

Imagine ROSEVILLE

Discussion I Report: Community, Policing and Race





Community Discussion I

OCTOBER 16, 2016 | Marquita Stephens, Facilitator

Relationships between the community and police are undergoing widespread scrutiny with the increased media attention given to police involved shootings of African-American men in particular. This scrutiny was localized with the shooting and subsequent death caught on tape and widely circulated, via social media, of Philando Castile, in Falcon Heights.

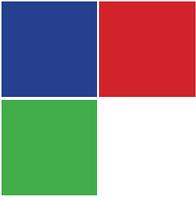
Falcon Heights borders Roseville and shares the same public school district and commercial spaces, but is serviced by the St. Anthony police department. Because Roseville residents are also affected by the impacts of the shooting, it was determined that the City of Roseville should initiate a conversation with Roseville residents.

Some residents wondered aloud if such an event could happen at the hands of the Ros-

eville Police Department. With this in mind, and the changes in the ethnic make-up of the city, the name, Imagine Roseville (from an earlier community visioning project) was applied to “an ongoing series of discussions to ensure Roseville is a community where people make connections amidst changing demographics.”

This work began by forming a committee of 20 interested persons from which a smaller planning committee assumed the responsibility of shaping the event. Members of the smaller committee included Mayor Dan Roe, City Manager Pat Trudgeon, Chief of Police Rick Mathwig, Parks and Recreation Commission member Terry Newby, Assistant Professor, Metro State University Don Eubanks, community mental health worker Molli Slade, and City of Roseville Communications Specialist Carolyn Carti.

*The City of Roseville hosted the inaugural **Imagine Roseville** event, **Community, Policing and Race**, at the Roseville Skating Center on October, 4, 2016.*



Discussion Format

The first Imagine Roseville Community discussion began with a panel of Roseville residents sharing their reaction to the Philando Castile shooting. Police Chief Rick Mathwig then presented information about Roseville's police policies before attendees discussed their reactions during a small group breakout session.

An event was held Tuesday, October 4, 2016 at the Oval in Roseville, 7:00 – 9:00 pm. It featured a panel consisting of Terry Newby, two high school students, Katrina Phidd and Angela Stenberg, Don Eubanks, and Molli Slade.

Remarks ranged from personal reactions to the shooting and subsequent death of Philando Castile and the fear it evoked for African-American males; the threat to personal safety felt by men of color given the seemingly law-abiding status of people of color in these instances; the lack of students' ability to discuss the shooting and related issues as part of the school day; to the observation that the vast majority of people governing and volunteering with the government structures are White in a community that's 20% people of color.

In addition, Chief Mathwig presented highlights of the documents titled, "Use of Force Policy" and "Community Outreach/Engagement Efforts." Both of these documents outlined specifics regarding the activity of police officers and provided new information to many of the audience members. The panel and presentation by Chief Mathwig spanned 40 minutes.

Table Talk

Participants were asked to discuss three questions at their tables, identify a scribe to take notes of the discussion, and identify someone to present highlights of the discussion. Participants were given 30 minutes to discuss the questions (see appendix). Answers to question #1, What was your reaction to Philando Castile shooting and other recent events in the news were grouped into 1 of 3 categories: 1) race, 2) emotions centering around sadness, shaken, loss of sensibilities, questioning, or disappointment, and 3) emotions of fear, horror, anger.

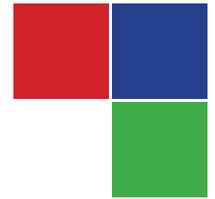
The majority of respondents indicated feelings that fell under category 2. As they reflected on their initial reactions to the events of that day, they mostly recalled feeling stunned that it keeps happening, and

that it happened in their community. Their perception of their community and the type of policing they assumed was in place was called into question. Things were not as they seemed. This sentiment was expressed twice as often as those in #3, anger, etc. Race was not directly mentioned very often in the answers to this question and was inherent in slightly less than 20% of the responses. (While no request was made of the audience to identify their ethnicity, a visual scan of the participants suggests that the vast majority of them could be described as identifying as White. This composition may or may not have a bearing on the pattern of responses for this question.)

Answers to question #2, What role do you think race plays in policing, had no clear pattern and therefore defied categorization for this purpose. Responses seemed to vary table by table and sometimes within the table discussion. The discussion about the role of race in policing often seemed to be a discussion about race in general. The abbreviated notes recorded seemed to point to a variety of considerations about race but generally revolved around 1) whether or not race should be a factor in policing, or is it a social construct and therefore a red herring, 2) race evokes fear, both on the part of the police and people of color, 3) prejudice, implicit and explicit bias, racism is taught and has roots in American history, 4) structural racism is a partial explanation, 5) need to deal with race directly, 6) people are afraid to speak up about race, and 7) is there a relationship between stress of police work and implicit bias of police?

