

Community Conversation – Holgate Church

August 10, 2022

7:00-8:30p

Hosted at Holgate Church, and co-sponsored by community partners including White Center Community Development, King County Equity Now, East African, NAACP, Holgate Church, Village of Hope, and City of Seattle, about 120+ people were in attendance. Facilitators led conversation in an open forum and participants shared their responses to the following questions:

- What do you want a new Police Chief to understand about public safety?
- What are important elements of public/community safety?
- What has been your experience in the past with public/community safety?
- What other comments, feedback, suggestions do you have?

SUMMARY

What do you want a new Police Chief to understand about public safety?

- Mental health in the black community needs to be taken more seriously and understood professionally
- Treatment based off discrimination adds to the mistrust. The police system is rooted in racism, so we must learn how to build trust with each other, particularly learn to work with each other to change the culture and relationship with each other
- Generations of suffering from policing has been normalized to families impacted by policing
- Public safety means and looks different to everyone, and is defined by individual needs
- Support, safety, housing, education, love are universal needs that black communities need to feel safe and secure
- Children and family are dying in the community due to gun violence and are in fear of the police. Police also seem to fear communities that look different than them. The black community wants to know: how can we start understanding each other?
- 6 months police training is not enough and there needs to be more training on dispute resolution, building an understanding of institutional racism as well as the communities they serve

What are important elements of public/community safety?

- Humanizing, respecting, and building relationships with people before showing or using weapons
- Community policing used to work well
- Bridging relationships and communications particularly with families harmed by policing

- Resources and access to other programs such as mental health and housing. For example, Harborview hospital is a revolving door for those in need. There must be a public safety plan that is holistic
- Dual aggression and experiences (law agencies vs community): Over policing versus feeling under protected and not getting proper responses to their needs. This is a “both, and” where accountability of police is important as well as violence and gun reduction
- History of policing and its institution continues to train officers in a way that has nothing to do with public safety
- A feeling of belonging that no longer exists for black communities who have been pushed out of the areas they were once the majority of. When coming back to the Seattle area, black people are targeted, ticketed, and unwelcomed

What has been your experience in the past with public/community safety?

- Positive experiences in the past with community service officers who were part of the police department as well as the community. These community officers were not armed and would need more resources than they had in the past if they are brought back
- Seeing loved ones sent to jail instead of finding a solution or treatment, particularly for mental health issues
- People feel fear, out of place, and experience harassment when out in public especially with ongoing racial profiling and “stop and frisks”
- Youth of color experience racism and mistreatment in schools by security officers. Youth and parents feel their children are set up to be in the system in schools
- Officers treat white and black communities differently
- Heavy police responses to protests

Additional comments, feedback, suggestions:

- Unarm officers in certain situations, particularly during traffic stops
- Respond to calls with team of resources such as mental health counselor, EMT/doctor, peers with lived experiences, and probation officers, instead of a team of police members. This would send message that the response team is coming to provide help, not make arrests
- Change in relationships between police and black community does not feel realistic
- Must have community response components that are separate from police or enforcement
- Prosecutors and other roles within the criminal justice system need to be examined and held accountable as well as the police department and leadership