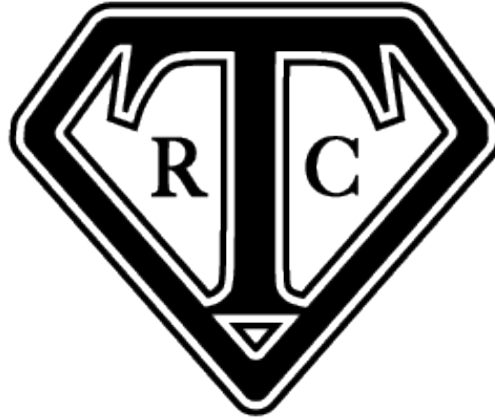


IOWA CITY AD HOC TRUTH & RECONCILIATION COMMISSION
CONCLUDING REPORT



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If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.
— *Desmond Tutu*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We sincerely thank the Iowa City Ad Hoc Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) commissioners for their unwavering commitment to justice and healing. We also acknowledge the Iowa City Council's role in establishing and supporting the commission's work. We thank the community members who courageously shared their stories and actively engaged in the process. Lastly, we thank the Native Partners - whose guidance and leadership were vital to honoring Indigenous traditions. We are equally grateful to the Healing Partners - for creating safe and supportive spaces for reflection and restoration. Lastly, appreciation is extended to Kearns & West for their facilitation efforts and to Think Peace Learning & Support Hub for their essential contributions to community engagement and restorative justice work. This collective effort would not have been possible without each of you.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of the TRC

The Iowa City Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established in 2020 following local and national uprisings against systemic racism and police violence, including the murder of George Floyd. The commission was created in response to longstanding demands from Iowa City residents—particularly Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color—to reckon with the city’s history of racial injustice and develop a path toward healing and equity. The TRC’s central aim was to investigate past and present harms, amplify community voices, and offer actionable recommendations for structural change.

This work began in the streets, led by community organizers and the Iowa Freedom Riders, whose demonstrations reflected both hope for accountability and skepticism about whether a City-led process could deliver authentic justice.

Background Context

The TRC focused on identifying and addressing racial disparities rooted in the city’s institutions, policies, and practices. Historical injustices included discriminatory housing practices, policing tactics disproportionately targeting communities of color, and exclusion from economic and educational opportunities. These patterns were perpetuated by systemic barriers within law enforcement, local governance, healthcare, education, and labor markets, leading to multigenerational trauma and socio-economic inequity.

Although the Commission’s charge was historic, its work was not without challenges. Tensions, resignations, and community distrust underscored how difficult it is to reconcile harms in a City-structured process. At the same time, the sustained effort of commissioners, who dedicated more than 100 public meetings and hearings over several years, demonstrated both the urgency of this work and the need for stronger support structures in future reconciliation efforts.

Methodology

The Commission collected data through a combination of public testimonies, community forums, archival research, and dialogue sessions. These included over two dozen public hearings and community briefings, with input from individuals representing a range of lived experiences and identities. Facilitators and restorative justice experts supported the testimonies, guiding the process with cultural sensitivity and trauma-informed approaches.

To strengthen findings, the TRC also considered demographic and disproportionality data, recognizing that Iowa City’s BIPOC population—roughly 9 percent—faces inequities at rates far

greater than their share of the population. This alignment between lived experience and quantitative evidence reinforced the Commission's conclusions.

Key Findings

Testimonies and documentation gathered by the TRC revealed recurring and deeply rooted issues, including:

- **Policing and Public Safety:** Widespread mistrust of law enforcement due to racial profiling, excessive force, over-policing in minority neighborhoods, and lack of accountability mechanisms.
- **Housing Discrimination:** Persistent barriers in rental and mortgage access, ongoing effects of redlining, and gentrification-driven displacement in historically marginalized communities.
- **Workplace Inequality:** Discrimination in hiring and promotion, wage disparities, labor exploitation (particularly of undocumented workers), and limited union protections.
- **Educational Disparities:** Racial inequities in school discipline, underrepresentation of minority educators, and implicit bias affecting student opportunities and self-esteem.
- **Mental Health and Trauma:** Limited access to culturally competent counseling, intergenerational trauma, and high costs associated with mental healthcare.
- **Public Testimony and Restorative Justice:** Community storytelling, cultural events, and healing spaces were powerful tools for truth-telling and building resilience.

Community Impact

The harms identified disproportionately affected Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and immigrant communities. Many residents described living with chronic fear, emotional trauma, and restricted opportunities. Youth of color, in particular, faced systemic disadvantages in education, employment, and public life. These ongoing experiences of marginalization fueled community fatigue and distrust toward institutions that claimed to serve them.

Recommendations

The TRC's recommendations call for sustained, community-centered reforms, including:

- Establishment of permanent restorative justice programs and community healing spaces
- Expanded funding for culturally competent mental health services
- City-level policy changes to address housing inequality and economic exclusion
- Greater accountability and transparency within the Iowa City Police Department
- Equity-focused reforms in public education and workforce development
- Institutionalization of Indigenous-led Reconciliation practices and land recognition policies

Each recommendation is paired with a responsible partner (City, School District, University, or Community) and accompanied by metrics and timelines detailed in the Recommendations chapter of this report.

Lessons Learned

The work of the TRC was unprecedented. Commissioners dedicated thousands of collective hours—equivalent to a full-time staff commitment—yet often faced unclear expectations and limited resources. These challenges underscored the resilience of commissioners and the community while also pointing to the need for better-designed, adequately resourced reconciliation processes in the future.

Commissioners of the Iowa City TRC (2020–2024)

The following individuals served as commissioners of the Iowa City Truth & Reconciliation Commission between 2020 and 2024. We honor and thank each person for their time, insight, and contributions to this process—whether they served throughout the full term or during its formative stages.

Commissioners Who Served Through Conclusion

- **Chastity Dillard** — 2021–2024
- **Lauren Merritt** — 2022–2024
- **Wangui Gathua** — 2021–2024
- **Clifton Johnson** — 2021–2024
- **Kayla Rossi** — 2024–2024
- **Lubna Mohamed** — 2024–2024
- **Amos Kiche** — 2024–2024
- **Louis Tassinary** — 2023–2024
- **Chad Simmons** — 2023–2024

Former Commissioners (Earlier Phases)

- **Sikowis Nobiss** — 2021–2024
- **Marie Krebs** — 2022–2024
- **Kevo Rivera** — 2020–2023
- **Mohamed Traore** — 2020–2023
- **Eric Harris** — 2020–2023
- **Amel Ali** — 2020–2022
- **Daphney Daniel** — 2021–2022
- **T'Shailyn Harrington** — 2020–2021
- **Layana NaVarre Jackson** — 2020–2021
- **Anthony Currin** — 2020–2021
- **Raneem Hamad** — 2020–2021
- **Royceann Porter** — 2020–2021

We also recognize the facilitators, staff, community members, and residents who shared their stories, attended hearings, and helped shape this effort.

INTRODUCTION

How We Got Here

The Iowa City Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) arose from a groundswell of community action during the summer of 2020. While the City Council formally created the TRC through resolution, the demand for truth and reconciliation began with residents themselves—particularly young Black organizers, the Iowa Freedom Riders, and other community members who mobilized nightly in the streets after the murder of George Floyd.

Protests in Iowa City were not isolated. They built on decades of local organizing around racial justice and connected directly to national movements for police accountability. On June 3, nearly 1,000 people marched for more than three hours through Iowa City, calling for law enforcement reform and racial justice. Days later, on June 6, thousands participated in a daytime march that concluded with an open-mic gathering, where residents shared personal stories of harm, systemic inequities, and frustration with the pace of institutional change. Out of this moment, parallel community-led efforts such as the *People's Truth and Reckoning* gatherings and the *Freedom Riders' Truth-Telling* amplified concerns that official processes alone might fall short.

This history matters because it shaped how the TRC was received. For some, its creation represented a milestone: the first municipal truth commission of its kind in the United States. For others, it was viewed with skepticism—a City-led process that risked co-optation, exclusion, and disappointment. These tensions set the stage for the Commission's work, influencing both its challenges and its opportunities.

Background on the Formation of the TRC

The Iowa City Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established in September 2020 in response to nationwide protests about racial injustice, police brutality, and systemic discrimination. The murder of George Floyd in May 2020 ignited widespread demonstrations, including in Iowa City, where community members demanded accountability and meaningful change. Recognizing the need to address historical and ongoing racial injustices, the Iowa City Council passed a resolution to create the TRC as an independent body tasked with examining racial inequities, investigating past injustices, and recommending restorative measures.

The City Council passed Resolution No. 20-159, a comprehensive initiative aimed at addressing systemic racism and responding to the Black Lives Matter movement, which laid the foundation for Resolution No. 20-228 to create the TRC as an independent body tasked with examining racial inequities, investigating past injustices, and recommending restorative measures. The City Council emphasized the need for an official mechanism to examine past and present racial inequities in Iowa City. The resolution acknowledged that systemic racism had long affected Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities and committed to facilitating dialogue and restorative justice efforts. The TRC was designed as a community-driven initiative, providing a platform for residents to share their experiences and recommend policy changes.

The formation of the TRC was part of a broader initiative to acknowledge the lived experiences of marginalized communities in Iowa City, particularly Black, Indigenous, and other people of color. It was modeled after similar truth commissions worldwide, such as those in South Africa and Canada, which have been instrumental in addressing systemic human rights violations. However, the Iowa City TRC was uniquely designed to focus on local racial injustices and their impact on the community, aiming to foster reconciliation and policy reform.

The establishment of the TRC also came at a time when cities across the United States were reckoning with their histories of racial discrimination and police misconduct. Many local governments were under pressure to take concrete steps toward racial equity, and the TRC was seen as a proactive response by Iowa City to these demands. The commission was expected to document past injustices and provide a framework for sustainable change in policy and governance. By engaging with affected communities, analyzing institutional failures, and recommending actionable solutions, the TRC sought to create an inclusive and equitable city for all residents.

Iowa City Ad Hoc Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Charges

The Iowa City Ad Hoc Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established under Resolution No. 20-228 with specific charges to systematically address racial inequities through structured, fact-based investigations, community engagement, and policy-oriented actions. See Appendix 1 for more details. The first charge¹ of the Iowa City Ad hoc TRC is restated here as:

1. **Fact-Finding** - The TRC shall collect evidence, including first-hand testimony, of discrimination and racial injustice in multiple settings and compile a complete record of racial injustices that will inform and support the fundamental institutional and policy reforms necessary to address systemic racism.

This charter allowed the Commission and facilitators to engage the City of Iowa City, Iowa City community organizations, NAACP, law enforcement organizations like the FBI /DOJ Institutions and Web Archives seeking facts for;

¹ Page 2 of resolution 20-228 [2020-09-15 TRC Resolution.pdf](#)

- i. Documenting incidences of systemic racism, and associated racist policies, systems, processes and practices which create and sustain inequities and inequalities among people of color. This was aimed at providing evidence on patterns, levels, magnitude of racism.
- ii. Documenting in historical manner injustices, harm, injuries, exploitation, and deprivation of resources and opportunities availed to other groups. This was aimed at gauging the impact of systemic racism on the well-being of minority groups in terms of employment, health, safety, law enforcement, food security, education, housing, incarceration and participation in economic development. This was also aimed at informing current and future discussions on reconciliation, reparations, and restitutions (RRR).
- iii. Documenting gaps and cultural biases in minority community research engagement and inclusion through initiation, data collection, and public dissemination to eliminate exclusionary information practices. Whether research initiatives consider the experiences of minorities in terms of -asking questions about what they care about, and whether the analysis and reporting included minority populations was of immense interest. The City of Iowa City has engaged in many surveys on housing, parks and amenities, safety and well-being and have assumed that there are no disproportionate impacts and experiences of their policies and actions on minority populations. This exercise is also meant to ascertain the extent to which the City of Iowa City has engaged in surveys, research, training, data informed policies and programs regarding elimination of systemic racism and social injustices.
- iv. Establishing a baseline/ benchmark of facts in different areas for
 - a. comparative analysis with other communities,
 - b. monitoring and evaluating changes in policies, community responses and minority well-being.
 - c. measuring participation of minority groups in economic growth and community development.

Considerations for Definition and Conceptualization of Fact-Finding (FF) Exercise

The commission addressed the question of -what fact finding means and what makes something a fact-. Defining fact-finding became an essential component of the process in order to establish the standards and what qualifies as a fact. Apart from real documented facts of incidents, observations and testimonies, filed complaints by members of a community or department if recorded and published becomes a fact which may offer insights towards trends. Fact-finding was considered as the process of discovery of all the information pertaining to the experiences of minorities in all aspects of life in their relationship with the rest of the communities, governmental entities, institutions and the private sector workplace.

The qualification of what is a fact as a rule can hinder the process of exploring truth if certain limitations are imposed by an entity except for the legal protections on confidentiality and public interest. The commission was aware of the possibility that judgement on what becomes a fact can be associated with systemic bias.

The Commission wasn't bound by the resolution regarding standards, scope, and depth of data inquiry. As a result, the Commission considered a long list of concerns and sources² relevant to the mission of TRC and in helping the commission learn and effectively execute its mandate; as in other truth commissions like Natives Children of Canada, Greensboro and Maine (USA), South Africa, Peru, Kenya etc.

2. Truth-Telling - The TRC shall:

- 1) Provide multiple fora and creative opportunities for persons impacted and traumatized by racial injustice to share their stories of racial injustice and experience to be heard by:
(a) fellow communities of color; (b) a broad cross-section of the entire Iowa City community; and (c) key decision-makers in city government, the business community, and the University.
- 2) Explore ways to provide such opportunities through art, music, theater, workshops, rallies, and other forms of congregation, multimedia and listening designed to reveal truths that cannot be fully expressed in traditional fora; and,
- 3) Create a repository for community stories expressed in multiple media (written, video, audio, art) that can be catalogued and used to educate and inform members of the community.

3. Reconciliation - The TRC shall:

- 1) Provide opportunity for and facilitate direct conversation among and between community members of color, white community members and representatives of various sectors in which people of color experience discrimination and injustice (e.g. police and protesters, landlords and tenants, students and teachers, patients and health care providers, business owners and staff);
- 2) Create a replicable model that provides a structure for enabling these conversations throughout the city;
- 3) Make available opportunities for a broad cross section of the community to learn about discrimination and racial injustice in our community; and,
- 4) Identify and recommend to the City Council institutional and policy reforms, new social practices, expectations, protocols, habits, rituals, conversations and celebrations

² <https://www.iowa-city.org/WebLink/DocView.aspx?id=2199559&dbid=0&repo=CityofIowaCity>

that will move Iowa City toward a shared experience of race and difference, justice and equity and community and harmony.

For more information about Resolution No. 20-228 Resolution establishing the Ad Hoc Truth and Reconciliation Commission, see Appendix 1.

Findings: The TRC Mission and Completed Works

The Iowa City Ad Hoc Truth and Reconciliation Commission committed to implementing and sustaining grassroots, community-centered truth-telling processes to address past and present instances of both direct and indirect actions of violence, discrimination, and racism in Iowa City.

The Commission collected testimonies from a variety of sources: individuals, public and private organizations institutions, communities, and private organizations, law enforcement (ICPD), Community Police Review Board, housing providers and agencies, Iowa City School District board members, health care and institutions engaged in social justice, combating systemic racism and violation of rights of Blacks, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

Testimonies, stories, and facts on the experiences and treatment of BIPOC in the community were collected using fact-finding methods by facilitators and commissioners, truth-telling occasions, community gatherings, and meet-and-greet events.

Records and Resources: Proceedings of the TRC, Commissioners' Training Materials and Facilitators Report and Recommendations.

The works of the commission, including transcripts, are housed on the City Website(<https://www.iowa-city.org/WebLink/Browse.aspx?id=1962561&dbid=0&repo=CityofIowaCity>)

The commission proceedings can be watched at <https://citychannel4.com/boards-commissions-and-committees.html> by searching for commissions and selecting the Ad hoc Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

Newspaper reports and YouTube videos can also be watched from sites like the [City of Iowa City ad hoc TRC - Search](#)

Facilitators Final Report and Recommendations is the TRC Agenda of 5-16-2024 housed at <https://www.iowa-city.org/WebLink/Browse.aspx?id=2186968&dbid=0&repo=CityofIowaCity>

Importance of Truth-Telling and Restorative Justice in Iowa City

The establishment of the TRC underscored the importance of truth-telling and restorative justice in addressing the city's history of racial inequities. Many marginalized communities in Iowa City have faced systemic barriers in areas such as policing, housing, and economic opportunities. The TRC sought to acknowledge these harms and provide pathways for reconciliation and redress.

Truth-telling is a fundamental aspect of restorative justice, serving as a mechanism for acknowledging past wrongs and fostering communal healing. In Iowa City, the TRC played a crucial role in creating a safe space where individuals and communities could share their experiences of racial injustice without fear of retaliation or dismissal. Truth-telling is essential in reconciliation efforts, as it allows individuals and communities to voice their grievances and receive acknowledgment from society and institutions. Without truth, justice remains elusive, and historical injustices persist. The TRC aimed to create a safe and structured space where victims of racial discrimination could share their experiences without fear of retaliation.

Restorative justice differs from conventional justice systems in that it prioritizes dialogue, relationship-building, healing, reconciliation, accountability, and systemic change rather than punishment. For Iowa City, implementing restorative justice meant addressing the historical marginalization of communities of color, rebuilding trust between law enforcement and residents, and ensuring that policies reflect equitable treatment for all citizens. By focusing on community-led solutions, the TRC aimed to empower those directly affected by racial injustices to shape the city's future policies and practices, hence rebuilding trust between marginalized communities and local institutions.

The importance of truth-telling extends beyond individual testimonies; it involves a collective acknowledgment of systemic failures and an active commitment to rectifying them. The TRC facilitated discussions on issues such as police violence, housing discrimination, and economic disparities, helping to contextualize these injustices within broader historical and societal structures. Through public hearings and open forums, the TRC documented past injustices and fostered dialogue on potential solutions that emphasized healing and reconciliation.

Moreover, the commission recognized that healing requires more than policy changes—it necessitates an ongoing commitment to education, awareness, and cultural transformation. The TRC, therefore, worked closely with schools, local institutions, and community leaders to promote racial justice initiatives that would have a lasting impact on future generations.

The Uniqueness of Iowa City TRC. It is Different from Other Commissions

While truth and reconciliation commissions have been established in various contexts worldwide, the Iowa City TRC was unique in its local focus and grassroots-driven approach. Unlike national truth commissions that often address large-scale human rights violations, the

Iowa City TRC concentrated on municipal-level injustices, making it one of the few city-led truth commissions in the United States.

Key factors that set the Iowa City TRC apart include:

1. Grassroots Formation and Local Government Collaboration

Traditional TRCs typically arise from major historical events, such as civil wars, genocides, or nationally recognized periods of oppression. Such TRCs usually operate at a national scale with clear international visibility, such as South Africa's post-apartheid TRC. The Iowa City TRC, however, uniquely emerged at a municipal level, driven explicitly by localized concerns and activism. Its focus was simultaneously historical and contemporary, rooted in specific local dynamics and community needs. This distinctive local orientation allowed for more direct community participation, responsiveness to local issues, and the ability to adapt recommendations and interventions promptly. The Iowa City TRC's efforts thus stand out as a model demonstrating how effective reconciliation can occur at the grassroots and municipal scale, providing valuable insights and adaptable frameworks for other localities worldwide.

2. Intersectionality and Holistic Examination

The Iowa City TRC adopted an expansive, intersectional approach, distinguishing itself by addressing both historical and contemporary injustices across multiple sectors, including policing, housing discrimination, economic disparities, public policy, gender inequalities, and immigration issues. Unlike other commissions typically confined to singular historical events or isolated policy concerns, Iowa City's commission proactively tackled interconnected forms of systemic discrimination, promoting nuanced and comprehensive recommendations.

3. Restorative Justice and Immediate Policy Action

In contrast to traditionally historical or symbolic TRCs, the Iowa City TRC placed substantial emphasis on restorative justice and tangible policy reform. Rather than solely documenting past injustices, it actively sought immediate institutional and policy changes. The commission translated community experiences into actionable policy recommendations, advocating for procedural flexibility, financial independence, and institutional reform to facilitate real-time responses to community needs.

4. Community Engagement and Inclusivity

Community participation formed a core element of the Iowa City TRC's approach, distinguishing it from many other commissions. It intentionally fostered inclusive community engagement through public hearings, storytelling sessions, and targeted outreach efforts. These initiatives prioritized marginalized voices, ensuring lived experiences significantly shaped the commission's processes and outcomes. This inclusive strategy enabled a more authentic and representative reconciliation process.

5. Adaptability Amidst Structural and Procedural Challenges

Most traditional TRCs operate with clear mandates from national governments, backed by established institutional authority and structures, allowing them to navigate political challenges easily. The Iowa City TRC, conversely, confronted ongoing local political resistance, frequent leadership transitions, limited financial autonomy, and strict municipal oversight. Rather than causing its dissolution, these challenges prompted the Iowa City TRC to develop a highly adaptive and resilient operational model. Its persistence in creatively maintaining community engagement and advocacy for systemic reform despite procedural setbacks significantly differs from traditional commissions, which often benefit from centralized support and smoother bureaucratic navigation.

6. Distinctiveness in Local and Global Contexts

Overall, the Iowa City TRC's combined attributes—grassroots establishment, intersectional focus, restorative justice orientation, robust community involvement, and resilience against structural barriers—uniquely positioned it in local and global contexts. Its approach provided a valuable model of municipal-level reconciliation, illustrating how localized, community-centered commissions can effectively address both historical grievances and present-day systemic injustices, setting it apart from traditional, nationally driven TRCs.

