



LOS ANGELES COUNTY
COMMISSION ON HIV



3530 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 1140 • Los Angeles, CA 90010 • TEL (213) 738-2816 • FAX (213) 637-4748
HIVCOMM@LACHIV.ORG • http://hiv.lacounty.gov

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**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

July 11, 2018



MEMBERS PRESENT	MEMBERS ABSENT (cont.)	PUBLIC	COMM STAFF/ CONSULTANTS
Ricky Rosales, <i>Co-Chair</i>	Joseph Cadden, MD	Lee Kochems, MA	Cheryl Barrit, MPIA
Al Ballesteros, MBA	Raquel Cataldo		Carolyn Echols-Watson, MPA
	Aaron Fox, MPM		Dawn McClendon
	Terry Goddard, MA	DHSP STAFF	Jane Nachazel
MEMBERS ABSENT	Joseph Green	None	Doris Reed
Grissel Granados, <i>MSW, Co-Chair</i>	Mario Pérez, MPH		Jarrod Schwartz, MSOD
Traci Bivens-Davis	Ace Robinson, MPH		Julie Tolentino, MPH
Jason Brown	Kevin Stalter		

CONTENTS OF COMMITTEE PACKET

- 1) **Agenda:** Executive Committee Meeting Agenda, 7/11/2018
- 2) **Table:** Los Angeles County Commission on HIV, Executive Committee Special Meetings and Racial Justice Workshops Schedule, 2018
- 3) **Notes:** Observation notes from Exec. Comm. Meeting 4/26, Lise Ransdell, 2018
- 4) **Notes:** Racial Justice Workgroup Meeting Notes, 5/8/2018

CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Rosales called the meeting to order at 1:15 pm.

I. PUBLIC COMMENT

1. **OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC TO ADDRESS COMMISSION ON ITEMS OF INTEREST WITHIN COMMISSION JURISDICTION:** There were no comments.

II. COMMITTEE COMMENT

2. NON-AGENDIZED OR FOLLOW-UP:

- Ms. Barrit said this was the first Special Committee meeting, especially for Executive, in a long time. She thanked attendees.
- The packet includes a schedule of special meetings and trainings; Lise Ransdell's notes on expectations and anxieties regarding race from the 4/26/2018 Executive Committee Meeting; and 5/8/2018 Racial Justice Workgroup Meeting Notes.
- Commission staff received cultural understanding and interracial justice framework training from Just Communities, Mr. Schwartz's organization, in December 2017. The goal was always to extend training to the full Commission and institutionalize ways to provide trainings, conversations, and safe spaces around cultural competency and interracial justice.
- This conversation especially pertains to health disparities as reflected in the Health District maps on the wall.
- An additional Special Executive Committee is scheduled for 8/15/2018 and hopefully will garner greater attendance.

