

# **NAACP TASK FORCE REPORT**

# **NAACP TASK FORCE REPORT**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### **Members of the Task Force**

#### **Introduction**

**Background on the Charge to the Task Force**

**Meetings of the Task Force**

**Request for Long Beach Police Department Policies**

#### **Methods of Review and Analysis**

**Discussion and Deliberation**

**Review of Documents in light of Request from the LBPD**

**Content Analysis of Documents**

**Presentation on Community Policing and Deployment Models**

**Interviews**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### **Appendices and Listing of Separate Documents**

**Task Force Information Request Letter**

**Summary of Use of Force Policy Guidelines and Training**

**Long Beach Police Department Strategic Plan**

**Community Policing Presentation Outline**

**Community Policing Deployment Models Presentation Outline**

**Citizen Police Complaint Commission Brochure**

## **MEMBERS OF THE TASK FORCE**

**Ms Evelyn Knight, MSW, Task Force Chairperson—Member NAACP, Workforce Board, Chairperson, Atlantic Community Economic Development Corporation, Involved Community Activist.**

**Dr. Alex J. Norman, DSW, Task Force Consultant, Professor Emeritus UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research, Vice Chairperson Atlantic Community Economic Development Corporation, Long Beach Community Services Development Corporation, Organization Development Consultant.**

**Mr. Raymond Chavarria, Former Director Centro CHA (Community Hispanic Association), Staff to Councilwoman Laura Richardson-Batts, Involved Community Activist.**

**Ms Russia Chavis, Student Intern Long Beach Office—Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles.**

**Attorney Mark Coleman, Labor Attorney, Chair of Workforce Board**

**Ms Sandra Henderson, RN, MH, Public Health Nurse, Extensive work with mental health services and patients.**

**Ms Qiana Johnson, President CSULB College Chapter of NAACP.**

**Attorney David Phiel, Member NAACP Legal Redress Committee**

**Mr. James Polk, Chair NAACP Senior services, Legislative Representative to the State for Senior Services, former teacher California Youth Authority.**

**Mr. Sereivuth Prak, Deputy Director, United Cambodian Community Center, Involved Community Activist.**

**Reverend Albert Pride, NAACP Executive Committee, Member Ministerial Alliance.**

**Ms Lynn Joy Rodgers, Director Urban League Ron Brown Center, Member Civil Service Commission.**

**Attorney Toby J. Rothschild, Former Executive Director of Legal Aid of Long Beach, General Counsel Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles.**

## INTRODUCTION

**“...To maintain at all times a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and the public are the police: the police being the only members of the public that are paid to give full-time attention to the duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interest of community welfare and existence.”**

**Sir Robert Peel  
Father of Modern Policing**

In March of 2002 the Long Beach Branch of the NAACP authorized a Task Force to review the policies of the Long Beach Police Department regarding its “use of force and training” of the Long Beach Police Department. The impetus of this action was related to the tragic killing of Marcella Byrd, a long time, mentally ill African American woman in possession of a knife. The incident of the killing of Marcella Byrd has drawn public outcries, demonstrations and peaceful forums calling for changes in the “excessive use of force by the police and racial profiling”.

The Task Force was selected on the basis of a wide cross-section of people in the community who have interests and concerns for the well being of the Long Beach residents. Most of the Task Force’s members have extensive years of community involvement, legal training, and experience with issues relative to police/community relations (See list of Task Force Members).

The Task Force held its first meeting on April 16, 2002 and has held nine meetings as of July 30, 2002. The Task Force, under the Freedom of Information Act and the California Public Records Act, requested the following information from the City Manager, Henry Taboada and the Chief of Police, Jerome Lance.

- Use of Force Policy guidelines or City Ordinance granting approval,
- Academy training curriculum on use of force (minimum and maximum),
- Academy training curriculum on human relations and diversity issues,
- Departmental philosophy on Community-oriented Policing (COP),
- Training curriculum of Patrol Officers and Sergeants on COP,
- Training of Field Training Officers on use of force guidelines and COP,
- Policy and procedure guidelines for dealing with people with special circumstances, for example the mentally ill, physically disabled, etc., including policies and procedures for use of the Mental Evaluation Team (MET).