7. Intersectional Approach to Marginalized Identities

Unlike many other TRCs that primarily focus on race or ethnicity as standalone categories, the Iowa City TRC deliberately integrated intersectionality into its operational framework. Traditional TRCs typically examine injustice from singular dimensions, such as racial or political violence, without explicitly considering how interconnected identities (e.g., gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, immigration, and disability) compound experiences of marginalization. In contrast, Iowa City's approach actively recognized identity's layered and interconnected nature, thereby facilitating a more inclusive, nuanced, and responsive reconciliation process. By explicitly including these multiple identities in its initiatives and recommendations, the TRC ensured a comprehensive and inclusive response recognizing the nuanced ways marginalized community members experience systemic oppression, making its reconciliation efforts uniquely thorough and sensitive.

By emphasizing localized truth-seeking, policy advocacy, and restorative justice, the Iowa City TRC set a precedent for other cities seeking to address racial injustices at the community level. Its work not only shed light on systemic inequities but also laid the groundwork for future initiatives to foster racial equity and reconciliation in Iowa City.

Challenges and Setbacks

In sum, the primary challenges faced by the TRC in starting its work were centered around bureaucratic delays, lack of organizational structure (e.g., no coordinator), and the need for

constant city council approvals. These systemic issues frustrated commissioners and hindered their ability to engage effectively with the community. The timeline of these challenges—from delays in facilitator proposals to structural recommendations for a coordinator—highlights the ongoing struggles to make tangible progress in the face of bureaucratic inertia.

1. Timeline and Challenges

The TRC faced multiple delays primarily due to bureaucratic processes and structural constraints. As noted, a significant delay occurred in late 2022, when proposals to hire facilitators and move forward with public hearings were stymied by administrative and approval processes. For instance, a proposal received by the city staff on November 20th, 2022, regarding facilitator services did not make it before the city council until January or February of the following year. The delay in approval was exacerbated by procedural steps that included the need to define the scope, services, and deliverables for the involved entities. This extended waiting period, at times, saw commissioners losing faith in the progress, with some feeling as though they were regressing to earlier stages of planning.

This delay was further complicated by the anticipation of council member vacancies, further slowing decision-making processes. The loss of council member Weiner in December 2022 meant that essential decisions, potentially subject to the input of a full seven-member council, were now dependent on only six council members. The resulting uncertainty about the composition of the council added another layer of complexity to the already slow-moving processes.

2. Procedural and Structural Barriers

One of the most significant structural barriers was the lack of a commission coordinator. While the idea of a dedicated coordinator was discussed in January 2022, it wasn't until later that the proposal was fully realized. Commissioners expressed a need for a point person to oversee the day-to-day activities, manage communication between the TRC and other city departments, and maintain momentum despite external obstacles. This position was essential for ensuring that the commission's work could move forward with some semblance of organization and without constant delays.

Additionally, the commission frequently conflicted with the city council over budget and approval delays. Financial decisions were required to go through city processes, meaning that even relatively small initiatives needed council approval, which could take months. These procedural delays were frequently cited as sources of frustration among commissioners, who found that they could not respond to the community's needs in real-time.

3. Response to Community Needs

The TRC's struggle to get started was also linked to an ongoing tension between the commission's goals and public expectations. Public criticism, particularly regarding the TRC's perceived inaction, sometimes created additional pressure. Yet, the commission often lacked the flexibility and autonomy to implement changes swiftly. As commissioners discussed during their meetings, they were caught between trying to address immediate concerns and waiting for approval to act. The tension between wanting to move forward with community initiatives and the necessity of waiting for formal approval created a dynamic where the TRC was unable to maintain the public's trust.

4. Lack of Formal Knowledge

One of the key challenges and setbacks the Iowa City TRC faced was the lack of formal knowledge among commissioners regarding their roles and expectations. Many commissioners expressed that they were not adequately informed about the specifics of the TRC's mission and the formal processes for executing their responsibilities. This lack of clarity led to confusion and delays in decision-making, which hindered the commission's ability to plan and execute its initiatives effectively. Without a clear understanding of their expectations and the framework within which they were to operate, commissioners struggled to align their efforts with the TRC's broader goals, ultimately slowing down the progress of the reconciliation work.

5. Leadership Instability

From its inception, the TRC faced significant leadership challenges. The inaugural chair, Royceann Porter, resigned amid misconduct allegations, leading to a temporary suspension of the commission by the City Council. Subsequent chairs, Mohamed Traore and Amel Ali, also stepped down, contributing to a lack of continuity and direction within the commission. This turnover disrupted the TRC's momentum and delayed the commencement of its core activities.

6. Strained City Council Relations

The TRC's relationship with the Iowa City City Council was often contentious. Commissioners voiced concerns over inadequate support and resources, leading to disagreements over funding and operational autonomy. These tensions culminated in Mayor Bruce Teague's proposal to dismantle the commission, highlighting the strained dynamics between the two entities.

7. Frustration and Burnout

The commissioners, faced with internal conflicts and bureaucratic delays, expressed frustration over their inability to fully address the systemic racial injustices in Iowa City due to the lack of financial independence and the failure to respond to community needs swiftly.

8. Community Backlash

Despite setbacks, the TRC's mission received significant community support, and public outcry followed each attempt by the City Council to disband the commission. Many saw the TRC as the last opportunity for genuine reconciliation.

For more information on the timeline and the challenges that the Iowa City TRC experienced, see Appendix 2.

The Path Forward

Despite these setbacks, the TRC remained a crucial initiative for advancing racial justice in Iowa City. As the commission continued its work, it prioritized sustaining community engagement, clear policy objectives, and accountability measures to ensure that its recommendations lead to meaningful change.

The success of the TRC depends on collective action from city officials, local organizations, and residents. By fostering a culture of truth-telling and restorative justice, Iowa City has the opportunity to serve as a model for other municipalities seeking to confront historical and systemic inequities. The work of the TRC is not just about uncovering past injustices—it is about building a future where racial equity is a lived reality for all residents.

Motivation Toward Commissioners' Involvement in the Commission

The Iowa City Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) commissioners joined the initiative, driven by a deep commitment to justice, equity, and community healing. Their motivations, as expressed in interviews that the writer of this report conducted with them, stemmed from both personal experiences with racial injustice and a broader desire to effect systemic change. Many commissioners shared that they had either witnessed or experienced firsthand the impacts of racial discrimination and systemic inequities, reinforcing their resolve to be part of a transformative process.

A recurring theme in the interviews was the belief in **the power of truth-telling and restorative justice** as essential tools for healing past and present harms. Commissioners expressed that participating in the TRC was an opportunity to create a structured platform for marginalized voices to be heard. For some, their involvement was fueled by a sense of duty to ensure that the TRC did not become a symbolic gesture but a catalyst for tangible policy change and meaningful reconciliation efforts in Iowa City.

Another key motivation was **commitment to community service and advocacy**. Several commissioners had prior experience working in social justice, legal, or activist spaces and saw the TRC as a natural extension of their lifelong commitment to racial justice. Others were inspired by the national movement following the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent protests, seeing the commission as a localized effort to address systemic racism in their community.

Additionally, commissioners were driven by a **desire to rebuild trust between institutions and communities of color**. Many cited the long-standing tensions between law enforcement and marginalized groups in Iowa City as a significant reason for their involvement. They saw the TRC as an opportunity to foster dialogue, hold institutions accountable, and advocate for racial equity policies.

Overall, the commissioners' motivations were rooted in a shared vision of justice, a commitment to amplifying unheard voices, and a determination to leave a lasting impact on the city's approach to racial reconciliation. Their participation in the TRC was about uncovering historical truths and ensuring that future generations inherit a more just and inclusive Iowa City.

METHODOLOGY

Background

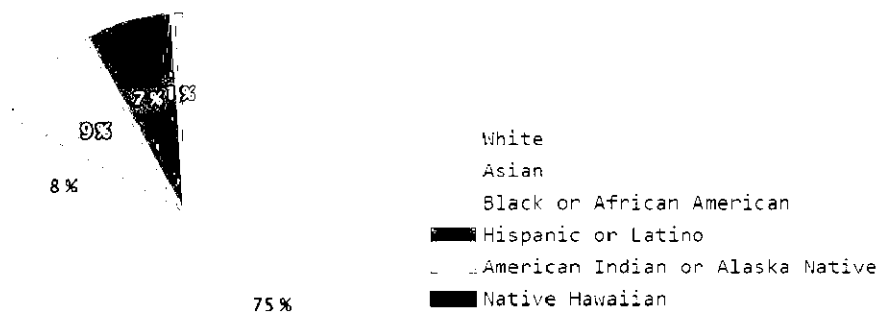
The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in Iowa City followed a methodological framework incorporating qualitative and quantitative approaches to fact-finding, truth-telling, and reconciliation events. The methodology aimed to bring together the community's lived experiences, promote healing, and foster justice through open dialogues. This framework incorporated structured and community-driven efforts with a blend of public hearings, storytelling, and facilitated dialogues.

The City of Iowa City Strategic Plan³ for the period 2023-2028 recognized among other things, - racial and income inequality- as one of the challenges preventing some individuals from reaching their potential in the community. The inequality challenge can be described as an environment where a combination of many factors including racial equity, social justices, and human rights is of fundamental *value* in explaining safety, well-being, and access to housing, education, and health care. In the spirit of the City Strategic Plan, the social environment where these *values* are realized requires sustaining neighborhoods which support economic development, freedom of expression and movement in Iowa City.

Maximizing these specific *values* requires policies, priorities, and plans informed by facts on the progress, gaps and obstacles in dismantling systemic racism, social injustices, bias and marginalization faced by the minorities. The population of Blacks, Hispanics and other minorities in Iowa City has grown and transformed the demographics of Iowa City. The diverse residents of Iowa City, whose experiences are under inquiry by the Iowa City Ad hoc Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is shown in the pie-chart below.

³ Strategic Plan (2022) Page 3, <https://www.icgov.org/home/showpublisheddocument/206/638696137570100000>

Iowa City Population Demographics



Source:

April 28, 2024

Iowa City Truth and Reconciliation Commission

According to the US Census Bureau⁴ (1980, 2010, 2023) the proportion of the population in Iowa City that is majority Non-Hispanic White formed 93.8 % in 1980, 78.7% in 2010 and declined to 72.4% in 2023⁵. Recent statistics (2022-2024) show that about 13.2% of the Iowa City population of 75,678 were born outside the country. In terms of diversity⁶ 9 % of the Iowa City population is Black or African American, 8% Asian, and 7 % Hispanic.

Demographic facts like *-the proportions of racial groups -* are not only important for demonstrating the presence of minority groups in Iowa City Neighborhoods, but is one of the popularly used concepts in the analysis of group representation in “events or issues of interest” to indicate evidence of or lack of bias or discrimination. In a traffic stops study, the measure does not necessarily signify bias⁷ as other factors can be responsible for the outcome e.g. driving behavior, vehicle types, driver licenses status etc. Another statistic – *odds ratio*⁸ - which not only measures changes in probability of events occurring, but considers the degree of association between events and groups. The existence of or lack of *disproportionality* in indicators of interest to TRC occupied discussions and analysis of the findings. Where possible, TRC discussed the

⁴ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/iowacitycityiowa/RHI125223>

⁵ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/iowacitycityiowa/PST045223>

⁶ <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/iowa-city-ia/>

⁷ <https://www.iowa-city.org/WebLink/DocView.aspx?id=2029774&dbid=0&repo=CityofIowaCity>

⁸ <https://www.iowa-city.org/WebLink/DocView.aspx?id=2029774&dbid=0&repo=CityofIowaCity>

odds⁹ that an event was more associated with and not necessarily caused by being a person of color.

The fact-finding exercises and the results of the findings by the Iowa City Ad hoc TRC reported here are guided by the City of Iowa City resolution 20-228¹⁰ of September 2020 pre-empted by an earlier resolution 20-159¹¹ of June 2020 addressing Black Lives Matter Movement and systemic racism as a response to call for action by protesters and residents regarding the death of George Floyd¹² in the hands of Minneapolis police. Such protests were worldwide but violent and intense in Minneapolis prompting the City of Minneapolis¹³ to act. The two-week protest¹⁴ in Iowa City over police brutality which resulted in a resolution¹⁵ after negotiations with the Freedom Riders Movement. was an important historical foundation of the TRC charges as a response to the urgent community racial justice needs.

Fact-finding, Truth-telling, and Reconciliation Events: Quantitative and Qualitative Conceptualization and Analysis of Effort, Achievements, and Gaps

The Iowa City TRC's methodology integrated fact-finding and truth-telling as foundational pillars. Through fact-finding, the TRC collected extensive testimonies from community members, stakeholders, and institutional representatives. This was done through public hearings, interviews, archival records, and community engagements. These efforts provided insight into the deep-seated racial injustices faced by marginalized communities in Iowa City, such as racial profiling by law enforcement, discriminatory practices in housing and employment, and disparities in education.

In the truth-telling process, the TRC allowed individuals to share personal narratives, which were viewed as a critical step toward collective healing and awareness. These individual and communal narratives highlighted the transformative power of being heard. Testimonies from community members not only shed light on the history of racial trauma but also offered opportunities for healing through collective action.

Quantitatively, the TRC made strides in reaching a broad audience through community forums, surveys, and public hearings. However, specific gaps were identified. One key limitation was the underrepresentation of some groups in these public spaces. Budgetary restrictions and bureaucratic challenges also constrained the hearings and events, which impacted the TRC's

⁹ Chris Barnum (2021). Iowa City Police Traffic Study. Brief Summary. Pg 7.

<https://www.iowa-city.org/WebLink/DocView.aspx?id=2029774&dbid=0&repo=CityofIowaCity>

¹⁰ [2020-09-15 TRC Resolution.pdf](#)

¹¹ <https://www.iowa-city.org/WebLink/ElectronicFile.aspx?dbid=0&docid=1949325&>

¹² <https://www.press-citizen.com/story/news/2020/06/02/iowa-city-protesters-march-against-police-brutality/5316852002/>

¹³ The City of Minneapolis passed a resolution in June 2020 calling for equity, truth and reconciliation through community engagement, research, and structural changes, later committing \$1.1 M towards funding a model which creates and sustain safety in the community. <https://www.thedmma.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Transforming-Community-Safety-Resolution.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://dailyiowan.com/2020/06/16/black-lives-matter-two-weeks-of-protests-in-iowa-city/>

¹⁵ <https://dailyiowan.com/2020/06/17/iowa-city-city-council-passes-resolution-addressing-iowa-freedom-riders-demands/>

ability to carry out its mission fully. Although the TRC provided a platform for marginalized voices, not all community members had equal access to participate in the process.

Comparison with Other TRCs Elsewhere: Iowa City TRC vs. Other City TRCs

The Iowa City TRC's methodology mirrored many foundational practices of other truth and reconciliation commissions (TRCs) worldwide. Like the TRCs in South Africa or Canada, the Iowa City TRC focused on providing a platform for victims of racial injustice to share their experiences and seek reparations. However, there were notable differences in how these commissions operated. Compared to other international TRCs, Iowa City's TRC faced more significant bureaucratic limitations and a lack of autonomous financial control, which slowed its ability to implement community-led initiatives quickly.

The approach taken by Iowa City was broadly participatory, with an emphasis on community-driven healing events such as storytelling sessions and cultural celebrations. Unlike other TRCs that may have had more direct institutional support or stronger mandates for policy reform, the Iowa City TRC's ability to influence local government was constrained. Its recommendations and initiatives were often subject to the city council's approval, which delayed implementation.

The comparison with the City of Iowa City's research initiatives revealed differences in approach, particularly regarding community-based research and policy influence. Research initiatives in Iowa City that focused on issues such as economic development, education, and housing were often driven by institutional actors and thus had more direct access to resources and funding. In contrast, the TRC's grassroots efforts were slower and more dependent on volunteer engagement, which created gaps in how quickly and effectively it could address community needs.

Evolution and Experiences of the TRC Process and Comparison to Other Methods

The Iowa City TRC methodology evolved as the process unfolded, incorporating lessons from the initial phases. Early on, the TRC focused heavily on gathering testimonies and building awareness. Still, it soon became evident that without sufficient community involvement and more targeted outreach, certain marginalized groups were underrepresented. This realization led to expanding outreach efforts and including more targeted events, such as school-based programs and specialized cultural events, aimed at reaching specific communities.

The TRC's methodology was adapted by incorporating alternative methods used in other TRCs. For instance, Iowa City's model echoed the TRC in Canada's focus on public hearings. Still, Iowa City also strongly emphasized restorative justice circles and facilitated dialogue. These circles allowed community members to address grievances in a less formal, more communal

setting. Learning from other TRCs, Iowa City also included components of restorative justice in their methodology, such as restorative circles with law enforcement and educators.

Lessons from other international models also influenced the Iowa City TRC, particularly in ensuring that the reconciliation process was not limited to victim testimonies but also involved the community in broader discussions about healing. This methodology was seen as groundbreaking in combining storytelling with action-based accountability and policy reform.

Identifying Themes and Strategic Planning

The TRC faced challenges in prioritizing focus areas due to the vast range of concerns brought forth by community members. With the help of the facilitators, commissioners utilized visual aids, like flip charts, to assist in capturing and organizing participant feedback during sessions. After identifying seven initial themes, facilitators recommended strategic prioritization, advising commissioners to focus primarily on three core issues to enhance effectiveness. The process for theme identification included the following:

1. **Data Analysis and Pattern Recognition:** After gathering testimonies, interviews, and archival materials, the TRC employed qualitative analysis techniques to identify recurring themes. The team categorized testimonies based on key issues such as law enforcement policies, economic disparities, housing discrimination, and educational inequities. A coding framework was developed to classify data into major thematic areas, ensuring consistency in analysis.
2. **Community Consultation and Feedback:** The TRC organized community meetings and feedback sessions to validate the identified themes. This participatory approach ensured that the commission's work remained rooted in the lived experiences of marginalized residents. The TRC adjusted its priorities based on community feedback, reinforcing the importance of inclusivity in its strategic planning efforts.
3. **Facilitator Guidance on Theme Prioritization:** Facilitators advised commissioners to concentrate strategically on three primary themes from seven identified. Public safety emerged as a crucial focus area following these guided deliberations.
4. **Strategic Planning Challenges:** One of the primary difficulties in strategic planning was the need to prioritize certain issues while recognizing that not all voices and concerns could be addressed equally. Strategic planning is inherently a business concept and applying it to a truth and reconciliation framework requires adapting it to ensure inclusivity. The commission ultimately prioritized three to four focus areas to maintain feasibility while addressing critical concerns. A key challenge was balancing immediate, actionable policy recommendations with the need for long-term systemic change.

Gathering Facts, Testimonies, and Reconciliation: Process and Methods

The Iowa City Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) employed a multifaceted approach to collecting testimonies and evidence, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of systemic racial injustices in the community. The primary data collection methods included:

1. **Public Meetings:** The TRC held multiple public hearings where community members could share their experiences of racial discrimination, police brutality, and systemic inequities. These forums provided an open and safe environment for individuals to voice their grievances and perspectives. Public hearings were recorded and transcribed for further analysis. The commission worked to ensure accessibility by providing interpreters, closed-captioning, and varied meeting times to accommodate diverse community members. See Table 1.
2. **Interviews:** To capture personal and institutional perspectives, the TRC conducted structured and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including victims of racial injustice, law enforcement officials, educators, and local government representatives. These interviews allowed for deeper insights into systemic issues and personal experiences that may not have emerged in public hearings. Additionally, efforts were made to reach out to historically marginalized groups, including non-English speakers and formerly incarcerated individuals.
3. **Archival Research:** Historical documents, government reports, and local media coverage were reviewed to establish patterns of racial discrimination and identify systemic inequities over time. This research provided a crucial context for understanding contemporary racial injustices within Iowa City. The TRC also examined past municipal decisions, housing ordinances, school policies, and employment records to identify institutional patterns contributing to racial disparities.
4. **Talking and Healing Circles and Focus Groups:** Community-based talking circles were organized to facilitate open discussions among residents. These discussions, rooted in restorative justice principles, encouraged storytelling, mutual understanding, and healing. Additionally, focus groups with specific demographic groups (e.g., native community members, youth, elders, Black community members, Latinx residents, and LGBTQ+ individuals) allowed for more targeted data collection. Healing circles provided emotionally supportive environments for participants to process trauma and foster collective community healing, ensuring sensitive topics were addressed compassionately. Lastly, healing circles provided emotionally supportive environments for participants to process trauma and foster collective community healing, ensuring sensitive topics were addressed compassionately. Talking circles, healing circles, and focus groups provided an informal yet impactful way to unite communities, offering emotional support while uncovering key themes related to injustice and healing.

Approach to Public Engagement and Data Collection

The Iowa City Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) organized several community events and cultural programs to engage residents in racial injustice dialogues and promote healing and reconciliation (See Table 1). Notable examples include:

1. **Fact-Finding, Truth-Telling, and Reconciliation Events:** The TRC hosted public sessions to gather data and personal narratives about racial injustice in Iowa City. These events featured facilitators, community meals, and support services to create a welcoming environment for sharing experiences.
2. **Community Meet-and-Greet Events:** As the TRC approached the end of its term, it organized meet-and-greet sessions to engage with community members directly. These

events provided platforms for residents to discuss systemic racism and contribute to the commission's final recommendations.