III. DISCUSSION

3. RACIAL JUSTICE WORKSHOP PLANNING:

- Mr. Schwartz is Executive Director, Just Communities, based in Santa Barbara. It mainly serves the California Central Coast, but also works throughout the state and nation. The social justice organization focuses on multiple forms of oppression and inequality with an intersectional approach to foster opportunity and justice for all. Just Communities works in all sectors of community such as school districts, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and law enforcement. It offers training, workshops, coaching, and organization development geared towards transforming systems to be more just and equitable.
 - Mr. Schwartz has done this work since 1991 in St. Louis Missouri. He moved to Santa Barbara in 2001 to open a satellite office of the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ), the successor to the National Conference of Christians and Jews founded in 1927. NCCJ folded in the mid-2000s and Just Communities spun off as an independent organization. The Commission was referred to Just Communities by another former NCCJ office in Long Beach that was unable to assist.
 - Ms. Barrit and Ms. McClendon have provided considerable information on past meetings, but he had questions to elicit more feedback on attendees' self-perspectives and perspectives on where the Commission is on the issues and on racial justice training. He will likely have follow-up questions at the 8/15/2018 meeting to ensure the training accomplishes Commission goals. Just Communities custom designs its trainings based on issues organizations face, their hopes, and goals.
- a. **"Racial Justice Training" - Associations and Feelings?**
- Current events in United States: Police called on People of Color (POC) for senseless reasons; POC beaten/killed by police.
 - Throughout work in the gay liberation movement, which became the gay rights movement, which became an AIDS movement, and then the professionalization of it all, the speaker continued to struggle for diversity at the table; but he found rage directed at him as a white male after the presidential election.
 - "Racial justice" calls for a balance where someone has rights and someone else does not, but that sounds like a conflict which can result in people being pitted against one another.
 - Race is ridiculous, but when people think about it, they think about it culturally, e.g., he was raised as a white male in a culture that on some level is inherently racist, homophobic, gender-phobic and sex-phobic. On the other hand, those things are learned. The Commission recently bought into the cultural humility concept that posits understanding based wholly on where someone is from. A concept that says a person cannot learn another culture is intellectually, morally, truthfully dangerous as fundamentally ethnocentric. Race is cultural, a social construct; not real. Addressing bigger issues than race at the table can manipulate cultural understanding in a way that pits people against one another.
 - People should care for one another. It is not about justice, or rights, or equal treatment under the law. Our first job is to take care of one another. That means not necessarily understanding another culture, but celebrating another person who may be from another culture.
 - For who we are and what we do in this place and time, it is sad to have to start from so rudimentary and fundamental a place. Over 30-plus years, another speaker reflected on seeing women, men, gays, straights, African Americans, Asians, Latinos, whites, babies, elderly all die from HIV. We know the factors and inequities that still propel the disease. That a planning body charged with this critical work must start from so fundamental a place is sad as it detracts from making the hard decisions. As a realist, he understands everyone does not come from the same place so he accepts the need.
 - The Commission can change itself, but it is unrealistic to impact racial justice in the larger society. He expected many generations will need to address racial justice to effect any change at the societal level.
 - Another attendee grew up in Los Angeles and, due to those around him, never needed to give this topic a thought until recently. He did not understand why people could not just talk and figure issues out without being angry with each other and talking behind each others' backs. It was foreign to him leading him to struggle with the topic.
 - Societal pressure on communities trying to make a difference may heighten individuals' sensitivity to comments.
 - Everyone is trying to talk, but they are talking at different levels about the concepts being considered and not connecting. People need to determine how to connect so people understand one another. For example, someone might say something casually during a meeting that is offensive to others without understanding the offense. Someone might try to say something that is empowering for that person, but others are hurt by it.
 - The conversation also includes a power issue. People want to move their agendas forward, often related to advocacy reflected in the Commission's seats. In that process, they are often political or strategic. We should check in with each other if someone says something upsetting, express our hurt, and ask what was meant, but that does not happen.
 - Commissioners expressing the most problems, and who most need to be at the table, did not attend.
 - People become more sensitive when a society is stressed and start looking for differences. Instead, love one another.

- Mr. Schwartz noted the intention of a comment versus its impact on the audience can differ and fester if it is not checked out. Layering on race, gender, class, or other issues can exacerbate the matter. Just Communities can provide a framework for understanding situations and tools for addressing issues while they are still small.
- Another speaker suggested addressing privilege, in particular white, male, heterosexual, top privilege. A tenet of the gay liberation movement perspective was that, unless you were a feminist, you were really a homosexual, not a gay man because no one is liberated unless everyone is liberated including the white, heterosexist man on top. That is different than a rights movement. People have not had those conversations for 30 years.
- Privilege in general is not discussed and, when it comes up, people react in really hostile ways. Many Commissioners grew up in a world where rights were discussed, but did not explore why people came to have different sets of rights.
- Perspectives of privilege can also differ from reality based on a lack of understanding of the person's background.
- However, the Commission, in the end, plans services and allocates money. Priorities, recommendations, and directives from the body do not seem impacted by these issues but, rather, Commissioners respond objectively to need.
- Even so, perhaps due to the society's atmosphere, another attendee identified fear that resources will not be allocated by need in future. In addition, there is a separate conversation on who sits at the table, often based on what people look like, not who they are. Representation versus the Commission's Priority- and Allocation-Setting (P-and-A) work can create conflict. Gay, white men with HIV are living longer so need resources and social support. While he felt people responded to that, some of those men think the Commission would not respond if that were said, are afraid to say it, and feel blamed for privilege they do not see they have and for taking resources from one group to give to another.