- **Methods for evaluating and measuring Department efforts on the use of force.**

In response to the Task Force's request, the Department provided the Task Force with a 2 inch-thick packet of police policies and training materials for our review. Materials requested but not included in the packet were:

- **Departmental philosophy on Community-oriented Policing**
- **Training curriculum of Patrol Officers and Sergeants on COP,**
- **Training of Field Training Officers on use of force guidelines and COP,**
- **Methods for evaluating and measuring Department efforts on the use of force.**

## **METHODS OF REVIEW AND ANALYSIS**

The Task Force used a variety of approaches to gathering information from the Long Beach community in order to gain a broader understanding of the issues and to seek recommendations that would improve the relationship between the members of the Police Department and the community-as-a-whole. Task Force members reviewed and analyzed the contents of the documents and reported back to the Task Force for a general discussion. Specific Task Force members were then given assignments to analyze and review the contents of the documents and to make specific recommendations for a final report to the NAACP, the City of Long Beach, and the Community-at-large. The Task Force Chairperson requested that consultant Alex Norman, member Toby Rothschild, and student-intern Russia Chavis review the policies and give the Task Force feedback on the content as it related to our request for information. A summary of these findings was submitted to the Task Force for discussion and deliberation at the July 2, 2002 meeting (see Summary of Police Policies & Training in Appendix).

In addition to reviewing the policies and procedures The Task Force was involved in mass community meetings, conducted by the NAACP, with residents and members of the Long Beach Police Department, and members of the City Council. These meetings focused on Police Policies and Practices, the need for better community-oriented policing and more respect by the police for community concerns. There was also concern for the perception that excessive use of force was used frequently when other methods of apprehending suspects were sufficient. The sad incident involving Marcella Byrd was appalling to many of the residents, as was the fact that the Mental Evaluation Team of the Police Department was not available at the time of the Marcella Byrd incident, nor was there a mental health specialist there to calm an agitated person during the Byrd shooting. A number of recommendations resulted from these meetings.

The Task Force sought input from several sources in the Long Beach community. The MHA Village, an integrated service agency of the Mental Health Association of Los Angeles County, made a presentation of its programs and services. The Village is an outstanding community-based facility in Long Beach providing a wide array of services to the mentally ill. They also provide the Long Beach Police Department with support services on an informal basis. On a formal basis the Village provides training on the handling of the mentally ill to many law enforcement agencies across the State as well as out of State. They indicated a desire to develop a more formal relationship with the Long Beach Police Department.

A member of the Police Complaint Commission shared concerns and expressed a desire for more involvement of the community in the complaint process and for more involvement of the Police Complaint Commission with the community. Other individuals from the community and organizations freely shared observations, experiences and concerns for the need for better police/community relations and communication. Youth members of the Task Force expressed concerns about youth issues with the Police Department. Dr. Alex Norman also provided the Task Force with materials and an orientation on "Best Practices in Community-Oriented Policing "and" Community Policing Deployment Models. Dr. Norman has worked extensively with the Los Angeles Police Department as well as other departments within the State and the Nation, and has studied the comparisons between community/police consultation processes in England and the United States.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Chair of the Task Force specifically assigned Russia Chavis, Sandra Henderson, Toby Rothschild and Dr. Alex Norman the responsibility for drafting recommendations to be reviewed by the Task Force. Other members at large were also encouraged to submit recommendations as well. The Task Force deliberated on these recommendations at the July 14, 2002 meeting and a preliminary report was made by the Chair and the Consultant at a mass meeting conducted by the NAACP on July 21, 2002. Additional recommendations from that meeting are included in this report. The recommendations are divided into three sections: 1) Use of Force Policies and Procedures; 2) Mental Health and Mental Evaluation Team; 3) Community-Oriented Policing; and 4) Additional Recommendations.

### **Use of Force Policies and Procedures**

The use of force policy guidelines states that "...Peace officers need to recognize that they have the authority to use reasonable force..." and that "...Unreasonable force occurs when it is apparent that the type, degree, and

duration of force employed was neither necessary nor appropriate. Indications are that the Department places a great deal of emphasis on training personnel in the use of force. However based upon the materials we reviewed and the information received from the Police Department and media accounts, the Task Force does not believe this was a situation where "lethal force" should have been used. Further it is our understanding that between 4-5 minutes lapsed between the confrontation of Ms Byrd and the time of the shooting. Therefore we recommend that:

- **Traditional use of force police training is augmented with training in an approach that has an emphasis on collaboration and mediation at the patrol level (for example "verbal Judo", SARA problem-solving—scanning, analysis, response and assessment).**
- **Video models used in use of force training reflect a diversity of suspects and not focus on using "ethnic minority" individuals in villain roles as this is likely to pre-condition the officer in real life situations.**
- **Field Training Officers and Patrol Officers receive continuous, in-service training on non-violent approaches in citizen encounters.**

### **Mental Health and Mental Evaluation Team**

The content of the Mental Evaluation Team materials provided the Task Force is more than adequate. However the training of team members is non-specific and does not indicate how broadly this training occurs in the Department. The MET operates on a temporal schedule, which means that it is time-limited in its operation. Based on the information the Task Force received and the experiences of members with mentally ill persons, we recommend that:

- **The Police Department increases the number of MET personnel and extends its operation to a 24 hour, 7 day a week schedule. Each team must include a licensed Mental Health Professional and a sworn Police Officer.**
- **The Police Department enter into a partnership with MHA Village and its staff to train, aid and "ride along" with police officers in order to create greater understanding, knowledge and empathy for the police, mental health staff and issues of mental illness.**
- **The Police Department should reconsider the negotiation process and the amount of time devoted to negotiating, bargaining and mediating with suspects who have mental illness or exhibit aberrant behavior.**
- **The Police Department conduct a public debriefing after all such incidents with the Mental Health Professional and the Supervisor(s) of the officer (s) involved present.**

## **Community-Oriented Policing**

Based on the City's failure to respond with materials or address the issue of community-oriented policing we assume that such a philosophy or policy does not exist. Therefore the Task Force takes this opportunity to make strong recommendations to the Department that can simply assist it in interactions with people in the community and promote a structure of togetherness, unity and success. In order to do so the Task Force recommends that:

- **The City of Long Beach through its City Manager and Chief of Police budget monies and adopt the Community-Based Policing Concept; and that the Department embark upon an organization-wide, Community-oriented Policing strategy with sergeants and patrol officers receive training in the definition, philosophy and implementation of community policing. Under this concept we recommend that more officers walk-a-beat to take the vast majority of officers out of patrol cars and let them get in touch with the community they serve.**
- **The Department increase its community involvement by developing partnerships with community-based organizations and groups, and that more members of the Department become more involved by attending meetings, community educational programs.**
- **The Department includes in its Diversity Training the behaviors of mentally ill or aberrant behavior characteristics, and that presentation and discussion of mental illness/emotional dysfunction be a cornerstone of that training.**
- **The Department implements an on-going in-service training program to increase cultural diversity training and awareness with the MHA Village staff as a way of addressing the need to reduce violent confrontations.**

## **Additional Recommendations**

During the deliberations of the Task Force it became evident that the vast majority of the people sought for the police to become more involved in community activities and for there to be more citizen oversight of the Police Department. Repeatedly the Task Force was presented with suggestions regarding the cultural/ethnic make up of the Police Department and a felt sense that there was a disconnect between the Police Department and the residents of the Long Beach community. In order for meaningful participation between the Department and the citizens it serves to occur the Task Force recommends that:

- **The City and the Police Department rethink the structure and operations of the Police Complaint Commission with consideration given to an approach that is more decentralized (possibly on a Divisional or neighborhood level);**



- **The City Council and the City Manager consider the establishment of a Police Review Board to provide more citizen oversight of the Department and provide citizens with a voice in policy development and in Police and community affairs;**
- **The City and the Police Department conduct an aggressive recruitment drive of more persons from ethnic/minority groups in order to reflect the demographic make-up of the residents of Long Beach;**
- **The territorial deployment models currently used by the Department and the philosophy behind them; and**
- **The Chief and his Command Staff present an annual or bi-annual "State of the Department Address" to the public on how it is serving and protecting the citizenry, including how "problem officers" are handled.**

We believe the studied recommendations in this report will help prevent any further perpetuation of unnecessary violent activity in the community between officers and members of society. We also infer that these recommendations will help facilitate the Police Department's future vision for the people of Long Beach as stated in its Strategic Plan (February, 1994), namely:

- **Feel safe in the community;**
- **Work together to solve community and neighborhood problems;**
- **Have a high level of respect, trust and confidence in their Police Department.**

Respectively submitted,

Evelyn Knight, Chairperson  
NAACP Task Force