3. **Educational Workshops and Training:** The TRC collaborated with Think Peace: Learning and Support Hub to conduct workshops and educational events to inform residents about the history of racial injustice in Iowa City and the TRC's objectives. These sessions incorporated historical context, systemic analysis, and policy discussions. Topics included trauma-informed perspectives and comparisons of truth commission experiences in the U.S. and internationally.
4. **Healing and Reconciliation Events:** Community-driven reconciliation activities, such as cultural performances and interfaith dialogues, were designed to promote healing and unity. These events helped bridge divides and foster a sense of collective responsibility for addressing systemic injustice.
5. **Youth and School Engagement Programs:** Recognizing the importance of engaging younger generations, the TRC collaborated with schools to incorporate discussions on truth and reconciliation in curricula. School-based projects encouraged students to research local history and engage in dialogue about racial justice.
6. **Cultural and Community Activities:** The TRC actively participated in cultural events like the African Festival and Evening Night Outs in local parks, broadening outreach and community participation.
7. **Outreach Meetings under Truth and Reconciliation:** Structured outreach meetings were held across diverse community locations, aiming for comprehensive geographic and demographic coverage.
8. **Diversity Market:** Commissioners attended and participated in the diversity markets with community members to create awareness of the TRC and listen to community members.
9. **Meetings, Partnerships, and Collaborations:** TRC commissioners attended and participated in meetings with other City boards, commissions, and organizations in Iowa City.

Table 1 Summary of Ad Hoc TRC Activities

	<i>Year</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>2024</i>	<i>Total</i>
Public meetings		1	24	22	30	28	105
Training sessions				3	3		6
Circles					3	3	6
Truth-telling hearings					3		3
Community Outreach							
Tabling events						3	3
Specific communities						3	3
Meet & Greet						2	2
Yearly Totals		1	24	25	39	39	128

Demographics of Tabling and Meet & Greet Events

	Volunteers	BIPOC contacts		Non-BIPOC contacts		
Tabling events		<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
		<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>s</i>	
NNO/ NCJC (8/6/24) Wetherby Park	8	9	19	3	7	38
NCJC (8/18/24) Willow Creek	10	3	24	0	2	29
Latino Festival (8/24/24) Iowa City	10	15	11	1	2	29
African Festival (9/28/24) Iowa City	6	13	23	3	0	39
Meet & Greet (10/4/24) Iowa City Public Library				1	2	3
Meet & Greet (10/21/24)	2			1	2	3

Mercer Park						
Total (volunteers & contacts)	36	40	77	9	15	141

Commissioners’ Perspectives on the TRC Process

Personal Experiences and Reflections

Commissioners of the Iowa City Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) brought diverse experiences and insights to the process, shaping the commission’s work and engagement with the community. Many described their participation as both deeply meaningful and emotionally taxing.

Commissioner Gathua reflected on the emotional burden of participating in truth-telling sessions. As a BIPOC woman and longtime social justice advocate, she found the testimonies both validating and deeply painful.

“The whole Commission, the whole TRC work, it was really... a whole testimony of racial inequity publicly. So, yeah, it was painful work and at times, people, even commissioners themselves, would break down.”

— Commissioner Wangui Gathua

Commissioner Kiche spoke about the emotional weight of community expectations and the personal responsibility he felt to respond to stories of racial injustice in housing, law enforcement, and employment.

“It’s very emotional, and it can trigger a lot of bad things from your experiences as a person. It triggers bad experiences for other people because you are reminding them of trauma that they have faced. So, it’s a time when you are reminded of the trauma, but it’s also a time when you might derive some form of healing as a person.”

— Commissioner Amos Kiche

Commissioner Merritt shared that the lack of initial trust in the TRC made outreach challenging. She emphasized how fear and past harm made it difficult for community members to feel safe participating.

“...even though the TRC, we weren’t paid staff of the City of Iowa City— we were still an arm of the city. And when some of the problems people were bringing up had to do with parts of the city itself... I mean, you don’t necessarily go to the same person—or their boss—who may be part of the problem and then expect them to do something about it.

— Commissioner Lauren Merritt

Commissioner Dillard reflected on the internal and external challenges of doing grassroots reconciliation work under public scrutiny. She noted how difficult it was to maintain cohesion and move forward as a team.

“We tried to have events... talking to people we knew, going into the community... but it wasn’t the easiest thing to do, especially internally. Our commission was not on the same page.”

— Commissioner Chastity Dillard

Commissioner Mohamed voiced her frustration with the limited impact of the commission. Despite her dedication to community advocacy, she felt that the commission lacked coordination and momentum.

“Honestly, you know, TRC did not add anything to me... All we do is like meetings. I did not feel anything different... it’s just a title for me.”

— Commissioner Lubna Mohamed

Commissioner Simmons offered reflections on how participating in the TRC deepened his understanding of institutional barriers. He highlighted the emotional toll of confronting systemic exclusion through a justice lens.

“It also helped me understand, unfortunately, that our systems are designed in such a way to reject people being different, and that puts more personal pressure on me as an individual when a system itself doesn’t support differences amongst people”

— Commissioner Chad Simmons

Commissioner Tassinary, the only non-BIPOC member of the TRC, described his role as one of support and facilitation. He sought to center the work of others while helping the group move forward.

“I tried to keep everything moving forward... I was more there to be supportive of initiatives... not to push any particular agenda.”

— Commissioner Louis Tassinary

Positive Aspects of the TRC Process

Commissioners acknowledged several **positive aspects** of the TRC’s work despite the challenges.

1. Empowering the Community

Commissioner Dillard emphasized how the TRC opened new avenues for storytelling, especially for those whose voices had long been suppressed.

“I’m always been interested in storytelling, and I thought that would be a really awesome way to try to showcase and give a voice to people, because I’ve never really felt like much would actually change.”

— Commissioner Chastity Dillard

2. Restorative Justice Approaches:

Commissioner Kiche described how the use of healing circles created space for emotional release and mutual understanding within safe settings.

“You talk it out of your heart so that you share with other people... that usually tend to provide some form of healing... so that helped a little bit.”

— Commissioner Amos Kiche

Commissioner Tassinary reflected on the importance of healing circles led by Native American consultants, which allowed community members to speak their truth without fear of judgment.

“Each person had a time to talk... you were there to listen to their truth. That was a way to get everybody to feel comfortable expressing and listening.”

— Commissioner Louis Tassinary

3. Policy Influence and Institutional Learning

Commissioner Kiche believed that the TRC model provided tools for community-driven evidence gathering that could influence long-term policy.

“A commission of this nature makes you start to ask certain questions... how to derive recommendations from evidence, not just from the heart or feelings.”

— Commissioner Amos Kiche

Commissioner Tassinary added that a routine system of feedback from the public and researchers could shape real-time policy at the city level.

“Just like we have monitoring systems set up for potholes in the street or sewer issues, we need something set up that’s a constant monitoring for social and policy decisions and issues that are leading to consequences that we don’t like and would like to change. We need to be able to get ahead of these things, not always behind them”

— Commissioner Louis Tassinary

4. Increasing Visibility and Cultural Awareness

Commissioner Gathua emphasized how the inclusion of BIPOC commissioners and testimonies of racial injustice helped to surface hidden truths.

“At first, until, I think, August 2023, the commissioners were BIPOC, so for all of us, it was painful, and I am able to talk for them, because we voiced this periodically, and we shared even publicly... the whole Commission, the whole TRC work”

— Commissioner Wangui Gathua

Challenges Faced During the Commission’s Work

The TRC process involved a range of structural and interpersonal obstacles. Commissioners pointed to trust deficits, institutional resistance, internal discord, and emotional and logistical limitations that made truth-telling and reconciliation difficult.

1. Distrust from the Community

Commissioner Simmons described the lack of a secure environment as a key reason why marginalized community members were reluctant to speak openly.

“If the work required it to be taped in such a way it did not create a sense of security or a sense of confidentiality... it will never be confidential. So the location or the parameters in which you allow me to share can have an impact on whether I really can share or not.”

— Commissioner Chad Simmons

2. Lack of Institutional Cooperation

Commissioner Tassinary noted that city affiliation created legal limits around confidentiality, which hindered efforts to build trust and limited community participation.

“By being a commission that was part of the city, we really couldn’t guarantee confidentiality... if we had been a private organization, we could have done something very differently.”

— Commissioner Louis Tassinary

Commissioner Mohamed recounted her effort to engage voices from marginalized immigrant communities, such as Sudanese families, and her disappointment that their issues weren’t addressed afterward.

“I remember one of the Sudanese community... came with his daughter because I told him. But even when they expressed concern, it was not... negotiated again.”

— Commissioner Lubna Mohamed

3. Internal Conflicts

Commissioner Mohamed expressed her deep frustration with how disconnected and ineffective the TRC process felt. She cited a breakdown in internal communication and a lack of follow-up from other commissioners as major sources of disappointment.

“There is like, none of the member, you know, like asking what you're doing and what's the result and what is going on, you know... It was very frustrating for me.”
— Commissioner Lubna Mohamed

Commissioner Dillard also reflected on ideological differences within the commission that hindered collaboration.

“Our commission was not on the same page. People had different views of what we were supposed to be doing, and that was really difficult.”
— Commissioner Chastity Dillard

Commissioner Gathua described high-stress incidents that revealed how emotionally and logistically strained the process could become.

“It's been difficult. It's been painful... there was the incident... when a commissioner and one of the first facilitator team, they almost came to blows... If I hadn't physically come between them, they would actually have come to blows.”
— Commissioner Wangui Gathua

4. Resource Limitations

Commissioner Kiche emphasized that a lack of data, support, and time made community outreach and research efforts difficult.

“That was a limitation... when it comes to fact-finding when you cannot really get a good amount of data from the people you are supposed to represent or hear from.”
— Commissioner Amos Kiche

Commissioner Dillard pointed to structural barriers such as blacklisting and meeting spaces near law enforcement buildings that discouraged participation.

“We were meeting at City Hall, which is next to the police station, which many people have an issue with being by police officers... We attempted... to hold spaces in the community... But building trust... we were never able to, at least from my opinion, get to that point with the community”
— Commissioner Chastity Dillard

Commissioner's Reflections

Many commissioners noted that serving on the TRC had transformed their views on social change, the role of public institutions, and the emotional demands of justice work.

Commissioner Merritt offered a candid reflection on the personal growth she experienced through her service on the TRC. She spoke openly about the challenges of managing expectations—both her own and those of the community—and the importance of recognizing personal limits in the pursuit of collective justice. As she explained:

“I want to say, well, actually, biggest lesson I learned. I learned my limitations... I had grand ideas of what I wanted to see done and what I wanted to do... and I realized that... I do not help the cause by overextending myself... There's a trust that we're going to have to trust the people that we're working with... We don't all have to bear it on our shoulders... and we need to also ask for help.”

— Commissioner Lauren Merritt

Commissioner Simmons shared that the TRC clarified the systemic nature of exclusion and the personal pressure that comes with trying to intervene.

“It also helped me understand, unfortunately, that in our systems are designed in such a way to reject people being different, and that puts more personal pressure on me as an individual when a system itself doesn't support differences amongst people”

— Commissioner Chad Simmons

Commissioner Mohamed reflected on the commission's lack of follow-through and action, which discouraged her from believing in its potential.

“Honestly... when I saw those meetings... I feel like there is no hope from these commissions to do something... they know how the community is suffering.”

— Commissioner Lubna Mohamed

Lessons for Future Commissions

Based on their experiences, commissioners outlined several **key lessons for future truth and reconciliation efforts**:

1. **Stronger Institutional Support:** Future commissions should receive adequate funding, legal backing, and administrative support to ensure smoother operations.
2. **Greater Community Trust-Building:** It is essential to build relationships with marginalized communities before launching public hearings. More grassroots outreach and partnerships with local organizations can enhance credibility.

3. **Enhanced Confidentiality Measures:** Given concerns about retaliation, future commissions should have stronger confidentiality protocols to protect testimony providers.
4. **Structured Internal Governance:** The TRC faced internal conflicts and leadership challenges, which could be mitigated with clearer governance structures, defined roles, and better mediation processes.
5. **Long-Term Commitments:** Racial justice work cannot be completed in a short-term commission. Future efforts should integrate with long-term city policies and initiatives to ensure sustained impact.

FACT-FINDING

The Iowa City Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)'s fact-finding phase served as a vital bridge between lived experiences and systemic analysis. While the truth-telling phase centered on personal testimonies of racial harm, fact-finding focused on gathering institutional data, historical records, and community input to corroborate and contextualize those experiences. This work was conducted in partnership with the University of Iowa Public Policy Center, the University of Iowa Libraries, and the Iowa City Public Library, which supported archival research, policy analysis, and data collection. Community voices were further captured through interviews, surveys, and public forums designed to ensure that the fact-finding process remained transparent, participatory, and inclusive.

Crucially, the TRC's fact-finding work was supported by Native Partners, whose guidance helped ensure Indigenous perspectives and histories were honored and accurately represented. Healing Partners contributed to creating trauma-informed spaces for public dialogue. Kearns & West facilitated deliberative public engagement, while Think Peace Learning & Support Hub brought restorative justice expertise to the process. Two key events—the *Fact-Finding Community Briefing* (March 14, 2023) and the *Dialogue and Deliberation Session* (March 18, 2023)—engaged stakeholders from the Iowa City Police Department, Community School District, County Attorney's Office, and other public institutions. These collaborative efforts revealed entrenched racial disparities across multiple systems and laid the groundwork for truth-informed, justice-centered recommendations.

Process of Selection of Topics and Data Inquiry

Fact-Finding process involved trainings by a team of facilitators (Native Partners, Healing Partners, Kearns & West, and Think Peace & Support Hub) on all the three charges of TRC. Upon listing many topics the public was interested in, the Commission used a method called *Strategic Doing* to narrow down the topics to a few areas for consideration in fact-finding,

truth-telling, and reconciliation initiatives. These topics are listed in the Facilitators Final Report¹⁶ (page 6) as:

- Health
- Economic Development
- Environmental Justice
- Naming and Remembrances
- Public Safety
- Housing
- Education and Youth (both K-12 and higher education)
- Other (including language access, special needs/education, immigration, public improvements by sections of the city, etc.)

Due to the time constraints and other resources, TRC resolved to narrow down the list to three areas. Feedback from public meetings and interest from the community influenced TRC's decision to prioritize fact-finding exercises from a set of about seven topics to three, starting with *Public Safety* and then researching experiences with *Economic Development* and *Education*. TRC's work with the facilitator team on fact-finding ended after completing work on *Public Safety, Criminal Justice, and Law Enforcement (PSCJLE)*.

Initial Data Presentation: The initial findings on *PSCJLE* by the facilitator presented to the TRC for discussion in the TRC meeting included data/ indicators for the following issues.

- i. Police funding in relation to City of Iowa City budgets and in comparison, with cities of similar populations.
- ii. Police force: size and diversity in relation to cities of similar size and to the national average.
- iii. Disproportionate minority contacts and outcomes (traffic stops, arrest rates, excessive force use involving tasers, chemical sprays, impact weapons, K9 deployments, injuries, and killings).
- iv. Discrimination complaints and proportions upheld (general arrests and drug arrests in particular).

Additional Data Requested by TRC: Discussions on the initial findings sparked TRC inquiry on additional indicators and dimensions of racism, social injustices, and human rights pertaining to *PSCJLE*. These are contained in the TRC Packet 2 15 24 (agenda # 9) and enumerated here as:

1. Iowa City Police Department (ICPD) Crime data using Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI)/ Department of Justice (DOJ), offenses
 - Demographic data
 - o By ethnicity (data is already presented by race)

¹⁶ <https://www.iowa-city.org/WebLink/DocView.aspx?id=2199559&dbid=0&repo=CityofIowaCity>

- o Related to the Hispanic/Latin population.
 - o Related to Arab peoples and/or people of Middle Eastern origin.
 - o By nationality of victims and perpetrators
 - Find out where and how the demographic information attached to this data is generated—i.e., does an officer ask someone their nationality in the intake or contacts form?
2. Iowa City Police Department (ICPD) Approach to Law Enforcement
- Data to compare Iowa City and other college communities—like Urbana-Champaign, State College, and other Big 10 cities of similar size—rather than comparing Iowa City to all other locations.
 - Annotate the most recent Iowa City Police Department Budgets and highlight changes in expenditure related to Public Safety, Law Enforcement, and Criminal Justice against other City allocations.
 - Annotation of recent ICPD yearly data on crime rates and relating to police force
3. ICPD Police Violence and Lethal Force
- Identification of the types of arrest; where lethal, less lethal force or no force was used and the outcomes like physical injury and trauma and other forms of abuse, by gender of the person.
4. Statistical Requests
- Demographic data from the Iowa City Community School District "to compare population percentages with the most recent Census numbers for Iowa City. Use school district population proportions to map out ICPD contacts, reason for contacts/calls and outcomes to school youth.
 - Generating a heat map of calls for service by geography across the greater Iowa City area, e.g. to examine nearby areas outside of Iowa City like Coralville & North Liberty.
 - Description of the training related to racial equity and/or diversity that ICPD police officers have received.
 - Seeking insight from Chief Kron about how Coralville purposely sought minority and women applicants, and about training related to racial equity and/or diversity that he has requested or seen for his officers over the years.
 - Description of the relationship-building undergone by the Sioux City PD with the area's Native community, as well as the decolonization training the Natives have provided that PD.
 - Detailed demographic makeup of recruited candidates for the ICPD and the racial composition of the ICPD itself.
 - Qualitative data associated with Community Police Review Board (CPRB) complaints, e.g. notes taken by CPRB appointees.
 - Breakdown of complainants by race to the CPRB.

¹⁷ Report on Community and Police relations listening post of October 8, 2020 where attending community members mentioned the need to look at police calls in Iowa City Community School District.
<https://www.icgov.org/home/showpublisheddocument/867/638157030419830000>

- Catalog all the cases of Iowa City residents taking officers to court instead of registering complaints at the CPRB.
 - Index all cases of officers reporting other officers.
 - A breakdown by race of those calling the police.
 - A breakdown by race of the people who are the subjects of calls to the police¹⁸ “suspicious colored people” and what is reported as happening.
5. Non-Statistical Information Requests
- Report on the level of cooperation by ICPD, Community Police Review Board (CPRB) regarding each request made.
 - Report on areas where State regulations are a barrier to minority experiences data collection, use, and publication with regard to public safety and law enforcement.
 - Report on the availability of the University of Iowa Public Policy Center Study using ICPD data collected over many years.
 - Repeat all analyses done for the Iowa City PD for U of Iowa Public Safety and the Johnson County Sheriff’s Department.

Analysis of Issues, Facts and Findings.

The analysis involves data presented to the TRC meeting of February 15, 2024) and the response data presented in 2 other TRC¹⁹ meetings held with facilitator Kearns & West on March 14, 2024 and March 18, 2024. The issues and findings are summarized using indicators. We indicate whether data was available, and the implications of the data to the question posed by the public or the TRC: Relevant data needs are also indicated.

The next sections present law enforcement indicators, results and discussion of implications on experiences of colored people. Discussions and implications of the results are presented in indented paragraphs.

1. The City of Iowa City Police Department (ICPD) Crime and Arrests Rates.

Crime statistics are collected and kept using Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) guidelines and are summarized as more serious group A offenses including theft, assault, robbery/burglary and fraud, but less serious offences mostly involving alcohol like intoxication, OWI, DUI are considered group B offences and are collected through arrests and not incidents. These crime

¹⁸ Report on Community and Police relations listening post of October 8 in 2020, where attending police officers mentioned that “calling on suspicious persons of color is a real phenomenon”.

<https://www.icgov.org/home/showpublisheddocument/867/638157030419830000>

¹⁹ Data archived under May 16, 2024 TRC meeting:

<https://www.iowa-city.org/WebLink/DocView.aspx?id=2199559&dbid=0&rcpo=CityofIowaCity>

statistics are presented in two tables from the City of Iowa City report²⁰ obtained from ICPD/FBI.

GROUP A CRIME INCIDENTS	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	% Change of 2019 total over previous 4 yr. avg.
Larceny/Theft Offenses	1,519	1,221	1,436	1,130	1,081	-19%
Assault Offenses (Aggravated, Simple, Intimidation)	729	800	786	771	889	+15%
Fraud Offenses	608	598	571	528	583	+1%
Drug/Narcotic and Drug Equipment Violations	545	416	518	654	663	+24%
Destruction/Damage/Vandalism	488	628	516	386	424	-16%
Burglary/Breaking & Entering	398	299	338	299	367	+10%
Motor Vehicle Theft	83	95	87	114	81	-15%
Sex Offenses	87	88	64	100	92	+9%
Weapons Law Violation	20	24	49	35	63	+97%
Robbery	34	46	56	32	32	-24%
Embezzlement	20	17	21	13	10	-44%
Kidnapping/Abduction	5	7	9	13	23	+171%
Stolen Property Offenses	7	11	11	12	11	+7%
Extortion/Blackmail	1	6	7	7	7	+33%
Pornography/Obscene Material	3	4	7	5	10	+111%
Prostitution Offenses	1	13	2	3	7	+47%
Arson	3	1	5	2	3	+9%
Homicide Offenses	0	0	4	0	1	0%
Bribery	0	1	0	0	0	-100%

GROUP B CRIME ARRESTS	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	% Change of 2019 total over previous 4-year avg.
OWI, DUI, or Operating w/ Controlled Substance Present	601	691	588	602	590	-5%
Public Intoxication	801	762	539	435	465	-27%
Driving License + Registration Violations	486	489	437	418	534	+17%
Under 21 in a bar after 10pm	296	298	268	305	791	+171%
Liquor Law Violations (Unlawful drinking locations, open container, PAULAs, providing alcohol to a minor, etc.)	359	364	427	356	208	-45%
Interference (includes interference causing/intending injury)	226	261	184	228	248	+10%
No Contact, Abuse, Stalking Protective Order Violations	132	120	153	137	152	+12%
Disorderly Conduct	156	171	121	121	119	-16%
Criminal Trespass and Trespass Injury/Damage	166	124	132	105	108	-18%
Use of Another's ID or Providing False Identification Info	110	75	54	71	93	+20%
Possess. Suspended, fake, or altered ID	66	82	71	62	91	+30%
Disorderly House	105	90	47	62	46	-39%
Harassment (2nd Degree, 3rd Degree, of Public Official)	44	27	38	45	49	+27%
Urinate in Public	72	49	21	21	38	-7%
Neglect / Endangerment of a minor	22	26	20	35	45	+75%

Data on the incidence of offences by racial groups for the period 2012-2016 shows disproportionate offences by Blacks.