b. Is Racism Showing Up and, If So, How?

- Some people fear talking about their issues which they feel lack the gravitas of others' issues. It is also hard to delineate those issues on racial and cultural lines. Race gets confused with economics, geography, and other related things, e.g., economy and geography are impacted by racism. At the same time, that makes it hard to discuss racism per se.
- Ms. Barrit noted the same people react negatively year after year to rollover of Minority AIDS Initiative (MAI) funding. People perceive a lackadaisical approach to rolling over funds specifically dedicated to POC versus other funding.
- It has also been asserted that Representative Maxine Waters intended MAI funds only for Black people. That was originally true. However, the award is determined by a formula. Los Angeles County (LAC) has such a large Latino population that Representative Waters later chose to support expanding target populations to increase funding.
- Ms. Barrit also saw visceral reactions in the Operations Committee about whether Commission membership mirrors the epidemic in LAC. It is not just about percentages, but a desire to literally mirror the epidemic at the table. There are concerns with perceptions, e.g., if the group looks too white, how can we make sure as brown folks that that really represents us; and, vice versa, if the group is becoming too brown and black, what does that mean for the white folks at the table; and if it is becoming too female, what does that mean for the gay men in the room.
- An attendee agreed that was a big piece of the issue. He felt the Commission has not done a very good job in preparing Commissioners to "take their hats off," e.g., if a Commissioner advocates for women, but data shows the epidemic is more disproportionately among young, Black, gay men, then that has to be considered in allocations alongside any special needs of women. Commissioners need to be prepared to see multiple perspectives. Allocations may remain the same, or they may change, but if the conversation has been held, then people feel they have shared their concerns.
- All generally agreed that resource allocations are driven more by data. Main table and Operations Committee issues such as membership, what is said, and what policies are taken up are driven more by emotion.
- Ms. Barrit added ageism also shows up on the Commission, in particular pertaining to generational differences with comments like, "The Commission is mostly old folks. There's not a lot of young folks on the Commission."
- Another attendee added that issues could also pertain to history, living through more things in different ways, not only age. For example, the Gay Men's Health Crisis once was run by volunteers committed to putting themselves out of a job. A cure was the priority. Working in HIV is now a career with priorities of treatment, access, and zero viral load.
- He felt allocations were data driven, but people did not look beyond the surface once discussion starts. He supported Commission training to overcome ethnocentrism and try to think like other cultures. People see faces and not hearts.

c. Hopes for Training?

- Focus on realistic hopes. Help to develop an understanding of how influences may come in and cause people to react. Provide tools to mitigate emotions in the moment and, once mitigated, tools to walk away feeling issues were resolved.
- Develop the ability to sit down and have conversations when something happens, e.g., no one reacted at all during the incident which spurred scheduling this training.

- It was noted that highest HIV infection rates are among POC so it was natural to be pleased with strong representation from the most impacted communities. Often such meetings have little or no meaningful participation from affected communities of color.
- One attendee noted Commissioners would have called out the comment in earlier years, e.g., "What do you mean by that?" No one was offended because people had good interpersonal relationships and trusted each other.
- One attendee noted that White people often do not know how to talk about their oppression without defending their privilege.
- A different perspective was that speaking up was complicated as the comment was made by a leader, i.e. a Commission Co-Chair. Mr. Rosales, also a Commission Co-Chair, noted everyone misspeaks sometimes. If he catches himself, he apologizes. If he misses it, he would want to be told. It was suggested he might announce that at the start of meetings.
- One attendee suggested general training on basic administrative processes such as bringing issues back to a pertinent committee or person. For leaders, part of what they do is to contain and resolve issues.

d. What Does Racial Justice Training Success Look Like?

