverse employees
- Set DEI metrics and assess periodically
- A referral program directed toward current diverse employees

The above recommendations represent 7 months of arduous and thoughtful work on the part of the Ad Hoc committee. Again, I strongly suggest that the council review the homework in detail to understand some of the proposals in greater depth. My summary of the homework that was used in the PowerPoints during the meetings was only meant to be a conversation starter; the detailed and well-thought out proposals that are found in the homework require review so that the council is properly informed.

Recommendations for Moving Forward: Suggested Best Practices and Pitfalls

The committee has completed the first step in a layered process that can lead to a city changed for the better if the council takes concrete action that produces visible and measureable results. The dialogue and input from the Ad Hoc committee, your panel of experts, should continue. I realize that no city can endlessly fund large committees, as there are a lot of associated costs. But the city might engage in the following activities to continue to garner community input as they follow council's direction in implementing the future plans:

- Partner with diverse community organizations to hold dialogue sessions (find a safe space; use a facilitator from within the group who will ensure that there is dialogue—not talking at each other)
- Have film festivals that highlight different cultures
- Begin book clubs to read about discrimination and hate—don't shy away from the tough topics
- Understand that people are angry—they have been hurt, dehumanized, and in some cases, harassed so work has to be empathetic
- Petaluma is a destination town—bring in key speakers on diversity
- Show Ted Talks on DEI and host discussions
- Don't always expect the POC or LGBTQ++ people to offer their stories—it can become too much at times
- Learn about your own unconscious (or conscious) bias and share your journey with authenticity

The Greatest DEI Pitfalls

We can become enamored of our own voices and thoughts when we engage in DEI work. We view ourselves a certain way (generally as a “good person”) and looking deep into our history and our souls to examine our own “ism's” can be a very difficult task. The key is to focus ourselves outward and always remember that we are on this arduous journey for a reason: to make Petaluma a better place for all.

Diversity brings more richness to the fabric of our society. We view problems and challenges from different perspectives; we are able to be creative together because we can talk to one another from an equitable platform. We learn more when we listen than when we talk. Listen a whole lot more. Seek first to better understand others. Don't listen to defend—just listen, and learn.

Use the SMART Goal model to set metrics for the DEI plans that you put in place. Stand up to the measurement and build it in so that the city can show progress or tweak the plan if it isn't demonstrating the desired results. Transparency matters. Share metrics. Results and outcomes matter in DEI work now more than ever. The city will do irreparable harm to itself if it doesn't develop a plan and execute well against it. The community is more than ready to continue to roll up their sleeves and work to improve the quality of life for all in Petaluma.

The four words that I left with the committee at our last meeting are as follows:

Tenacity: Never let go of your fight to be better

Perspective: View things from a perspective very different from your own—see things with fresh eyes

Empathy: Try to connect with the other person's "why"—Why are they feeling / behaving as they do?

Hope: For a better tomorrow...All of you can make it so together....

The community is committed to this process, the city has been a dedicated partner, and the time is nigh to implement the programs and policies that will make Petaluma a city where all thrive. My hope is that the council make the structural and policy changes that are so critical to implementing DEI practices to heal Petaluma and to prepare it to continue to grow in the areas of equity, inclusion, and the basic human right to feel safe and to thrive. I am confident that Petaluma can do this heavy lifting. I am confident that Petaluma can pull together and grow into a community that welcomes, cares for, and protects all.