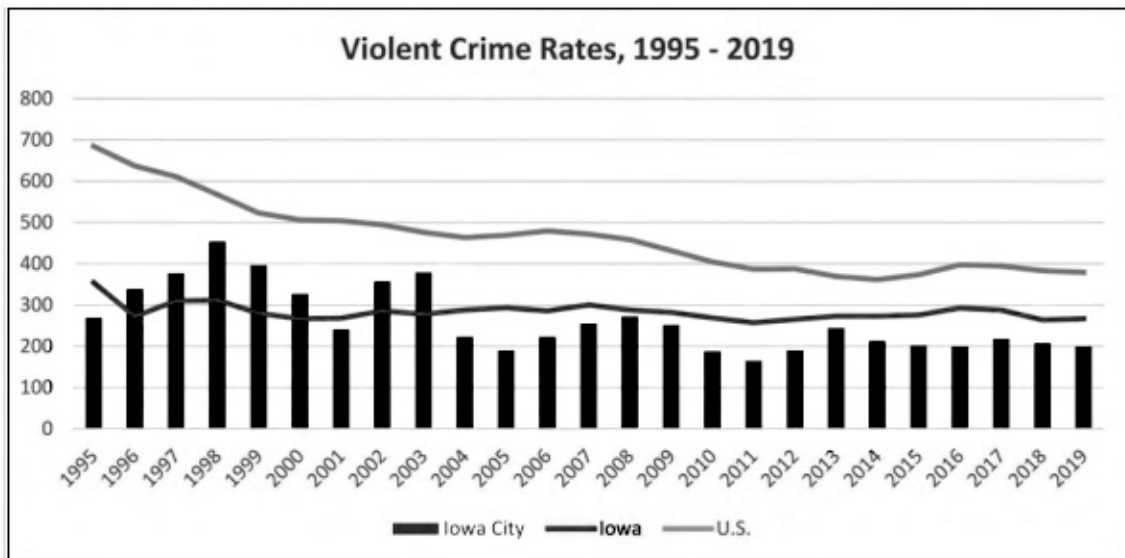
Data on victims of the offences by racial groups is missing. Such information can be used for offender race analysis, victim race analysis, and for designing prevention strategies. For example,

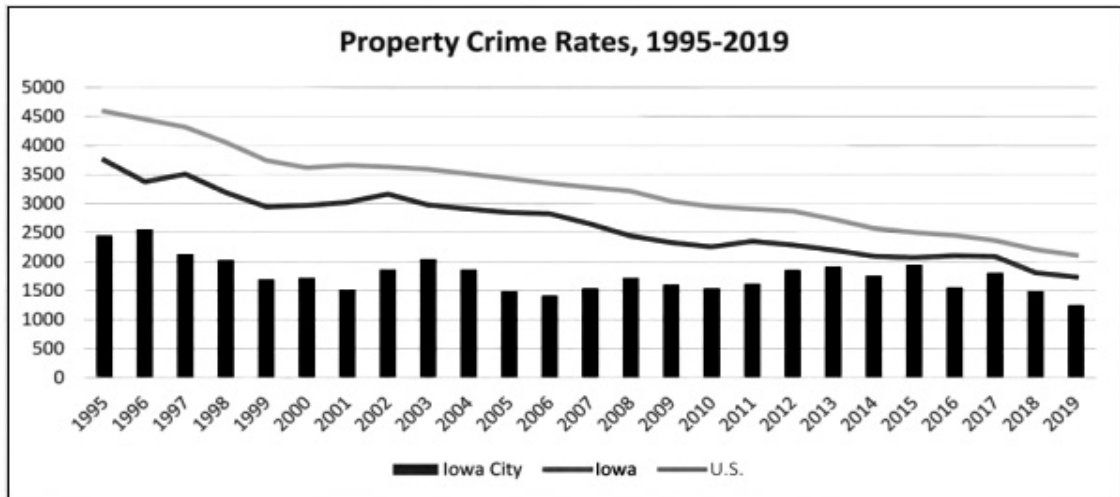
²⁰ Restructuring the Iowa Police Department (2020). A preliminary plan to accelerate community policing: <https://www.iowa-city.org/WebLink/0/edoc/1971827/Preliminary%20Plan%20to%20Restructure%20the%20Police.pdf>

minorities and other communities may worry about the incidence of hate crimes and want to know the sources and the groups different types of hate crimes are directed to. During the Covid-19 pandemic there was an escalation of hate crimes towards people of Asian origin. Immigrants and refugees experience hate and discrimination offences, which are rarely reported because of fear and lack of knowledge of their rights.

a. ICPD crime and arrests trends, and data indicating racial proportions in crime and arrests

The FBI statistics on property and violent crimes shows that Iowa City is a safe place if compared with the state of Iowa and US in terms of crime rates.





Data (FBI/DOJ) on offenses and arrests for the period 2012-2016 was presented to the TRC.

White	2,540	44%	75.9%
Black or African American	3,023	52%	8.5%
American Indian or Alaska Native	4	.0007%	0.3%
Asian	52	.009%	7.9%
Native Hawaiian	0	0%	0%

Source:

https://www.fbi.gov/wanted/press-releases/2017/06/2017-crime-in-iowa

4

26

Crime Rates: During the period, Whites who are 75% of the population were responsible for 44% of all crimes. Blacks or African Americans who are only 8.5% in the population committed disproportionately higher rates of crimes at the rate of 52%.

Arrest Rates: Whites arrest rate is almost proportional to the population proportion, while blacks are almost twice as likely to be arrested and Asians are less likely to be arrested compared to their population benchmarks.

Hispanics were excluded from the proportions Table. Data on the race of victims was not presented, either because it is not being collected or ordered by FBI/DOJ. It is not clear why the period 2012-2016 was

selected by facilitators for reporting despite available data on crime going back to 1995 up to 2019

b. ICPD Police force size, growth, and comparisons to similar police jurisdictions and campuses like urban-Champaign, Big 10 Universities and Iowa State University ²¹

With a population of 77,390 Iowa City has 85 officers and 23 civilians. Compared to another city with 77306 having 142 officers and 94 civilians. Iowa City officer rate of sworn positions of 1.13 per 1000 people is lower than that of Big Ten communities (1.48) officers, four large cities of Iowa (1.59). The total force of sworn officers grew from 81 (2010) to 85 (2020) officers while the rate per 1000 populations declined from 1.19(2010) to 1.13 (2020). The civilian staff count remained constant at 23 persons until in 2020 when it grew by 2.3 staff due to innovations in data systems, health and community engagement needs.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total Police Employees	104	103	103	105	105	105	105*	105	107	107	109.26*
Sworn Positions	81	80*	80	82*	82	82	82	82	84*	84*	84
Sworn Positions per 1,000 Population	1.19	1.16	1.14	1.15	1.13	1.12	1.10	1.08	1.11	1.12*	--

Compared to other police departments, data shows lower officer force size and insignificant growth, the officer rate per 1000 people fairly constant and even declining over the ten-year period.

2013-2021 ICPD Police Scorecard²²: The higher the percentage the better the score.

Overall Funding-73% with budgets per capita at a good high 90% among 156 police departments. *Accountability* -31% with misconduct complaints being held at 51% excessive force complaints upheld 4%. *Police violence*-48 % with force used per arrest at low 28%, deadly force per arrest better at 68%. *Approach to law enforcement*- 43%. Data on racial disparities in deadly force, misconduct settlements, criminal misconduct complaints upheld, unannounced victims of deadly force is missing from the Scorecard.

c. City funding and allocations in comparisons to other police departments and the national average.

Total departmental budget growth from \$11.043 (2010) M to \$15.758 M (2020) can be accounted for by other factors like inflation and administrative changes. Statistically²³, changes in police

²¹ Restructuring the Iowa City Police Department December 2020.

<https://www.icgov.org/home/showpublisheddocument/867/638157030419830000>

²² <https://policescorecard.org/ia/police-department/iowa-city>

²³ Regression estimation results show Adj R-squared = 0.8071, correlation coefficient r=0.9. Effect coefficient b=0.87729 and statistical significance p=0.00.

force size accounts for 80.7% of the variation in ICPD expenditure and is highly correlated with allocations. In 2024 Iowa City expenditure on public safety was 39% compared to 51% in similar sized cities and 44% in the State of Iowa. On funding, the per-capita distribution curve of ICPD shows a level which is more than 10% of other 156 departments used in the police score card ratings. Revenue allocation to ICPD increased by only 3.1% for the period 2010-20 indicating negligible to modest law enforcement additional needs implications on Iowa City budgets due to sustained average annual violent crime rate of 200 cases and property crime rate between 1500 (2020) and 1250 (2020) cases. Both the violent and property crime rates are lower than the State of Iowa and the US rates.

Total Department Budget (millions)	11.043	11.342	12.350	12.692	13.217	13.016	13.457	13.827	14.847	15.319	15.758
Department Budget as a Percentage of City General Fund	21.68%	21.39%	25.65%	24.04%	24.42%	24.02%	24.29%	23.88%	24.59%	24.49%	24.78%

d. Diversity, recruitment, and training.

The 2022 ICPD Diversity report indicates a total of 79 officers and 70 of them White which is 88.6 % in a population that is 75% white and are over-represented. Others are 1 male Asian /pacific Islander (1.3% in a population that is 7%), 5 Blacks all male (6.3% in a population that is 9% and are under-represented, 3 Hispanics, 2 are male (3.6% in a population that is 7% and are under-represented. In terms of gender, 86.1% of officers are male. Despite improvements in recent years, slight disproportional representation of minorities exists at the ICPD in terms of gender and race. Data shows no female Black or Asian and this trend continued in the next round of hiring in 2024 where no Black female or male was hired.

Disproportionality Question. Does diversity improve law enforcement outcomes for minority groups and for the entire department? Studies show that policing has struggled with diversity

due to historic distrust, dislike of misconduct of police, and strained relations with communities of color. Recruitment, hiring and retention are variables that affect the proportion of police department that are made up of minorities. “Diversity in policing can improve civilian interactions”. This is a result from a Chicago police departments study of 7000 officers (Princeton Researcher²⁴). The report by US DOJ ²⁵ report on barriers and impact of diversity in law enforcement finds benefits to the workforce and the community, but out of caution the study recommends more empirical studies on this subject across and within different departments.

Sworn Personnel Demographics

	Asian/Pacific Islander	Black	White	Hispanic	Total	Percent
Male	1	5	60	2	68	86.1%
Female	0	0	10	1	11	13.9%
Total	1	5	70	3	79	-
Percent	1.3%	6.3%	88.6%	3.8%	-	-

Source: Iowa City Police Department 2021 Annual Report

1. *Recent Hiring Results:* The CALEA²⁶ report /ICPD (2021) puts the force at 73% White, 18% Hispanic, 9% others and 0 % Black. The same report on applications and hiring shows that in 2021 Whites constituted 70% of all applicants, Hispanics 6%, Black males 0 % and Black females 2%. On hiring 45% was Hispanic, 5% was White and 0% Black was hired.

In a scenario where Black applicants exist, the CALEA/ICPD data of 2022-2024 can help answer the question of -what if the pool of minority applicants especially Blacks are not making it through the process as was the case with 2 Black females in 2021?

²⁴ [Diversity in policing can improve police-civilian interactions, say Princeton researchers](#)

²⁵ [Executive Summary of Advancing Diversity in Law Enforcement Report](#)

²⁶ CALEA stands for Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies.

Consider transitions and proportions of the racial groups. The proportions can increase or decrease at each level of selection depending on the performance of applicants on all tests. The table shows that White's starting proportion was 60% less than the Iowa City baseline of 75%, but Black and Hispanic applicants represented more than their baseline proportions at 14% out of 9% and 12% out of 7% general populations respectively. The rate of applications by a group can signal interest in policing. After performing better in other stages of the hiring stages, the Black group lost only 2% points, Hispanics lost 5% points, Asians sustained their starting proportion of 2% but the Whites gained 5% points.

The table compares rates of transition of 276 applicants to ICPD officer positions to a final certified hiring list of 41 from which 3 new White officers ²⁷were hired and welcomed in August 2024.

Table: Changes in Proportions by transitions through different levels of candidate tests

	ICPD/ CALEA 2022-24				
	%	%	%	%	%
	applicants	written test	interviewed	physical fitness	certified hiring list
Whites	60	35	72	59	65
Blacks	14	14	10	9	12
Hispanic	12	12	4	11	7
Asians	2	2	3	7	2
Others
% total	100	100	100	100	100
Total applicants	276	92	61	44	41

According to the calculated proportions of interest to apply, Blacks and Hispanics over-achieved compared to the Whites who gained during the interviews and in the certified hiring list but many dropped after the written test. Asians gained during the interviews and in the physical test. This result indicates that the excuse of – minorities are not making it- can be misleading and discouraging minorities from applying to such positions.

There was no historical data that would indicate changes in diversity of the ICPD despite information on the force size for 2010 to 2020. Time series data can help inform research on past policies and structural changes.

²⁷ [Iowa City Police Department welcomes three new officers at Emma Harvat Hall ceremony](#)

Does training improve implicit bias, racial preferences, and racial profiling? Does training change the behavior of officers?

The question of how race is considered during a hiring process was raised. How effective are the strategies used for recruitment of officers? Information on the test rankings including race and gender of the final list of the 41 persons was not provided. This could have helped the commission learn about the positions to be filled, whether low level or senior level for which the minorities are likely to be disadvantaged.

ICPD talks to other police departments like Coralville and Sioux City to get more minority applicants. In Coralville they use strategies to improve diversity like seeking advisors, pursuit of identified candidates, wide advertisements, high school mini academy, collaboration with NAACP, and support on entrance exams. The Sioux City department relies on the Native advisory council, join in formal and informal events to develop and strengthen relationships, and discuss mistrust, work with community cultural liaison, instill a culture of inclusion, respect privacy and property, and engage in cultural competency training. Bonuses and other flexibilities like-when to take the exams have been used by the ICPD.

2. *Equity Training:* Between 2013 and 2019 the ICPD engaged in police legal sciences training and MATS. A total of 15 different training sessions were attended by officers in the following *areas*; Implicit bias (bias-based policing) = 6, Racial profiling =1, diverse communities =2, LGBTQ and diversity focus=2, Fair policing=2, justice and disparities=1, cultural competency =1.

The 4 captions discussing training taken by officers shows a list of courses.

The lists are incomplete in terms of the determination of minimum required number of officers the training is intended for and the number who have taken the training.

Past and Annual Trainings

In recent years, the Department has focused on expanding training opportunities for its staff beyond traditional law enforcement topics. Examples of recent trainings include topics such as:

- Strengthening Relationships with LGBTQ+ Communities
 - Diversity Focus
 - Mental Health for Veterans
 - Cultural Competency
 - Mental Health
 - Ethics
 - Bias-Based Policing/Racial Profiling
 - Fair and Impartial Policing
 - Alzheimer's & Autism
 - Crisis Intervention
 - De-Escalation
 - Effective Communication with Aggressive, Mentally Ill, and Emotionally Disturbed Individuals
 - Developmental Disabilities and Dementia
 - Consequences and Impacts of Police Interactions on Minority Communities
 - Responding to and Investigating Hate Crimes
-
- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Active Shooter Response Training (ALICE)• Alcohol safety• Bartenders and server awareness (TIPS)• Fraud prevention• ICPD 101• De-escalation• Self Defense | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hate Crimes• Personal Safety• K9 Presentations• Child Abuse & Domestic Violence Law• Social Media Safety• Bike Rodeos/Bike Safety• Distracted Driving• Crisis Intervention• Internet Crimes Against Children |
|---|--|

2018

- Conference on Crimes Against Women – 3 staff, 3 community partners (CPs)
- End Violence Against Women International Conference – 3 staff, 3 CPs
- IACP First Line Supervisor Training on Violence Against Women – 2 staff
- National Center for Victims of Crime Conference – 1 staff
- Battered Women's Justice Conference – 1 CP
- 6th Annual Technology Summit – 1 staff, 1 CP
- IACP Annual Conference – 5 staff
- Vicarious trauma training - 16 staff, 39 CPs

2019

- Trauma Informed Sexual Assault training – 1 staff
- Iowa Sex Crimes Investigator's Association conference – 6 staff
- Family Justice Alliance Conference – 10 staff, 2 CPs
- Conference on Crimes Against Women – 8 staff, 4 CPs
- End Violence Against Women International Conference – 10 staff, 2 CPs
- Nat'l Bilingual Sexual Assault Conference – 1 staff, 2 CPs
- FBI Human Trafficking training event – 6 staff, 9 CPs
- Trauma Informed Victim Interview training – 1 staff
- IACP Leadership Institute – 2 staff
- Nat'l Sexual Assault Conference – 3 staff
- Predominant Aggressor training – 1 staff
- Domestic Assault Response event – 1 staff, 5 CPs
- Strangulation training – 16 staff, 8 CPs
- Stalking training – 12 staff, 4 CPs
- General training on grant topics – 36 staff
- Trauma Informed Investigation – 13 staff, 21 CPs
- LGBTQ+ training – 13 staff, 1 CP
- Drug and Alcohol Facilitated SA and Title IX training – 22 staff, 27 CPs
- Victim Rights training – 12 staff, 6 CPs

These trainings have impacted law enforcement outcomes like disproportionality in stops, arrests etc. Studies have questioned the effects of training alone, if not accompanied with internal reviews and disciplinary action on violators for which information was not provided as suggested by the NYPD ²⁸study;

²⁸ Police training on implicit bias [NYPD Study: Implicit Bias Training's Effect On Policing Unclear : NPR](#)

NYPD Study: Implicit Bias Training Changes Minds, Not Necessarily Behavior

SEPTEMBER 10, 2020 • 5:00 AM ET



Martin Kaste

The City of Iowa City passed ordinances on unbiased policing and has considered plans to restructure the department. With the help of CPRB ICPD has reviewed policies on use of force, use of body-cameras, in-car recorders, and juvenile procedures.

The proportion of the force which has completed each category of training was not provided and whether information learned from workshops, conferences by one or a few officers was disseminated to the rest of the force during the period 2013 to 2020 on topics like disabilities, mental health impacts of police on children and adults exposed to violent arrests or encounters and the police officers themselves. The proportion of officers receiving training on stress management among officers, trauma among victims of crime or arrests is missing. The proportion of officers trained on crime prevention, injury prevention and de-escalation tactics recommended by law enforcement organizations, and the US DOJ is also missing.

In a TRC truth-telling session (March, 2024) a grandparent narrated the experiences of his grandson after an encounter with the ICPD exposing him to trauma. The child remains traumatized. Minority youth in Iowa City Community Schools District who experience disproportionate encounters with police can suffer long-term psychological effects.

An understanding of the experiences of new arrivals, immigrants, refugees in Iowa City with law enforcement and their knowledge of their rights, laws, regulations and justice in areas like child neglect and abuse, domestic violence, etc.

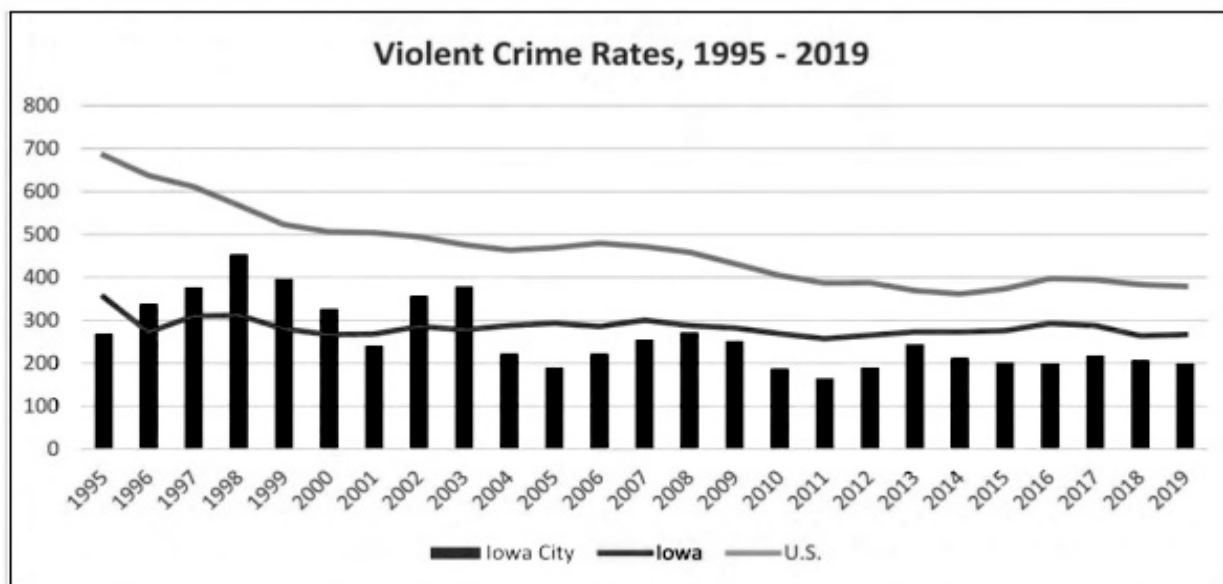
There is no research or information on the social, economic and mental health impacts of disproportionate police stops in neighborhoods predominantly occupied by minorities. No information on compliance with regulations, and evaluation of

training on behavior²⁹ among officers through internal surveys data or complaints by the public.

e. Police force size and crime rate. ICPD bending the crime curve or not?