- Mr. Schwartz noted multiple definitions of success, e.g., enough understanding of cultural and racial experiences to readily empathize with someone; or just comfort in having a conversation about something that does not feel right.
- One attendee would like people to be comfortable going directly to a speaker who said something that felt offensive, identifying what was hurtful, and working it out rather than engaging in weeks of gossip with people not there.
- Another attendee preferred ideally that people would be comfortable having those discussions at the table because that would ensure everyone who might have been hurt would be included in the discussion.
- Some people feel they understand another culture simply because they have a partner of that culture even though getting along with one person does not bestow cultural understanding.
- At the same time, the Commission's Prevention Standards provides a definition of cultural humility stating it is impossible to understand another person's culture. If true, there is no point in someone discussing their culture or a provider attempting to offer culturally sensitive services. He disagreed with that intellectually, fundamentally, morally, and scientifically. No one can perfectly understand cultural or personal experience, but the conversation stops if people cannot understand one another's cultures when they come in contact. Cultural contact, growth, and new cultures coming out of old cultures is all about having the conversations when two cultures clash, and exploring the differences.
- It is also critical to address trauma because these communities experience levels of trauma layered on top of each other. People interpret their cultural and racial experiences through their trauma. Cultural and racial traumatic experiences of oppression, deprivation, and prejudice vary, but we can also relate through the fact of shared trauma.

e. Difficult Conversations in the Commission?

- Commissioners do not often ask how one another are doing or check in with another. The recent loss of a Commissioner and former Commissioner threw people off more because those conversations no longer occur regularly as they used to when death was more common.
- We thought that because we saw one another at the Commission that we were taking care of one another and being good friends and family, but that was not the case. We should talk about some of those issues, especially around topics like substance abuse, but do not do so partly because people are afraid to share themselves.
- Conversations concerning the integration of the Prevention Planning Committee and the Commission continued over the course of some ten years. The main fear was that the focus on care and treatment would overwhelm attention to prevention needs if the two bodies integrated. In fact, prevention was set aside for a couple years after integration until a template was developed for the treatment and care work which now ensures more time for prevention.
- Those conversations were hard and the Commission is as big as it is to ensure prevention was represented at the table.
- Most people at the table now do think that care is prevention so the areas are inherently more integrated. In addition, oversight of the prevention portfolio changed based on changes in the federal government so it is necessary to focus on prevention differently. The newly approved Prevention Standards are the product of years of conversation.
- Mr. Schwartz felt there was a parallel between the integration experience and now when there is a fear that the priorities and needs of some groups will overcome the needs of other groups. He suggested identifying lessons learned.
- These challenges are typical. Society has gone from not talking about race or other areas of oppression because those in power said it was unnecessary to recognizing the need, but lacking the tools, strategies, language, and skills to do so. The plan will provide the skills, tools, and practice to have effective and unifying conversations to support the mission.
- ➡ Lessons learned from integration:
 - People focused in on facts and data to see what it said.

- Historically, prevention money shrank drastically creating a need to spend treatment/care money on prevention which made people sit down and talk to one another about practical necessities.
 - There is a need to connect with each other more.
 - Learn why people are sitting at the table.
 - Historically, Commissioners are hesitant to weigh in on issues pertaining to other communities, e.g., for an older gay man to weigh in on issues of younger gay men, but sometimes good input is lost by that reticence. What tools are needed to understand when and how to weigh in?
- ➡ Focus on perspectives of those not in attendance today for August Special Executive Committee meeting.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

4. **ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting adjourned at 3:05 pm.