Though this was a general conversation among residents, it would seem the participants would benefit from facts about these matters to help strengthen their understanding and reflective viewpoints. The next round of discussions could offer this to better help participants chart the pathway to potential solutions.

The last question, who would be hurt or at risk without law enforcement was unanimously answered by the statement, "all of us."



Evaluation

Responses to the evaluative questions were positive. The event was overwhelmingly well received. It is believed to be needed and helpful to residents and they want to see it continue. Would like more transparency on the part of the police department, e.g., specific data on stops, activities kept by race, etc. Many want to see a more diverse city government; all trained in diversity/inclusion/implicit bias. Overall, it would seem they want to trust those in authority. Underneath their responses is the desire to not have anything like the shooting that brought them here, ever happen again. The amount of information they want will vary with the amount of trust they feel in the system that governs them.

A sample of the responses to the last question of the evaluation, “what other questions should we, as a community, be talking about” and “anything else” are highlighted below for further consideration by the planning group. These are complex issues and reflect the optimism they have in the city’s ability to move forward.

How do we build ourselves as a multicultural city?

- Make Roseville a leader/model for communities tackling/confronting race.
- Can we have more community oversight of policing?
- What needs to change?
- An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure (paraphrased)
- Systemic racism in all our systems needs to be examined.

Each of these responses suggests some participants want the conversation to go deeper. The planning committee should consider this when outlining the remainder of the series.

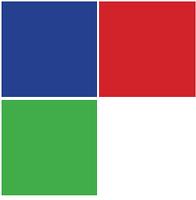
Reporting and Q&A

Several tables presented a summary of the conversation at their respective tables. The event ended with Q&A from the participants to the panelists. A question was asked of the students about their experience discussing the impact of the shooting with other students. They responded that it wasn’t being talked about by teachers nor was any time set-aside in the classes for discussion of the shooting with students. They want to talk about both the shooting and race. The remainder of the questions was directed at the Chief about policing. Some general notes stemming from the Q&A and table reports are listed below.

- Ability to challenge police officer if you’re white is part of white privilege.
- Emotion hasn’t dissipated
- People first mentality with law enforcement
- Overwhelming sadness that it happened in their backyard
- Had to talk to 14 year old son (person of color) sooner than later as a result
- Race matters
- Systemic racism
- Shoot first in some police departments
- How can police officers come from other cities without the training Chief talked about?
- Took it happening in MN for the national epidemic to be seen as such
- Media escalates the issue

Idea Wall

Statements on the idea/resource wall were mainly expressions of individuals about their perspectives that may not have been captured in the notes taken at the table. They should be read individually as that was their intent. (See appendix) It may reveal more of what is on the heart and mind of the participants than the summarized table notes indicate.



- Not being racist is passive
- Everyone is affected by it
- When you get pulled over it's like a confirmation of what's in your head already
- Why don't Black Lives Matter?
- There are differing perspectives that are brought to a scenario
- We cry together....this is the first step.
- Would like a meeting/forum with the police chief
- State law dictates what the Post board does.
- Want to talk about de-escalation policy and practice
- How diverse is the Post Board
- What are the metrics kept by police by race? MN. doesn't require it. Ramsey County just started doing it.

Recommendations

1. Continue to move toward restoring/strengthening confidence in policing and, by default, governing, via more community conversations that move the dialogue toward solutions. This should be scheduled within 8 weeks and carried through 2017. The next Table discussion can be devoted to preselected topics and table leaders can make sure the conversation examines various aspects of the topic/solution. The anticipated outcome would be to launch committees that could work toward resolution of the issue at hand. An example is an examination of the role of the state legislature in insuring fair and responsive policing.
2. Race is inherent in any conversation about policing. However, many of the participants want to be part of a conversation specifically about race. Given the observation by many that the city governance structure is overwhelmingly White, it is recommended that the Community Conversation about race be shared with one or more other entities. This may result in increased attendance by people of color to a level that encourages satisfactory exchange between participants. An intergenerational participant pool will also yield a more thorough discussion. A conversation about race is complex. There are many dimensions to the conversation, e.g., history and how it was introduced in American society; the difference between bias, prejudice, stereotypes, etc., institutional and systemic racism, micro aggressions, etc. These dimensions will most likely need to be presented by "experts" and then discussed. Otherwise, you can host a space for informal conversation and people can talk about race from their perspective with no particular formal outcome.
3. Consider the questions, "What needs to change?" and "How do we build a multicultural city?" Both are central to the direction of Re-imagine Roseville.

Closing

This was a very good start to discussing a very important issue. All were heartened that the City of Roseville believed the conversation necessary and created the space to host it. All involved are to be congratulated on their willingness to step forward and face the issue of policing --- in the open --- with any resident. That alone can dispel myths about the city and help the program, Re-imagine Roseville, thrive within the current diversity.