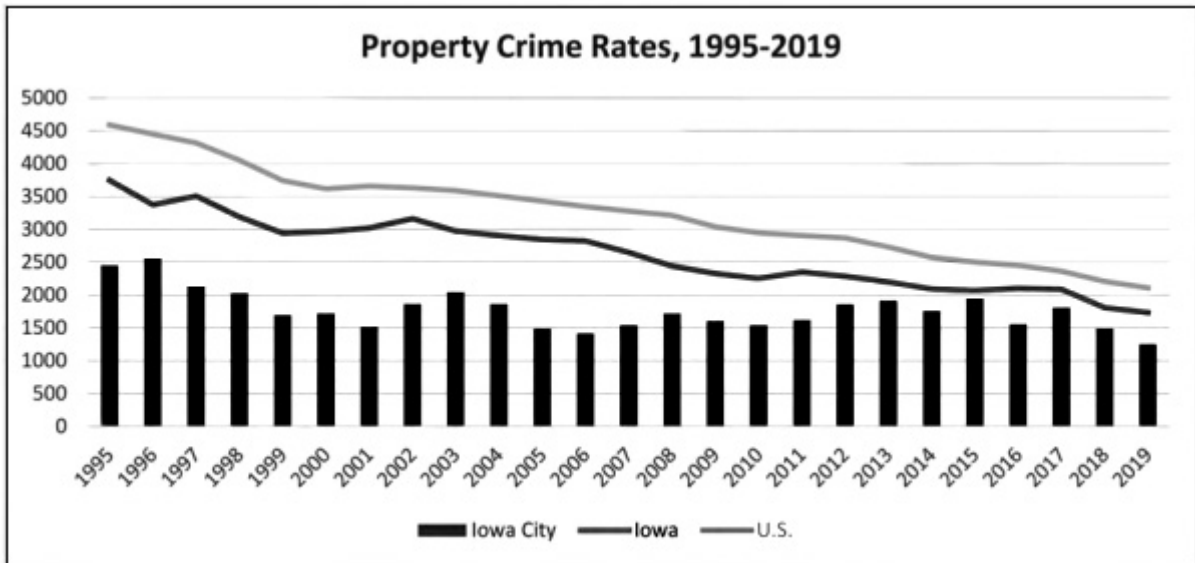
There exists a negative relationship between crime rates and police force in Iowa City. Does increase in crime rates call for more hirings or boosting presence and patrols through re-allocation? And what other crime prevention strategies are being adopted by the City of Iowa City?

The ICPD policy on increased presence and creation of a sub-station in South District³⁰ Neighborhood of Iowa City was associated with a decline in crimes between 2010 and 2019 despite the small increase in officer size by 2 persons. There were community complaints, fear and restricted freedom of movement by youth and adults associated with increase in stops in the area. The then Police Chief Jody Matherly after getting many complaints said – *it served the purpose but it is an old style of policing which can create a bad perception of safety and crime in the area*-. Perceptions of crime in an area can negatively affect property values and new business developments.



²⁹ Police training on implicit bias [NYPD Study: Implicit Bias Training's Effect On Policing Unclear : NPR](#)

³⁰ [Iowa City chief proposes closing police substation on south side | The Gazette](#)



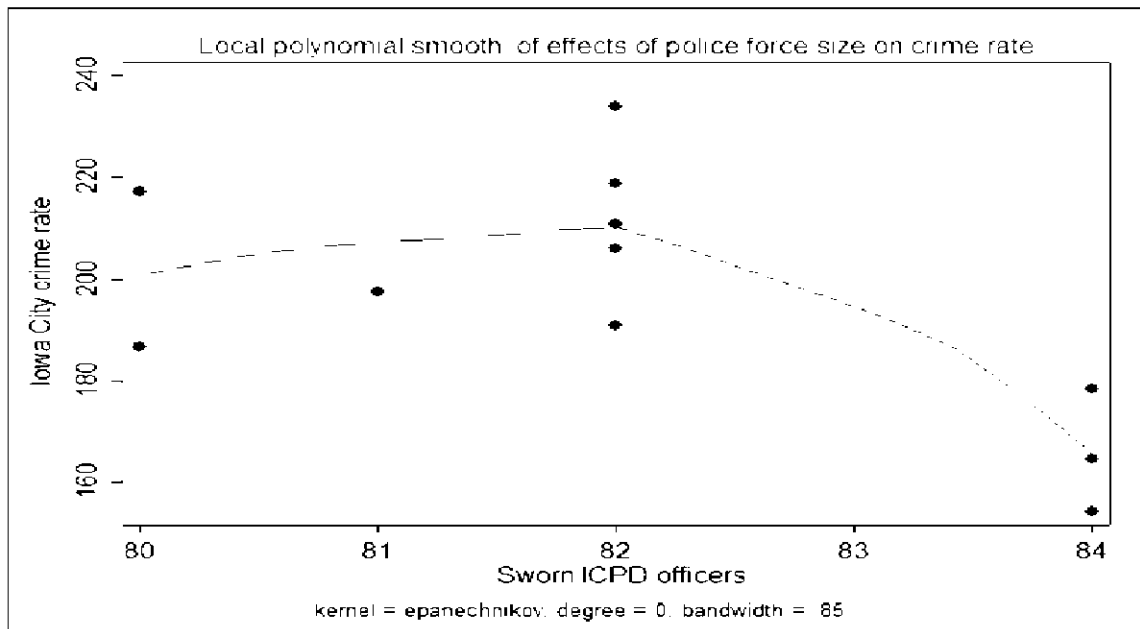
Analysis of data presented to the TRC for the period 2010-2020 shows that increasing police force is negatively associated with a decrease in total crime rate by 9 points for every addition of an officer during the 10-year period (graph). Despite the statistically significant estimates at 5%, police force accounts for only 27% of the story. Graphically, such an effect was realized after increasing size to 84. The effectiveness of police force on deterrence has been documented by many studies. Police size may differ across communities and cities of similar size due to changes in crime rate as a result of changes in the behavior of people, changes in socio-economic circumstances, changes in policies and changes in costs associated with doing crime. Another factor to test in the model would be the changes in the demographics of Iowa City over time.

The commission raised a question on the relationship between police force size and crime rate in Iowa City in relation to over-relying on the comparison between ICPD police size with other cities of similar size. The question is relevant to revenue allocation decisions and impacts. There are cities with smaller populations but high crime rates and as a result their police force may be higher compared to other cities. There are also cities with higher populations but low crime rates and low police force size. Care is needed in the use of the concept -cities of similar size- to rationalize the force size.

Data from the ICPD indicates that the size of force of 82 and other factors turned the crime rate in Iowa City around. The inverted U-shaped curve is what is expected, and increases in police force beyond 84 can occur until a threshold plateau is reached. At such a point any additional officers are

costing the city more money for little marginal returns in terms of reduction in crime rate and responding to non-crime community calls and needs

Figure: Relationship between police force and number of crimes



Additional information is needed to know what will happen with any additional increases in the number of officers in the next few years.

How is the increased demand for non-crime related services taken into account in police force size determination? Variables like calls for service load may be considered in decisions about police size to avoid negative impact from burn-out.

What are the un-intended consequences to community perceptions of the police department and neighborhood development.? Did the rate of traffic stops reduce in the South District area after 2019 when ICPD believed the sub-station had successfully reduced crime rate in the area? No data exists to study the question.

- f. **Composition of police force in relation to specialized community functions of ICPD (outreach, mental health, homelessness etc.)**

The ICPD had a civilian unit consisting of an average of 23 members for the period 2010-20. According to the ICPD annual report of 2022 the ICPD has worked with community organizations, the CPRB and the NAACP on community policing projects and recommended changes. Participation in these activities is listed in the caption below.

Community Outreach

- **1 Sergeant**
- **1 Neighborhood Response**
- **1 Community Relations**
- **2 Downtown Liaisons**
 - **2 Community Outreach Assistants**
 - **2 Community Mental Health Liaisons***
 - **4 Chaplain Volunteers**

g. Minority immigrants and refugee community engagement with ICPD and outcomes:

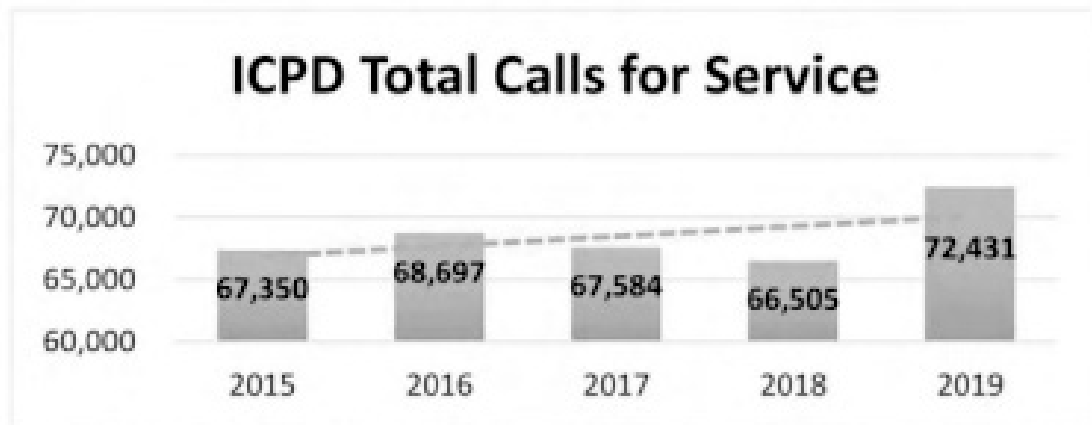
The ICPD engages in listening posts, community liaisons for the general population and for the immigrant and refugee populations. The community still suffers lack of services regarding advocacy, knowledge of their rights and justice in many areas. Language interpretation is one of the needs often mentioned as critical in the administration of their cases with law enforcement personnel. The killing of an immigrant in Iowa City by an ICPD officer still traumatizes immigrants, as a case where other options could have been used and also as a problem of lack of understanding other cultures, including mental health sensitivity.

There are no specific statistics on events held with immigrant communities regarding law enforcement and rights. Data on cases and types of problems for calls or outreach is either missing or aggregated with other statistics on service calls and community outreach. Moreover, data on the race of the caller and the victim are not being collected.

2. ICPD Calls for Service (CFS) from the Community and from Homeless Persons.

According to the City of Iowa City report, about 54% of calls are from the public and officers also initiate calls regarding traffic, compliance and community policing. The report indicates arrest and citation rates of about 10%. Calls for service (CFS) increased in 2019 (77,626) from the average of 70,000 calls (2015-18) due to Covid-19 Pandemic but declined to an average of

66,000 calls. On average 54 % of calls are initiated by the public. The calls can be associated with outcomes like use of force, arrests, injuries, citations, warnings, vehicle removal and no action.



Police officers in attendance:

- Calls about "suspicious" persons of color are a real phenomenon. Officers respond to all calls for service, but if supervisors hear this type of call, they will often direct the officer to just drive by and assess if there is a threat and not make contact.
- Gaps: Only supervisors can give this direction, and they aren't able to hear every call that comes in. Impossible to know the perspective or motivation of the caller, therefore it can be difficult to make a judgement call about how to respond.

The ICPD confirms cases of calls based on suspicious persons walking, driving, working especially at night. These too need to be indexed in terms of the race of the caller and the race, location, time, and the activity the person is engaged in.

Cases of Black persons being called on while working in buildings was discussed by the commission. Testimonies of repeated presence of ICPD around Colored persons owned businesses especially at night is troubling. Testimonies by members of the community indicated that it creates fear and discourages customers, and ultimately resulting in loss in business. To prevent harm, trauma and

death as was the case in Iowa City, the public needs to know and get educated about the incidences and impact of the problem on minorities. In a listening post in Iowa city officers confirmed the problem exists.

Homelessness remains a problem the Iowa City community would want to reduce. The ICPD, Shelter house and Cross Park Place work together as partners with Iowa City Housing and economic development agencies to reduce homelessness affecting families, individual adults and youth especially during the winter. calls for service by homeless persons has been a problem for the community agencies including ICPD. Despite the growth in the population of homeless persons and increased Iowa City shelter capacity, the homeless population calls for service has declined from 450 in 2016 to 300 in 2019. Homeless contacts with ICPD that ended in arrests was 5% in 2016, but reduced to 1%.

The experiences of persons of color with homelessness and contacts with ICPD is unclear due to lack of information on race.

3. Law Enforcement and Outcomes: Complaints and Court Cases.

a. Complaints with the ICPD by race

Complaints tend to be formally presented to the ICPD, the Community Police Review Board (CPRB), but due to fear of the ICPD, many complaints are not presented to the police station in person or on a form using the web. Statistics on complaints are more likely an under representation of people's experiences. An immigrant who does not know their rights or can't express their complaints clearly and "just let it go". An immigrant who is undocumented will rarely present a complaint to the ICPD. During a public meeting on housing in Iowa City by the minority group *Eschuza Mi Voz*, a member complained that some landlords call police officers to threaten renters who complain about poor services. Such cases are not likely to show up in statistics of complaints.

Another example of complaint about racial discrimination and arrest with force is captioned below.

One of the officers involved in the case forced a 15-year-old Black male to the ground during an arrest at the Robert A. Lee Recreation Center in Iowa City [2015]. Some viewed that behavior as discrimination based on a video posted on social media, and the encounter prompted an [online petition](#) calling for the “end of discrimination against Black youth.” ICPD subsequently modified its arrest procedures and policies to deploy more “de-escalation techniques” prior to officers using force.

This same officer also was under investigation after being employed by the state of Iowa for a 2019 arrest following a fight between two women, one Black and the other white, in Des Moines, according to news reports. A video posted on social media showed the officer gave the Black woman two elbow blows to the head while she grabbed the other woman’s hair. In the video, the officer pepper-sprays the Black woman while the other woman is allowed to walk away. But both were booked into jail, according to news reports. This officer and a second state officer were placed on administrative leave during an investigation but cleared of any wrongdoing a few weeks later, according to the Des Moines Register.

The officer in the two incidents resigned from ICPD but continues to work in law enforcement.

*Source: Cedar
Rapids Gazette,
July 16, 2022.*

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b. Police Accountability: Complaints at CPRB and outcomes

These are examples of cases either sustained or not sustained.

- 2 community member concerns regarding bias-based policing in traffic contacts, field contacts, or asset forfeiture in 2021.
- The first concern was a telephone complaint of a bias-based traffic stop. A review of the stop exonerated the officer finding their actions were justified, lawful, and proper.
- The second concern was that an officer followed the complainant while driving. A review of this incident determined it was unfounded as it had been another agency.

Source: CALEA data compiled by ICPD

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c. Court cases instead of complaints to Community Police Review Board (CPRB) and outcomes

Since 2014 8 lawsuits were directed to the ICPD of which 2 were by Black Mr. Watson (2022) and Mr. Kelly (2021). In these two cases the court found evidence of wrong doing

involving false arrest, injury, racial- profiling. The six cases by non-Black persons were dismissed. Details on these court cases are captioned below.

Selected Lawsuits against City / ICPD / Officers

Cases	Watson	Kelly
<i>Tolson v. ICPD, dismissed (2021)</i>	Anthony Watson sued the two cities (IC and Coralville) and two police officers for negligence resulting in personal injury, false arrest, false imprisonment, intentional infliction of emotional distress and malicious prosecution.	Chris Kelly sued IC and Johnson Co. for "illegal racial profiling," racial discrimination, failure to intervene, civil conspiracy, false arrest, unconstitutional policies and practices.
<i>Herricks v. ICPD, dismissed (2020)</i>		
<i>Airhart v. ICPD, dismissed (2018)</i>		
<i>Burgs v. ICPD, dismissed (2015)</i>		
<i>Bokassa v. ICPD, dismissed (2014)</i>		
<i>Ittig v. ICPD, dismissed (2011)</i>		
Watson v. ICPD, settled (2022)	Stopped for reckless driving, tested negative for alcohol and for drugs, though drug use evaluation found he was under influence of marijuana.	jailed for eight months, released after federal judge said case amounted to "a story of 'walking while Black.'"
Kelly v. City of Iowa City, pending (2021)	Settled by two cities for \$390,000, half paid by each city.	Allegedly stopped on pretext at direction of county prosecutor.
<i>Italic = allegations of illegal behavior by officers in street.</i>		Judge dismissed portions of lawsuit related to racial discrimination.
Bold = Black/African-American party		

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Sources: news reports

4. Disproportionate Minority Contacts³² and Outcomes^{33 34}.

From 2005 to 2020 the ICPD collected data on traffic stops as part of the efforts to practice fair and equitable policing. Data was analyzed by Associate Professor Chritopher Barnum³⁵ of St. Ambrose University. The study focused on area of stops, time of the day and officer outcomes. The department is committed to eliminating racial profiling, implicit bias, mistrust, and lack of respect between communities and the people of Iowa City. The 2023 contract between ICPD and The University of Iowa Public Policy Center is part of the effort to work with community partners and collaboration with local entities to provide insights and strategies for understanding racial disparities in Iowa City traffic stops, citations, and arrests.

Between 2016 and 2020 the total number of traffic stops by ICPD decreased by almost half despite slight growth in the population of Iowa City among males and females. The burden of traffic stops was shouldered by males taking 63% in 2016 and 64% in 2020. The smallest decrease in stops was among Hispanics and Asians by about 25% while that of Whites was by

³²

<https://www.icgov.org/government/departments-and-divisions/police-department/disproportionate-minority-contact-study>

³³ <https://www.iowa-city.org/WebLink/DocView.aspx?id=2029774&dbid=0&repo=CityofIowaCity>

³⁴

<https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/crime-and-courts/2014/06/22/study-finds-minority-tilt-iowa-city-traffic-stops/11230093/>

<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ba=SF%20311&ga=91>

³⁵ [Barnum 2019 and 2020 report](#)

about 49% and Blacks by about 47%. These results are derived from the City of Iowa City Human Rights Department report of 2020.

Figure:

TRAFFIC STOPS BY RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN AND SEX

CITY OF IOWA CITY
UNESCO CITY OF LITERATURE

Because of the unique circumstances of COVID-19, 2020 percentage comparisons are not useful.

*2020 is impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and thus should be considered in that context.

Sources:
Iowa City Human Rights Commission Annual Report FY16-20
Iowa City Employee Statistics Report, January 2017, 2021 Iowa
City Police Department Annual Report 2016-2020 US Census

Male -----	8,168 -----	Male -----	4,419 -----	-46%
White -----	5,361 -----	White -----	2,736 -----	-49%
Black or African American -----	1,548 -----	Black or African American -----	809 -----	-48%
American Indian and Alaska Native -----	17 -----	American Indian and Alaska Native -----	5 -----	-70.5%
Asian/Pacific Islander -----	554 -----	Asian/Pacific Islander -----	416 -----	-25%
Hispanic or Latinx -----	469 -----	Hispanic or Latinx -----	336 -----	-28%
Race/ethnicity not known -----	99 -----	Race/ethnicity not known -----	117 -----	+18%
Female -----	4,635 -----	Female -----	2,405 -----	-48%
White -----	3,408 -----	White -----	1,711 -----	-50%
Black or African American -----	681 -----	Black or African American -----	366 -----	-46%
American Indian and Alaska Native -----	4 -----	American Indian and Alaska Native -----	0 -----	-400%
Asian/Pacific Islander -----	255 -----	Asian/Pacific Islander -----	132 -----	-48%
Hispanic or Latinx -----	210 -----	Hispanic or Latinx -----	155 -----	-26%
Race/ethnicity not known -----	40 -----	Race/ethnicity not known -----	41 -----	+2.5%

Source: Iowa City Human Rights Department

Using the proportion of stops, Whites' share increased from 60.8% (2016) to 65.1% (2020) but remained stable for Blacks at about 17% during the period and more than their share in the Iowa City population.

a. Stops and locations. The Police Stops Heat Map

Despite GIS technology, no police stop heat map was yet available showing locations where most stops have occurred, and how those stops vary annually with time of day across racial lines.

Race	Stops & Arrests			
	Stops	Arrests	Stops	Stops
	2019-2020	2019-2020	2022	2023
White	67%	53%	60%	58%
Black/AF_AM	18%	30%	27%	28%
Hispanic	6%	11%	8%	9%
Asian	6%	4%	3%	3%
Native etc	3%	3%	2%	2%
Others	0%	0%	0%	0%

2019-20 data source: Disproportionate Minority Contact Study

2022-23 data source: ICPD Traffic Stops Study

Source: TRC Commission

1. Stops Rate by Racial Proportions: The stable proportion of 17% of stops among blacks ended in 2020 when Blacks saw a jump in the proportions of stops from a stable 17% of 2016-2020 period to a disproportionate rate of 28% while that of Hispanics slightly increased to 9% in 2023. The proportion for Whites decreased from 65% to 58% (2023) while the rest experienced increases in stops.

2. Stops Index: Here the discussion revolved around the departmental *stops index* for the periods 2019 and 2020, and the odds ratios for *outcomes* (citations, arrests, search) index for the period 2005 to 2020. The odds ratio index table below for stops is about 0.1 at night indicating increase chance of stops for minorities by about 10% for the two years 2019 and 2020. Over the chances of increased stops among minorities increased by between 5% to 9% as shown in the table. This is not the case of association between stops and being a minority as will be seen in the case of outcomes where positive associations are observed.

Table:

Year	Index
2015	0.05
2016	0.08
2018	0.07
2019	0.09
2020	0.07

Source:

3 *Outcomes Odds Ratio*³⁶: Estimates of odds-ratio are presented in the table below for the 2005-2020 period. Data confirms positive association between citations, arrests and searches with minority status. Graph using the data shows odds ratio greater than 1 in most cases and was very high for searches and arrests after stops between 2005 and 2013. The odds ratio for arrests was 2.0 and for citations was 1.55 in 2020. The strength of positive association has decreased and stabilized around odds- ratio of 2 which still shows positive association between race stops and arrests, searches, and citations. Trends in the odds-ratio are reflected in the table and graph below.

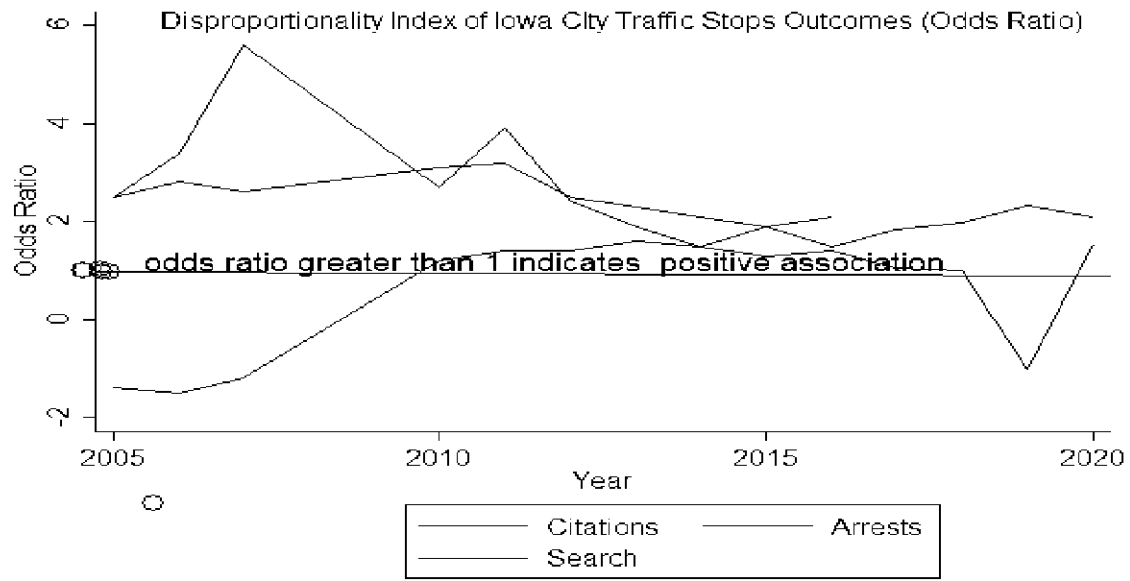
Department Stops Outcomes														
Univariate Odds -Ratios by Year														
	2005	2006	2007	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Citations	-1.4	-1.5	-1.2	1.2	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.07	1	-1.02	1.55
Arrests	2.5	2.8	2.6	3.1	3.2	2.5	2.3	2.1	1.9	1.5	1.82	1.98	2.32	2.08
Search	2.5	3.4	5.6	2.7	3.9	2.4	1.9	1.5	1.9	2.1				

Source: ICPD Disproportionate Minority Contacts Study

Figure :

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<https://www.feinberg.northwestern.edu/sites/firstdailyife/docs/resources-docs/jama.2018.norton.guidetostatisticsandmedicine.odds-ratioscurrent-best-practice-and-use.pdf>



Data Source: Minority Contacts Study

Source: Graph by TRC Commission

Information on warnings and citations after traffic stops can also be used to show disparities in proportions in the table below.

Table:

Warnings & Citations by Race and Gender

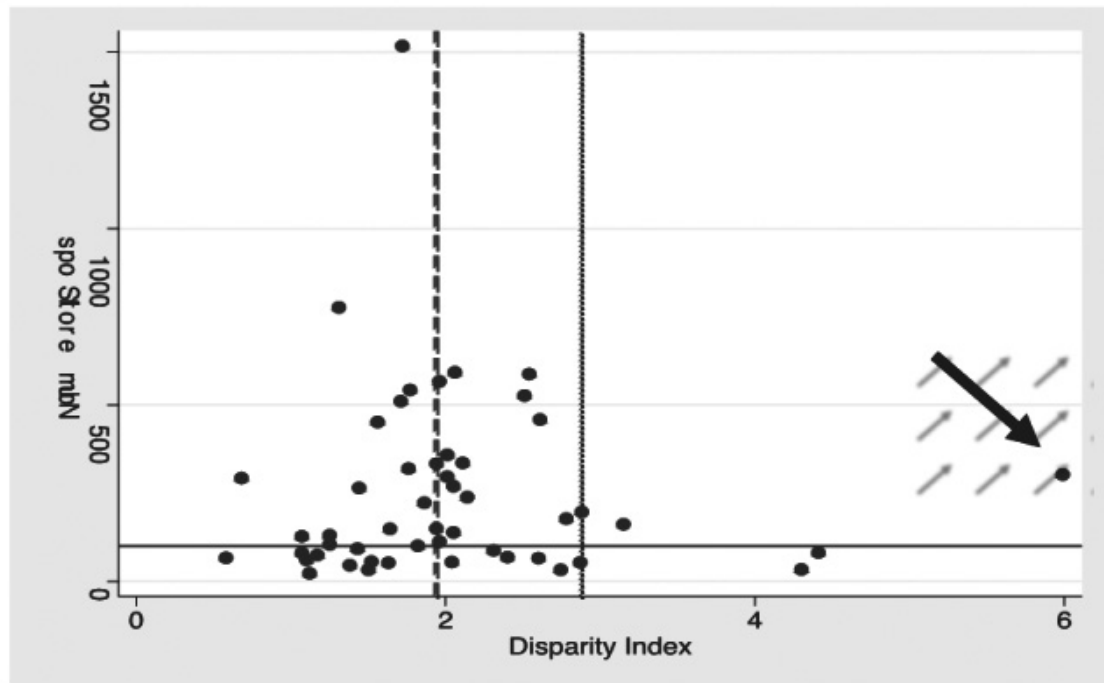
	2020		2020		2021		2021	
	Warnings		Citations		Warnings		Citations	
Race & Gender	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
White	67%	81%	59%	70%	63%	72%	56%	61%
Black/AF_AM	38%	14%	24%	17%	23%	18%	25%	23%
Hispanic	6%	4%	10%	6%	7%	5%	11%	8%
Asian								
Native etc								
Others								

Source: CALEA for ICPD

4. *Officers Index*: The plot of officer's odds ratio shows a mean odds ratio of about 2 with one extreme case at 6. Even if the extreme case is dropped the data still shows an association between higher rate of stops and being a minority at officer level. According to the distribution, a few officers have an odds ratio that is less than 1 and their stops are not associated with minority status of an individual.

Figure:

2016



Source: Minority Contact Study

The distribution of officer's odds ratio is useful for the analysis of why extremes exist and for identifying factors like experience, age, gender, race, and education in explaining the variation in odds ratio.

4. Locations: The disproportionate study found concentration of stops downtown especially at night and in the South District area (Kirkwood Street, Taylor Drive, Wetherby) where about 40% of households are Black.

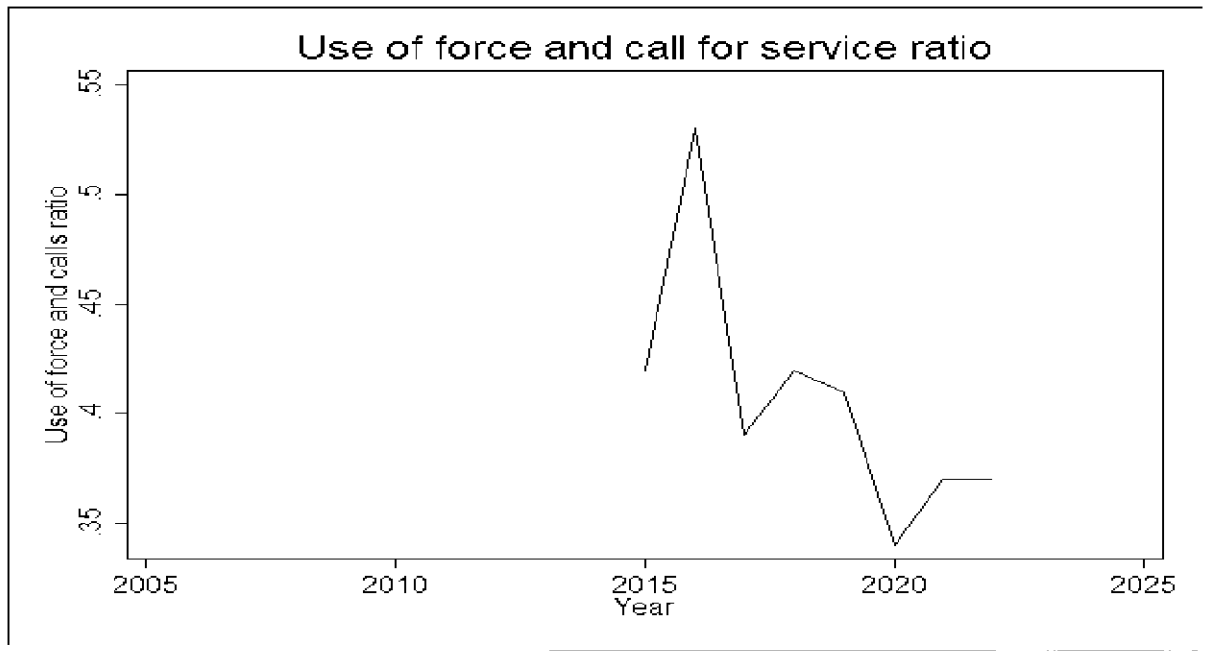
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[illegible]

Geographic information systems (GIS) can produce heat maps to show areas of intensity of stops relative to other locations by year, race, and other details about police officer odds ratio index. This will help analyze bias, and racial profiling in stops.

5. Use of Force, Injuries and Deaths.

³⁷ <https://policescorecard.org/ia/police-department/iowa-city>



a. Use of force by race

Data from CALEA and City of Iowa City³⁸ shows higher disparities in the total use of force among Blacks at 46% where 9% of which are on Black females, compared to Whites at 41%. Regarding arrests Blacks constituted 47% and Whites constituted 39%. On non-fatal injuries. Whites have a higher proportion of 54% which is still below their population ratio, while Black rate remained high at 33%. Such disproportionality in use of force among Blacks accompanied with a higher rate of complaints at 50% among Black males, 0% among Black females, 50% among White females, and 0% among White males.

³⁸ Restructuring the Iowa Police Department (2020). A preliminary plan to accelerate community policing: <https://www.iowa-city.org/WebLink/0/edoc/1971827/Preliminary%20Plan%20to%20Restructure%20the%20Police.pdf>

Use of force in arrests & injuries 2020 and complaints 2020 -2021						
	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2021
			suspects			
	Total use	Total use of	agency	receiving	use of	use of
	of force	force arrests	custodial	non-fatal	force	force
	M % + F%	M % + F%	arrests	injuries	complaints	complaints
	M % + F%	M % + F%	M % + F%	M % + F%	M % + F%	M % + F%
White	33+8	34+5	38+9	54+0	0+50	0+22
Black (AF-AM)	37+9	42+5	35+8	29+4	50+0	67+0
Hispanic	4+5	7+6	52+2	8+0	0+0	0+0
Others	3+1	0+1	2+0	0+0	0+0	0+0
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: CALEA

The decrease in use of force per call for service observed in Iowa City data may not apply to minorities , especially where the rates were very high in 2020.

b. Force, injuries, and deaths by race

The 2020-2021 ICPD shows a disproportionate level of use of force and injuries among Blacks in 2020. Use of force can result in injuries or death. The use of force and injuries are disproportionate among Black males.

The experience of Black females with use of force, arrest and injuries was surprisingly proportionate to their population ratio in the community. This result of proportionality is observed among Hispanic males and females, and there are lessons to learn regarding propensity to commit offences and treatment. The crime propensity ratios and proportionality of outcomes can be compared to check for bias.

	2020	2020
	Total use	suspects
	of force	receiving
	M % + F%	non-fatal
		Injuries
	M % + F%	M % + F%
White	33+8	54+0
Black (AF-AM)	37+9	29+4
Hispanic	4+5	8+0
Others	3+1	0+0
	100	100

Source: CALEA

There was a case of a homeless immigrant from Sudan by the name Mr. John Deng who was shot and killed by a Johnson County Sheriff's Deputy. The African immigrant community felt that justice was not served when the officer was cleared of wrongful death, despite eye witness accounts refuting statement placed by the officer.

John Deng, a Sudanese resident of Iowa City, was shot and killed by a Johnson County Sheriff's Deputy in July 2009.

An investigation conducted by the Iowa Attorney General's office found that the shooting was justified because Mr. Deng had stabbed another person at the scene and refused commands to drop the knife. The deputy was cleared of any wrongdoing.

Media reports indicate that Mr. Deng had initially been struck by the other individual before Mr. Deng stabbed him. Those same reports indicate that some eyewitnesses refuted the suggestion Mr. Deng had a knife in hand and threatened the deputy before being shot.

At a press conference, speakers alleged Mr. Deng's race played a role in how the deputy handled the incident; the other individual was white and not detained.

Source: Cedar Rapids Gazette,

Iowa City Truth and Reconciliation Commission

September 25, 2009.

April 28, 2024

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6. Police Accountability: The ICPD and the Community Police Review Board (CPRB)

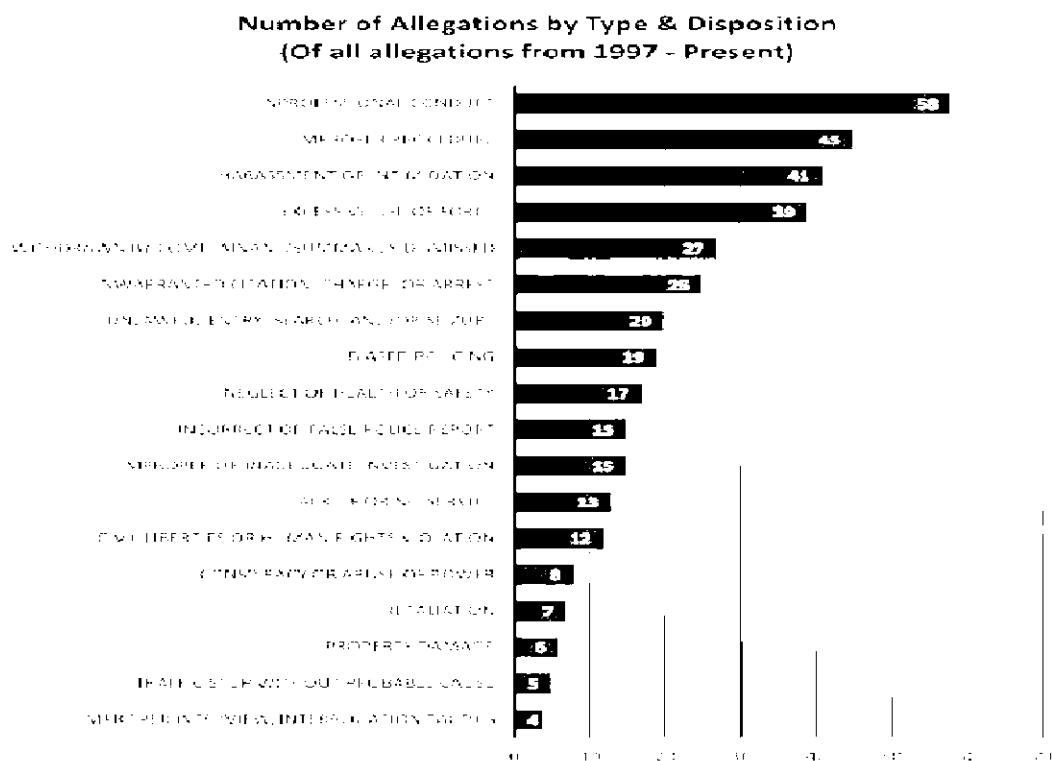
According to the police scorecard³⁹, ICPD score on accountability of 31% is worse due to excessive force where it sits at 4%. The CPRB reviews police policies, procedures and practices

³⁹ <https://policescorecard.org/ia>

regularly to recommend any changes necessary. The ICPD receives complaints which have been investigated by the ICPD with written reports on why a complaint should be sustained or not sustained. ICPD deals with many complaints ranging from unprofessional conduct to improper tactics of interrogation. Between 1997 to 2020 among the total 119 complaints, unprofessional conduct (58) was the major complaint, followed by improper procedure (45), harassment of interview (41), excessive use of force (39), etc. Out of the 119 reports, the Board agreed with the Police chief on 111 cases, and reversed 8 cases.

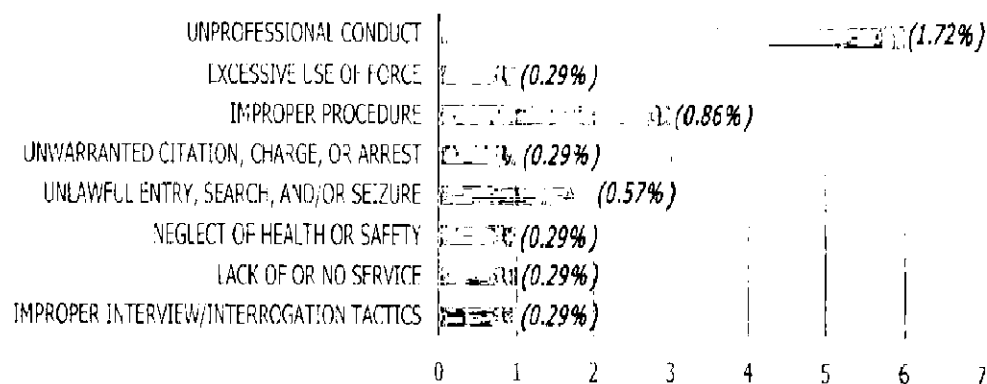
For the two-year period 2020-2021 Black males disproportionately complained about use of force at the rate of 50% in 2020 which increased to 67% in 2021. Complaints about use of force by White females dropped from 50% in 2020 to 22% in 2021.

Information on complaints by race is not reported for the allegations or complaints except in 2021 where there was information by race on complaints about use of force only, but not other categories as presented in the table of allegations.



Sustained CPRB Allegations, 1997-2020

Number and Category of Allegations 'Sustained' by Board
(Percentage of Total Allegations)



Source:

The finding here is a low rate of allegations sustained by the Board most of the sustained cases (6) on unprofessional conduct, but their race or gender is not reported.

Regarding use of force complaints, the period 2020-2021 was marked by disproportionately high rate of complaints by Black men and White females.

Use of Force Complaints 2020-2021		
	2020	2021
	use of force complaints M % + F%	use of force complaints M % + F%
White	0+50	0+22
Black (AF-AM)	50+0	67+0
Hispanic	0+0	0+0
Others	0+0	0+0
	100	100
Source: CALEA		

7. ICPD and the Iowa City Community School District (ICCSd)

The interface between ICPD presence in Iowa City schools and disproportionate⁴⁰ expulsion, and discipline due to offences committed by students can be explored if data existed. TRC acknowledges there may be a connection between offences at the schools and police presence in the schools. Police listening post⁴¹ portrayed community complaint about expulsion and discipline in schools among Blacks.

TRC did not get data on ICPD policy on schools, their presence in the schools, reasons and interactions with persons of color as victims or as offenders. This data is contained in the many calls for service, but because information on locations, race or age is not reported it is difficult to determine police presence in schools, outcomes and impacts on minority youth compared to the White youth in schools.

8. ICPD Information Systems and Research

The Cit of Iowa City has expressed the importance of creating data systems which are inclusive and useful for detecting problems and making specific changes in law enforcement strategies and outcomes. Investments in this area has improved community data systems in

⁴⁰

https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1736523656/iowacityschoolsorg/xhifjsox4ycqpvmv4ovj/APR2023-24_1.pdf

⁴¹ Page 75 <https://www.icgov.org/home/showpublisheddocument/867/638157030419830000>

terms of collection, analysis, publications and access. The ICPD has also initiated research on perceptions of the community about the ICPD, and on law enforcement organization, disparities in crime and disproportionate contacts and outcomes. Despite these efforts there are specific issues that need attention. These are listed as:

- a) Information gaps on race, gender, locations, due to lack of collection or data processing
- b) Calls for service analysis in terms of the race of the caller, the person the calls are subjected to in relation to the events, activities, time of the day and location.
- c) Community engagement in research contracting to improve sampling and the quality of information being collected.
- d) Impact studies on crime deterrence, community relations and trust, community policing, businesses, mental and physical health of adults, youth and homeless persons.

9. ICPD and State Regulations

Changes in policy can affect law enforcement outcomes like stops, arrests, use of force, and injuries. Changes are initiated internally within the department, by the department, and Community Police Review Boards (CPRB) collaborating with organizations like NAACP. Some policies require the City of Iowa City Ordinance to be implemented. Two major policy changes by the State of Iowa involved stops and CPRB.

The ICPD and the CPRB cooperated with the TRC facilitators and provided most of the information requested by TRC.

For more information about fact-finding, see page 18 of the Iowa City Truth & Reconciliation Commission Final Report prepared in April 2024 by:

Native Partners: Donnielle Wanatee, Terry Medina, and Manape LaMere Healing Partners: V Fixmer-Oraiz and Annie Tucker

Kearns & West: Larry Schooler and Laurel Cohen

Think Peace Learning & Support Hub: Eduardo Gonzalez, Melinda Salazar, David Ragland, Leo Hylton, and Jena Kitchen

TRUTH-TELLING

Community Testimonies of Racial Harm: Systemic Injustice and Its Impact Across Institutions in Iowa City

The Iowa City TRC gathered extensive testimonies from community members, stakeholders, and institutional representatives. These testimonies, derived from public hearings, interviews, archival records, and community engagements, provided insight into the deep-seated racial injustices in Iowa City.

The testimonies revealed pervasive racial discrimination affecting daily life in Iowa City, spanning interactions with law enforcement, disparities in housing, employment, and education. Many testimonies highlighted longstanding injustices and their lasting impacts.

Law Enforcement and Judicial Disparities

1. Racial Profiling and Wrongful Targeting

Numerous testimonies detailed experiences of racial profiling disproportionately affecting Black and Latinx residents. Residents reported unjustified traffic stops, pedestrian checks, and unwarranted questioning by law enforcement without probable cause, reinforcing perceptions of systemic racial bias (TRC Transcript – Fact-Finding Dialogue and Deliberation – March 18, 2023; TRC Transcript – Fact-Finding Community Briefing – March 14, 2023).

2. Excessive Use of Force

Several testimonies highlighted excessive and aggressive police tactics disproportionately targeting Black and Latinx individuals. Community members recounted physical aggression during routine interactions, resulting in injuries and emotional trauma. A specific case involved a Black youth aggressively detained without provocation. Such incidents fostered deep mistrust in law enforcement, intensifying calls for accountability and reform. Testimonies expressed an urgent need for transparent investigations and disciplinary measures (TRC Transcript – September 21, 2023; TRC Transcript – October 5, 2023).

3. Over-Policing of Minority Communities

Testimonies indicated heightened police surveillance and frequent patrols in minority neighborhoods, resulting in increased citations and arrests for minor infractions. This reinforced perceptions of systemic bias and criminalization of minority communities. Residents described over-policing as exacerbating racial tensions, increasing fear, and reinforcing feelings of marginalization (TRC Transcript – October 5, 2023; TRC Transcript – October 19, 2023).

4. Lack of Police Accountability

Community testimonies emphasized frustration over inadequate investigations and disciplinary actions against officers involved in racial misconduct. Community members expressed disillusionment due to the lack of outcomes following official complaints, highlighting systemic barriers to accountability. This absence of accountability perpetuated mistrust toward law enforcement, leading to diminished reporting of injustices and ongoing community trauma (TRC Transcript – October 12, 2023; TRC Transcript – September 14, 2023).

5. Mistrust and Fear of Law Enforcement

Testimonies consistently emphasized pervasive mistrust and fear of law enforcement among marginalized communities. Residents expressed reluctance to engage with police, fearing escalation, wrongful accusations, or violence based on past experiences of racial profiling and

excessive force. Parents described educating children on cautious interactions with police, reflecting profound psychological and social consequences resulting from generational trauma (TRC Transcript – September 14, 2023; TRC Transcript – September 28, 2023; TRC Transcript – October 5, 2023).

6. Police Training and Cultural Competency

Testimonies revealed widespread concerns about the inadequacy of police training in addressing racial bias, de-escalation tactics, and community engagement. Community members emphasized that existing training programs failed to adequately prepare officers to interact respectfully and equitably with marginalized populations. Several participants called for mandatory cultural competency training, with a focus on understanding systemic racism, implicit bias, and the lived experiences of communities of color. Witnesses also advocated for regular, community-informed training sessions that involve direct dialogue with residents impacted by policing. These calls reflect a broader demand for systemic reform rooted in accountability, empathy, and education to rebuild trust between law enforcement and the community (TRC Transcript – October 5, 2023; TRC Transcript – September 14, 2023).

Employment and Workplace Exploitation

1. Workplace Discrimination

Workers testified about discriminatory hiring practices significantly affecting minority employees' professional advancement. Testimonies described being repeatedly overlooked for promotions despite having superior qualifications compared to their white counterparts. Employees described being explicitly told they were not “a good cultural fit,” indicating underlying racial bias. Additionally, testimonies emphasized a pattern of implicit bias where workers of color reported career stagnation due to systemic discrimination in workplaces. Employees recounted experiences where less-qualified white coworkers received promotions, leaving them feeling marginalized and undervalued despite their qualifications and strong performance reviews (TRC Transcript – July 6, 2023; TRC Transcript – August 3, 2023; TRC Transcript – September 7, 2023).

2. Wage Disparities and Job Insecurity

Employees of color highlighted substantial wage disparities and employment instability. Workers described situations in which they earned significantly lower wages compared to their white counterparts performing identical job roles, exacerbating financial hardships. One worker testified to discovering substantial pay inequities between themselves and a white coworker who started employment later (TRC Transcript – June 1, 2023).

3. Workplace Harassment and Retaliation

Employees described hostile workplace environments, including experiences of racial harassment and retaliatory actions. Workers who reported discriminatory behaviors or harassment encountered negative repercussions such as fewer work shifts or deliberate exclusion from critical meetings, fostering an atmosphere of intimidation and fear. Testimonies documented that reporting discriminatory incidents resulted in dismissive reactions from employers, who minimized complaints and labeled responses as “overreacting.” Employees experienced emotional distress and ongoing workplace hostility as discriminatory behaviors continued unchecked (TRC Transcript – August 3, 2023; TRC Transcript – August 17, 2023; TRC Transcript – September 21, 2023).

4. Labor Exploitation and Wage Theft

Workers provided testimonies of labor exploitation, including explicit wage theft, particularly affecting undocumented workers. Employers frequently withheld wages, threatening workers with deportation when they demanded payment. Such intimidation tactics created extreme economic vulnerability and silenced complaints from exploited workers (TRC Transcript – July 20, 2023; TRC Transcript – September 7, 2023; TRC Transcript – October 12, 2023).

5. Limited Career Advancement

Employees testified about systemic barriers severely limiting career advancement. Workers of color described consistently being denied mentorship and professional development opportunities provided to white coworkers. Employees recounted repeatedly training white employees who subsequently advanced into higher positions while they themselves experienced stagnation despite considerable tenure and expertise. Testimonies also highlighted frustration regarding the limited representation of minority employees in leadership roles, perpetuating professional stagnation. Workers expressed ongoing dissatisfaction due to exclusion from opportunities necessary for career growth, reinforcing systemic barriers to professional advancement (TRC Transcript – June 1, 2023; TRC Transcript – August 3, 2023).

6. Lack of Union Representation and Advocacy

Workers expressed challenges obtaining union representation and advocacy, leaving them vulnerable to workplace exploitation. Employees reported difficulties receiving adequate support from union representatives when attempting to report workplace abuses, resulting in feelings of neglect and powerlessness. Further testimonies emphasized overt employer retaliation against union organizing attempts. Employees described witnessing systematic termination of workers involved in unionizing efforts, which discouraged collective action and reinforced exploitation. This anti-union stance created ongoing vulnerability for marginalized employees (TRC Transcript – October 12, 2023; TRC Transcript – October 19, 2023).

Housing Discrimination and Economic Disparities

1. Rental and Mortgage Discrimination

Residents testified to discriminatory housing practices by landlords and mortgage lenders. Testimonies described scenarios where landlords falsely claimed properties were unavailable to minority applicants but available when inquired about by white individuals. Additionally, residents recounted situations where lenders unfairly denied mortgages or provided unfavorable terms solely based on racial identity (TRC Transcript – October 6, 2022; TRC Transcript – February 2, 2023)

2. Historical and Ongoing Redlining

Residents testified about the ongoing negative impact of historical redlining practices, emphasizing continued racial segregation and economic neglect. Testimonies pointed to sustained disinvestment in historically minority neighborhoods, evident in inadequate infrastructure and public services, reflecting systemic neglect and racial segregation patterns established historically (TRC Transcript – August 24, 2023; TRC Transcript – September 7, 2023).

Further testimonies explicitly linked current zoning and urban planning practices to historic redlining, emphasizing that contemporary policies continue to reinforce segregation. Residents described experiencing stark disparities between minority-majority neighborhoods and predominantly white communities in terms of resource allocation, perpetuating inequality, and segregation (TRC Transcript – October 19, 2023).

3. Gentrification and Forced Displacement

Testimonies described experiences of forced displacement resulting from gentrification, particularly in historically minority neighborhoods. Community members reported escalating rents and property taxes that compelled longstanding residents to relocate due to financial constraints. This displacement fractured community cohesion and caused feelings of exclusion and loss among residents (TRC Transcript – April 6, 2023; TRC Transcript – October 5, 2023).

4. Unequal Access to Public Services

Residents described disparities in public services between minority-majority neighborhoods and predominantly white areas. Testimonies highlighted inadequate infrastructure maintenance, limited recreational facilities, and longer response times for public services in marginalized communities, creating ongoing disparities and economic disadvantages (TRC Transcript – February 16, 2023).

Community members further testified that resource prioritization consistently favored affluent, white neighborhoods, exacerbating systemic inequalities. Testimonies emphasized that unequal public resource allocation significantly disadvantaged minority communities, reinforcing perceptions of institutional neglect and systemic marginalization (TRC Transcript – April 20, 2023).

Educational Disparities and Systemic Barriers

1. Racial Disparities in School Discipline

Testimonies described significant racial disparities in school disciplinary actions, where students of color experienced disproportionately higher suspension and expulsion rates compared to their white peers for similar behaviors. Parents recounted specific incidents of differential punishment, emphasizing how their children received harsher consequences than white students who committed equivalent or even more severe infractions. This unequal treatment contributed directly to a hostile educational environment and negatively impacted the educational trajectories of affected students. These disciplinary discrepancies perpetuated broader systemic inequities, leading community members to highlight the urgent need for reform within school disciplinary policies. Testimonies emphasized that current disciplinary practices reinforced negative stereotypes and placed students of color at higher risk of academic disengagement and long-term disadvantage (TRC Transcript – March 2, 2023).

2. Bias in Curriculum and Classroom Treatment

Testimonies detailed experiences where minority students faced biases within the curriculum and classroom environments, including inadequate representation and misrepresentation of Black histories. Community members specifically highlighted how education on Black history often focused narrowly on slavery, omitting significant historical contributions and leading to feelings of exclusion and marginalization among students of color. Furthermore, students of color were frequently discouraged by educators from enrolling in advanced classes, limiting their academic opportunities and fostering lower self-confidence.

This bias extended to educators' implicit assumptions regarding students' capabilities, often resulting in lowered expectations for students of color. Community members expressed that such assumptions significantly impacted students' self-perception and academic performance, reinforcing stereotypes and creating psychological barriers that discouraged students from striving for academic excellence (TRC Transcript – March 2, 2023).

3. Underrepresentation of Minority Educators

Testimonies highlighted the critical issue of underrepresentation of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous educators within schools, emphasizing its adverse effects on students of color. Community members explained how the lack of educators who reflect students' racial and cultural backgrounds negatively influenced students' academic motivation, self-esteem, and overall feelings of belonging within educational institutions (TRC Transcript – April 6, 2023). The scarcity of minority educators limited students' exposure to relatable role models and supportive mentors.

Community voices strongly advocated for increased recruitment and retention of minority educators, stressing that representation correlates with improved educational outcomes, cultural understanding, and personal empowerment among students of color (TRC Transcript – June 1, 2023).

4. Limited Access to Resources and Opportunities

Testimonies from community members emphasized the inequitable allocation of educational resources and extracurricular opportunities for schools serving predominantly students of color. Individuals described disparities such as inadequate funding, outdated materials, limited access to advanced placement classes, and a lack of extracurricular activities, which collectively disadvantaged minority students compared to their peers in predominantly white schools (TRC Transcript – May 4, 2023). These resource disparities translated into systemic disadvantages, reinforcing educational inequity and barriers to higher academic achievements.

Community members expressed frustration over the systemic neglect, underscoring the direct link between resource allocation and persistent achievement gaps among minority students. Testimonies called for comprehensive, equitable investment in schools serving marginalized communities to rectify historical neglect and provide equal opportunities for all students (TRC Transcript – August 31, 2023).

5. Implicit Bias Among Educators

Community testimonies indicated significant implicit biases among educators, negatively affecting their interactions with students of color. Witness accounts described educators making prejudiced assumptions about the academic abilities of minority students, often leading to lowered expectations and inadequate support for these students compared to their white peers. Students described situations where they received minimal assistance or encouragement, while white classmates experiencing similar academic struggles were given additional support.

These implicit biases had lasting impacts on students' academic self-esteem and performance. Parents recounted observing negative shifts in their children's confidence due to educators' biased comments and actions, emphasizing the need for addressing and mitigating implicit biases within educational settings. Community members highlighted that such biases reinforce harmful stereotypes, limit academic opportunities, and contribute significantly to systemic educational disparities (TRC Transcript – April 6, 2023).

Impact of Racial Injustice on the Community

Community Fear and Trauma

1. Mental and Emotional Strain

Testimonies underscored severe emotional and psychological trauma stemming from interactions with law enforcement. Community members expressed anxiety and persistent fear triggered by traumatic incidents involving police. One testimony specifically described the lasting trauma experienced by a young child who witnessed police nearly shoot his grandfather due to mistaken

identity. The child developed enduring fear and anxiety around police officers, demonstrating the severe psychological toll of such encounters (TRC Transcript – January 5, 2023).

2. Changes in Daily Behavior

Community testimonies described significant adjustments to everyday behaviors motivated by a need to avoid harmful encounters with law enforcement. Individuals mentioned actively avoiding certain neighborhoods or restricting outdoor activities, particularly during nighttime hours, due to fear of racial profiling or unjust treatment by police officers. Such alterations in routine activities illustrate the profound and tangible impact of systemic racism on affected community members' daily lives and freedom of movement (TRC Transcript – January 5, 2023).

3. Multi-Generational Trauma

Witnesses testified about how families perpetuated coping strategies for managing racial discrimination across multiple generations. One community member recounted warnings passed down through generations about where to go safely and how to behave cautiously in public to avoid unwanted attention and encounters with police. This intergenerational transmission of trauma coping mechanisms emphasizes the persistent, long-term emotional and behavioral impacts that racial injustice imposes on families and communities (TRC Transcript – January 5, 2023; TRC Transcript – August 3, 2023).

Economic Deprivation

1. Limited Job Mobility

Community members testified about significant obstacles to career progression, describing how systemic barriers limited their job advancement opportunities. Workers of color explained that despite their professional qualifications and performance, they consistently encountered unfair practices where less-qualified white colleagues received promotions instead. Witness accounts specifically highlighted repeated experiences of being passed over for advancement, reinforcing persistent economic inequalities and professional stagnation within minority communities (TRC Transcript – June 15, 2023; TRC Transcript – July 6, 2023).

2. Barriers to Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurs from marginalized backgrounds shared experiences of discrimination when attempting to obtain financial support for their businesses. Testimonies described systemic difficulties in securing business loans, noting explicit disparities in lending practices between minority applicants and white counterparts with comparable or fewer credentials. Community members testified to feeling unjustly excluded from business funding opportunities, significantly

limiting their capacity for economic independence and entrepreneurship (TRC Transcript – July 6, 2023; TRC Transcript – September 7, 2023; TRC Transcript – August 17, 2023).

3. Intergenerational Financial Hardship

Testimonies described persistent intergenerational economic challenges directly linked to structural inequalities in employment and housing. Witnesses explained that their parents and grandparents faced barriers such as housing discrimination and wage disparities, hindering wealth accumulation and perpetuating cycles of economic hardship. These testimonies illustrate systemic, longstanding economic inequities that inhibit financial stability and upward mobility for minority families over multiple generations (TRC Transcript – September 21, 2023).

Distrust in Institutions

1. Law Enforcement and the Justice System

Community testimonies highlighted widespread mistrust of law enforcement, influenced by repeated negative encounters and perceptions of unfair treatment. Witnesses expressed reluctance to call police for assistance, even in emergencies, fearing that interactions might escalate into harmful situations for themselves or their family members. One community member explicitly stated advising their children to avoid interactions with police due to concerns about personal safety, reflecting deeply rooted distrust toward the law enforcement system (TRC Transcript – February 9, 2023; **TRC Transcript – May 25, 2023**; TRC Transcript – June 15, 2023).

2. Healthcare Disparities

Witness accounts described discriminatory experiences within healthcare settings, notably highlighting inadequate responses from healthcare providers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Individuals detailed situations where their medical concerns and symptoms were dismissed or minimized, leading to delayed or inadequate treatment. Such experiences fostered distrust in healthcare institutions and heightened vulnerability, particularly during public health crises (TRC Transcript – April 6, 2023; TRC Transcript – August 3, 2023).

3. Educational Institutions

Community testimonies emphasized distrust in educational institutions due to discriminatory disciplinary practices. Witnesses shared examples where students of color were disciplined more harshly than white peers for comparable infractions, highlighting systemic biases within schools. One community member specifically described the disciplinary disparity involving their child, underscoring persistent institutional bias in school discipline policies and practices (TRC Transcript – August 10, 2023; TRC Transcript – September 7, 2023).

4. City Leadership and Government Agencies

Testimonies from community members revealed significant frustration and distrust toward city leadership. Individuals criticized local authorities for publicly stating commitments to racial

equity while failing to implement meaningful policies or actions. Witnesses expressed exhaustion from repeated, unfulfilled promises from city leaders, reinforcing disillusionment with government agencies and undermining trust in their stated commitments to equity and justice (TRC Transcript – September 21, 2023; TRC Transcript – August 3, 2023).

RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation and Community Healing for Addressing Racial Injustice Harm

Community testimonies to the Iowa City TRC revealed a strong collective commitment to healing from racial trauma through community-led initiatives, public storytelling, culturally rooted expressions, and expanded mental health support. Across multiple hearings, residents emphasized the value of dedicated spaces and structured dialogues where their pain could be heard, validated, and transformed into solidarity and resilience. Public forums, storytelling sessions, and cultural celebrations emerged as essential platforms for truth-telling, reconnection, and collective empowerment. Simultaneously, community members called for long-term, culturally competent mental health services—free or subsidized—alongside investment in restorative justice practices and youth leadership development. These accounts paint a picture of a community actively working to reclaim its narrative, repair harm, and create sustainable infrastructures of care and accountability.

Community-Led Healing Initiatives

1. Establishment of Community-Driven Spaces

Testimonies emphasized the critical role of community-driven spaces in supporting emotional and psychological healing. Community members advocated for dedicated environments where marginalized voices could be openly heard and validated, creating a collective sense of empowerment and reducing feelings of isolation. Individuals described how these spaces provided the rare opportunity to openly share their pain and experiences with others who genuinely understood their struggles.

Witnesses detailed these spaces' transformative impact on their personal healing journeys, highlighting their effectiveness in fostering emotional solidarity and validation among participants. They expressed the profound emotional relief and a sense of belonging that emerged from being part of communities that recognized and actively engaged with their experiences of racial trauma (TRC Transcript – May 18, 2023; TRC Transcript – August 3, 2023).

2. Programs Addressing Trauma Through Structured Dialogue

Structured dialogue programs and peer counseling were described as crucial elements for addressing trauma experienced due to racial injustice. Testimonies praised these programs for creating safe and facilitated spaces, encouraging community members to articulate their experiences and engage in meaningful, structured discussions. These dialogues played a therapeutic role by helping individuals process their trauma, share mutual support, and develop a clearer language around their experiences of racial injustice.

Community members noted that structured dialogues facilitated mutual understanding and reduced the stigma surrounding racial trauma. Participants underscored the necessity of such programs, which helped them feel validated and empowered. This helped foster deeper community bonds and pave pathways toward collective healing (TRC Transcript – February 16, 2023; TRC Transcript—May 18, 2023).

3. Need for Long-Term Emotional and Psychological Support

Testimonies highlighted the ongoing need for sustained emotional and psychological support to address the deep-seated effects of racial trauma. Individuals expressed concern that short-term or temporary measures would not adequately address the generational impacts of systemic racism. Many testimonies explicitly called for permanent funding and resources dedicated to culturally competent counseling and long-term mental health support to address continuous experiences of racial trauma effectively.

Community members stressed the chronic and cumulative nature of racial trauma, indicating that without long-term commitments to mental health resources, marginalized communities would continue to experience emotional neglect. The testimonies strongly advocated for continuous, adequately resourced programs that provide sustained therapeutic support, essential to breaking cycles of trauma and fostering enduring healing within affected communities (TRC Transcript – June 15, 2023).

Public Healing Events

1. Community Forums and Storytelling Sessions

Testimonies emphasized the transformative power of public storytelling and community forums in the healing process. Community members noted that these spaces allowed individuals to speak openly about their experiences of racial trauma and injustice. Sharing personal narratives in a public setting was described as a critical step toward collective healing, validation, and awareness. Individuals emphasized that the act of being heard helped build solidarity and deepened mutual understanding among participants.

These events also served to bridge divides between different community groups and foster dialogue around accountability and change. Participants shared how storytelling enabled both the sharing of pain and the expression of resilience, emphasizing the power of testimony in confronting systemic harms. Many called for regular storytelling forums to facilitate healing and strengthen community bonds (TRC Transcript – August 15, 2024; TRC Transcript – July 20, 2023).

2. Cultural Celebrations and Art-Based Reconciliation

Art and cultural expression were highlighted in testimonies as essential components of reconciliation and community healing. Community members described how music, dance, visual arts, and cultural traditions provided emotional release and reconnected individuals with their

heritage. These creative events were therapeutic and empowering, offering participants a means to assert their identities and histories in the face of systemic erasure.

Cultural celebrations were described as inclusive and healing environments that united diverse community members. Testimonies underscored the importance of supporting art-based initiatives that highlight marginalized voices and provide platforms for expression. Witnesses also advocated long-term investment in cultural programs to sustain these healing efforts and promote intergenerational knowledge sharing (TRC Transcript – August 15, 2024).

Mental Health Support and Trauma-Informed Care

1. Need for Expanded Access to Mental Health Services

Testimonies expressed a pressing need for expanded mental health resources to support individuals and families impacted by racial trauma. Community members highlighted barriers to accessing therapy, including cost, lack of insurance, and limited availability of culturally competent professionals. The lack of accessible mental health care contributed to prolonged suffering and intergenerational trauma among marginalized communities.

Participants stressed that effective healing requires consistent access to therapy and emotional support that reflects the lived experiences of communities of color. Many called for increased funding for mental health programs and greater awareness of available resources. This subtheme highlighted a broader need for systems-level changes to improve mental health equity in Iowa City (TRC Transcript – August 15, 2024).

2. Culturally Competent Counseling Services

Witnesses consistently emphasized the importance of culturally competent mental health care. Several individuals shared experiences of feeling misunderstood or dismissed by therapists who lacked awareness of racial trauma and its effects. Community members advocated for hiring mental health professionals with lived experience or specific training in supporting marginalized populations (TRC Transcript – August 15, 2024).

Testimonies indicated that culturally competent care created safer, more validating therapeutic environments. Community members explained that without cultural understanding, therapy could become retraumatizing or ineffective. There was a strong call for increased training and hiring practices reflecting the cultural and racial diversity of the communities served (TRC Transcript – August 15, 2024).

3. Proposals for Free or Subsidized Therapy

Several testimonies called for implementing free or subsidized mental health care programs. Community members highlighted the high cost of therapy as a significant obstacle to healing. In particular, individuals affected by systemic racism, police violence, and economic instability stressed the need for accessible therapy options as part of a broader reparative justice effort.

Free or low-cost therapy was framed not as a luxury but as a necessary component of recovery and justice. Testimonies proposed city-sponsored mental health clinics and partnerships with local providers to deliver trauma-informed care. These proposals aimed to make healing accessible to all, particularly those most impacted by racial injustice (TRC Transcript – August 15, 2024; TRC Transcript – July 6, 2023).

Indigenous-Led Reconciliation Practices

1. Indigenous Healing Circles and Ceremonial Practices

Testimonies emphasized the significance of traditional Indigenous healing practices such as storytelling, land-based rituals, and ceremonial gatherings as integral to community reconciliation. Collaboration with Indigenous leaders—including Donnielle Wanatee, Terry Medina, and Manape LaMere—ensured these culturally rooted practices guided the TRC’s healing efforts. These ceremonies addressed historical and intergenerational trauma and created restorative spaces for reflection, emotional connection, and cultural continuity (TRC Transcript – September 14, 2023; TRC Transcript – August 24, 2023).

Participants stressed the importance of centering Indigenous voices in reconciliation efforts, noting that long-standing erasure and marginalization must be addressed through intentional inclusion. Witnesses called for integrating Indigenous frameworks in healing initiatives and city policy, reinforcing that genuine reconciliation must begin with Indigenous leadership and self-determination (TRC Transcript – August 24, 2023).

2. Land Recognition and Reparations

Community members advocated for meaningful land acknowledgments that move beyond symbolism to include policy-level changes and representation in city governance. Testimonies supported increased funding for Indigenous-led cultural and environmental programs as a form of reparative justice, including land restoration efforts and cultural preservation projects (TRC Transcript – August 24, 2023; TRC Transcript – September 14, 2023).

There was strong advocacy for promoting Indigenous self-determination and economic empowerment, with recommendations including support for Indigenous-owned businesses, culturally specific education, and equitable access to city contracts and grants. These testimonies reinforced the call for structural changes prioritizing Indigenous agency in shaping their future (TRC Transcript – September 14, 2023).

Safe Spaces for Community Healing

1. Creation of Safe Spaces for Dialogue

Testimonies highlighted the need for protected environments where individuals can engage in open expression, process trauma, and find solidarity with others experiencing similar struggles. Community-led workshops and peer-support groups were described as essential for building trust and fostering emotional safety. These spaces empowered marginalized voices and offered

collective support systems critical for healing (TRC Transcript – May 18, 2023; TRC Transcript – August 3, 2023).

Witnesses emphasized that such environments must be insulated from institutional retaliation or stigma, allowing participants to share their truths freely. Participants described the therapeutic impact of gathering in spaces where racial trauma was acknowledged and validated, helping to reduce isolation and build mutual understanding (TRC Transcript – May 18, 2023).

2. Intersectional Approaches to Healing

Community members stressed the need for healing programs that recognize the diverse and intersecting identities within marginalized populations. Testimonies called for the inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals, refugees, and others facing compounded discrimination in healing initiatives. Participants underscored that effective healing practices must be tailored to reflect the specific lived experiences of each community subgroup (TRC Transcript – February 16, 2023; TRC Transcript – May 18, 2023).

Calls were made for increased investment in culturally responsive facilitation and representation within healing programs. Testimonies emphasized that intersectional healing spaces contribute to a broader culture of belonging and resilience, ensuring that no individual feels invisible or excluded from community reconciliation efforts (TRC Transcript – February 16, 2023; TRC Transcript – August 3, 2023).

Restorative Justice Circles

1. Engagement with Law Enforcement, Educators, and Policymakers

Testimonies emphasized the importance of creating community-led restorative justice spaces, including dialogue between impacted community members and representatives from law enforcement, education, and city government. Participants viewed these spaces as essential for fostering transparency, accountability, and meaningful reconciliation. They shared that voicing their experiences directly to institutional representatives helped validate their concerns and build trust.

Community members highlighted that these sessions opened lines of communication and gave marginalized voices a seat at the table. Gathering face-to-face for dialogue encouraged collective problem-solving and allowed city officials to witness firsthand the harm caused by systemic racial injustice. Many testimonies expressed hope that continued engagement would lead to real change (TRC Transcript – August 17, 2023; TRC Transcript – August 24, 2023).

2. Formal Agreements for Permanent Restorative Justice Programs

Strong support was given to institutionalizing restorative justice practices as a permanent part of city-led equity efforts. Community members called for formal agreements between the TRC and city institutions to ensure that restorative approaches would not be limited to one-time events.

Testimonies emphasized the need for structured programming, oversight mechanisms, and public transparency to ensure the longevity of these initiatives.

Several testimonies advocated embedding restorative justice into city processes such as policing, education, and housing. Participants urged the City of Iowa City to allocate resources toward developing and maintaining these efforts. Calls were made for city resolutions or policy changes that would provide long-term commitment and accountability (TRC Transcript – August 24, 2023; TRC Transcript – September 14, 2023).

3. Training for Community Members and Local Leaders

Community members consistently stressed the importance of training both residents and institutional actors in restorative justice practices. Testimonies underscored that meaningful healing and reconciliation require facilitation, listening, and conflict-resolution skills. By equipping people with these tools, the community can sustain its own healing efforts and respond more effectively to future harm.

Witnesses explained that city-supported training initiatives could empower local leaders, school staff, and neighborhood organizations to implement restorative principles. Participants suggested partnerships with experienced trainers and local nonprofits to build capacity. These trainings were viewed as investments in the community's long-term health (TRC Transcript – September 14, 2023; TRC Transcript – October 5, 2023).

4. Increased Funding for Restorative Justice Facilitators

Testimonies called for increased funding to support trained facilitators who could manage restorative justice sessions. Many emphasized that skilled facilitation is essential to maintaining safety, respect, and effectiveness in difficult conversations. Community-led efforts risk burnout, inconsistency, or diminished impact without adequate funding.

Participants recommended that the City of Iowa City provide financial support to ensure the long-term viability of restorative programs. They advocated for facilitator stipends, training scholarships, and administrative support to sustain this work. Witnesses framed this funding not as charity but as a necessary public investment in community healing (TRC Transcript – October 5, 2023; TRC Transcript—September 14, 2023).

5. School-Based Restorative Justice Programs

Community members also discussed the potential of implementing restorative justice practices in schools. Testimonies suggested that school-based programs could help reduce punitive disciplinary measures, improve student-teacher relationships, and create safer learning environments.

Participants urged local school districts to adopt restorative frameworks as an alternative to suspensions or expulsions, especially for students of color. They highlighted the importance of youth engagement in reconciliation processes and the role of education in fostering

accountability and empathy. Schools were seen as critical starting points for modeling restorative principles and cultivating a culture of care (TRC Transcript – August 17, 2023; TRC Transcript – September 14, 2023).

Mentorship, Youth Engagement and Leadership Training

1. Opportunities for Paid Internships, Scholarships, and Leadership Workshops

Testimonies underscored the importance of providing mentorship and leadership development opportunities for youth, especially those from marginalized communities. Community members highlighted the significance of initiatives offering young people guidance, skills development, and civic engagement pathways. Programs such as internships, scholarships, and workshops were cited as vital tools in empowering youth to become active participants in shaping a more equitable future.

Several testimonies called for intentional investment in leadership opportunities that are both financially accessible and culturally responsive. Witnesses stressed the importance of mentorship programs led by adults who understand the lived experiences of youth of color. These programs support individual growth and strengthen the broader community by fostering future leaders committed to justice and equity (TRC Transcript – August 17, 2023; TRC Transcript – September 14, 2023; TRC Transcript – September 21, 2023).

Youth-Led Reconciliation Initiatives

1. Organization of Youth-Led Forums

Youth participants and community leaders emphasized the transformative impact of youth-led forums focused on racial justice and reconciliation. Testimonies described how such initiatives provided young people with safe platforms to voice their experiences, contribute to policy conversations, and educate their peers and communities.

These youth-led events were praised for fostering dialogue, increasing awareness, and inspiring collective action. Community members advocated for increased institutional support and youth leadership recognition in racial equity efforts. Participants recommended embedding youth-driven reconciliation work into school curricula and community programming to sustain long-term change (TRC Transcript – August 17, 2023; TRC Transcript – September 21, 2023).

COVID-19 and Racial Injustice: Economic Impact and Recovery Efforts

Excluded Workers Fund Advocacy

1. Lack of Inclusion in Federal Pandemic Relief Programs

Testimonies from community members revealed that many marginalized workers, including undocumented individuals and gig workers, were excluded from federal pandemic relief

programs. This exclusion left many without financial support during a critical time of job loss and economic uncertainty. Community members described how entire sectors of the workforce—particularly those overrepresented by people of color—were overlooked by aid structures that did not consider immigration status or informal employment as valid for relief (TRC Transcript – May 25, 2023; TRC Transcript – July 6, 2023).

2. Advocacy for Financial Aid for Marginalized Workers

Speakers advocated for local and state-level funds, such as the Excluded Workers Fund, to supplement the gaps left by federal programs. Calls were made for financial assistance that specifically addressed the needs of communities, which were essential during the pandemic but received no support. Testimonies stressed the moral imperative for cities like Iowa City to invest in justice-centered recovery strategies (TRC Transcript – May 25, 2023; TRC Transcript—July 6, 2023).

3. Calls for Long-Term Economic Protections

Testimonies urged for structural changes to economic policy to prevent similar disparities in future crises. Suggestions included building permanent safety nets such as universal basic income, hazard pay for essential workers, and expanded unemployment insurance that includes all employment types. Community voices emphasized that lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic must inform future policymaking to ensure equity in disaster response (TRC Transcript – May 25, 2023).

Community Health and Racial Disparities in COVID-19 Response

1. Unequal Access to Healthcare and Vaccinations

Testimonies pointed out how Black, Latinx, and immigrant communities experienced difficulty accessing vaccines and testing sites due to transportation barriers, language limitations, and lack of localized outreach. These gaps delayed timely care and increased health risks in already vulnerable communities (TRC Transcript – May 25, 2023).

2. Medical Racism and Dismissal of Concerns

Speakers reported incidents where healthcare providers dismissed or downplayed the concerns of people of color during the pandemic. This medical neglect was attributed to racial bias and systemic inequities within healthcare institutions, reinforcing mistrust among these communities and impacting health outcomes (TRC Transcript – May 25, 2023).

3. Need for Targeted Public Health Strategies

Community members called for culturally responsive health outreach and services, including multilingual information campaigns and pop-up clinics in underserved neighborhoods. Testimonies advocated for sustained investments in public health infrastructure that prioritizes

racial equity, particularly in preparation for future health crises (TRC Transcript – May 25, 2023).

Support for Minority-Owned Businesses

Collaboration with City Officials

1. Advocacy for Increased Funding for Minority-Owned Businesses

Business owners and advocates testified about systemic barriers faced by Black, Latinx, and Indigenous entrepreneurs in accessing loans and grants. Many emphasized the need for city-funded programs specifically designed to support minority-owned enterprises, noting that broad funding mechanisms often overlook these businesses (TRC Transcript – August 3, 2023).

2. Challenges in Securing Loans and Business Development Resources

Speakers shared personal experiences of being denied financial assistance despite having viable business plans. Some pointed to discriminatory lending practices, while others noted that minority-owned businesses lacked access to technical assistance necessary to navigate bureaucratic processes. Testimonies called for tailored support and equity-focused funding models (TRC Transcript – August 3, 2023).

Equitable Access to City Contracts and Grants

1. Barriers in the City's Procurement Process

Testimonies indicated that minority-owned businesses were often excluded from city contracts due to opaque procurement procedures and lack of outreach. Community members urged the city to revise its contracting processes to prioritize inclusion and transparency (TRC Transcript – August 3, 2023).

2. Policy Changes to Promote Diversity in City-Funded Projects

Advocates recommended that the city adopt formal diversity goals and accountability measures for contracting and funding decisions. They called for equity audits and public reporting to ensure minority-owned businesses receive fair opportunities to participate in local economic development (TRC Transcript – August 3, 2023).

Replicable Culturally Specific and Community-Led Reconciliation Framework of the Iowa City TRC Model

1. Community Forums and Storytelling as Healing Tools

The TRC placed storytelling at the core of its healing strategy. Through public forums, individuals affected by systemic racism shared personal narratives of harm and resilience. These testimonies created a shared space for collective healing and truth-telling, offering a model in

which emotional testimony is not just a record of harm but also a catalyst for community solidarity and transformation.

Multiple transcripts (e.g., TRC Transcript – August 15, 2024; TRC Transcript—July 6, 2023; TRC Transcript—June 15, 2023) reflect the power of these storytelling sessions, in which participants described healing through being heard and understood in safe communal settings.

2. Cultural Celebrations and Art-Based Reconciliation

1. Community Forums and Storytelling as Healing Tools

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2. Cultural Celebrations and Art-Based Reconciliation

The Commission endorsed and supported cultural celebrations, performances, and art-making as mechanisms for community healing. These included music, poetry, dance, and visual arts rooted in diverse cultural traditions—especially those of Black, Indigenous, and Latinx communities in Iowa City.

These events allowed participants to assert cultural identity, resist historical erasure, and foster intergenerational healing. Witnesses emphasized how these art-based gatherings were empowering and therapeutic, especially for historically marginalized communities by state institutions (TRC Transcript – August 15, 2024).

3. Indigenous-Led Healing Circles and Ceremonial Practices

A distinctive aspect of the Iowa City TRC model was the collaboration with Indigenous leaders, who facilitated traditional healing practices such as ceremonial gatherings, storytelling circles, and land acknowledgment discussions. Indigenous partners like Donnielle Wanatee, Terry Medina, and Manape LaMere were critical in introducing Indigenous knowledge systems into the reconciliation process.

The inclusion of Indigenous ceremonial practices signaled a shift away from Eurocentric models of justice, prioritizing holistic and spiritual well-being through land-based and ancestral practices (*Referenced in multiple TRC sessions involving Native partners such as:* TRC Transcript – July 20, 2023; TRC Transcript – September 14, 2023; TRC Transcript – October 5, 2023).

4. Mental Health and Culturally Competent Counseling

Testimonies repeatedly stressed the need for culturally competent, trauma-informed care. Community members called for long-term investment in free or subsidized mental health services led by providers with lived experiences or training in racial trauma. The Commission supported this call, advocating for funding city-run mental health clinics and partnerships with culturally aware providers (TRC Transcript – August 15, 2024; TRC Transcript – July 6, 2023).

Effective reconciliation efforts must acknowledge the psychological toll of systemic oppression and offer tailored mental health support that centers on the lived experiences of marginalized communities.

5. Restorative Justice Circles with Institutional Stakeholders

The TRC also convened restorative justice dialogues that brought together impacted community members with representatives from city government, police, schools, and other institutions. These facilitated sessions encouraged truth-telling, accountability, and trust-building between parties.

These sessions were not adversarial but facilitated in ways that emphasized listening, acknowledgment, and forward-looking commitments. They were often moderated by trained facilitators from organizations like Think Peace (TRC Transcript – September 14, 2023).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to the City Council

The Iowa City Ad Hoc Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) proposes the following recommendations to the City Council to address systemic racial injustices and create sustainable change in the community. In addition to these recommendations, additional recommendations can be found in the Iowa City Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report.

1. Strengthen Law Enforcement Accountability and Oversight

- a. Implement an independent civilian review board with subpoena power to investigate police misconduct and racial profiling cases.
- b. Require racial bias training for law enforcement officers, with community involvement in curriculum design.
- c. Increase transparency in policing by mandating public access to data on arrests, stops, and use-of-force incidents, and racially motivated calls on suspicious black people in different locations and even at work places or own businesses especially at night.
- d. Data collection to pay attention to age and not just race to reflect the experiences of youth and adverse impacts on their development, learning and integration to the wider economy.
- e. Diversify the police force to reflect the community diversity through unbiased equal opportunity hiring practices.

2. Expand Economic and Housing Opportunities

- a. Establish stronger anti-discrimination policies for landlords and mortgage lenders, and real estate agencies to combat housing discrimination.
- b. Allocate city funds for down payment assistance programs targeting historically marginalized communities.

- c. Develop minority-focused small business grants to increase economic opportunities through apprenticeships and contracting.
- d. Support local community-initiated business programs on awareness and enforcement of tenant rights especially among immigrants and refugees using Section 8 Housing Vouchers. This group in particular faces frequent evictions and are often denied access to houses of choice. The City Housing Authority should study the causes of high house maintenance costs among Section 8 renters, which is often cited by property owners as one of the causes of high rates of denials section 8 voucher applicants. The study can help reduce denials, evictions and homelessness among vulnerable minority persons.
- e. Protection of Mobile Homes Owners and Renters regarding high fees. lack of enforcement of tenant rights and lack of maintenance to meet City codes, and use of Iowa City Police system by property owners to threaten or harass renters who complain to landlords.
- f.. City to conduct inclusive community engaged housing research on the problems of housing faced by minorities and impact of evictions which tend to occur at higher rates (13%) among the blacks compared to 2% among Whites, 3% among Hispanics/Latino and 4% among others according to the Johnson County (2022) Community Status Assessment Report (page 55). Random sampling and other approaches regularly used in housing studies under-represent minorities.
- g. Disproportionate homelessness among minorities exists despite lack of study on the prevalence and experiences of homeless minority persons with mental health, and the experiences of youth and disabled persons.
- h. Lack of enforcement of 2 months maximum deposits and regulations regarding when to apply the 2-month rule. Demanding more than 2 months-deposit in addition to guarantors as security has been a barrier to housing access and choice by newcomers to Iowa City like immigrants and refugees.
- i. Use of credit rating reports has impacted immigrants and youth adversely for they have not had an opportunity to build a credit history. Communities recommend a fund to be used for rent deposits and loans to qualified members of the community.

3. Improve Educational Equity

- a. Mandate implicit bias and anti-racism training for educators and school staff.
- b. Increase recruitment and hiring of educators of color to improve representation.
- c. Strengthen disciplinary policies to eliminate racial disparities in student suspensions and expulsions.

4. Promote Community Healing Initiatives

- a. Fund and support community-led healing initiatives, including counseling services and safe spaces for racial trauma recovery.

- b. Expand partnerships with grassroots organizations that focus on racial justice and reconciliation.

5. Establish a Permanent Truth and Reconciliation Office

- a. Create a permanent oversight body to continue TRC's work in advocating for racial justice.
- b. Ensure community members have direct input in policy reforms and city decision-making processes.
- c. Monitor progress on racism and discrimination through research and expert hearings on the progress being made on the recommendations and producing annual reports to the Iowa City Council.

Restorative Justice Initiatives

The TRC recognizes that justice must go beyond punitive measures and incorporate restorative practices, allowing healing and reconciliation.

1. Steps for Addressing Racial Injustices

- a. **Implement Community Restorative Justice Circles:** These circles would allow affected individuals to engage in dialogue with those responsible for harm, fostering understanding and healing.
- b. **Facilitate Racial Healing Workshops:** Create safe spaces for community members to process racial trauma and work toward collective solutions.
- c. **Enhance Police-Community Relations:** Require police officers to participate in facilitated community dialogues to rebuild trust and accountability.

2. Programs or Policies for Community Healing

- a. **Mental Health and Trauma Support:** Develop a city-funded program offering free therapy and support groups for those impacted by racial injustice.
- b. **Youth Engagement and Mentorship:** Establish mentorship programs that empower young people from marginalized communities to become leaders in racial justice efforts.
- c. **Restorative Housing Programs:** Address historical displacement by prioritizing housing assistance for communities affected by redlining and gentrification.

Dedicating/Renaming Public Spaces

1. Proposed Spaces to Be Renamed

- a. **Rename Public Parks and Streets:** Consider renaming parks and streets in honor of individuals who have been pivotal in Iowa City's racial justice movement.
- b. **Create Black Lives Matter Memorials:** Designate spaces to commemorate the Black Lives Matter protests and the efforts of local activists.

2. Rationale for Selections and Community Feedback

- a. Community members have consistently voiced the need for greater representation in public spaces.
- b. Naming public areas after civil rights leaders and activists serves as an acknowledgment of past injustices and a commitment to ongoing racial equity efforts.

Policy and Institutional Reforms

1. Measures to Ensure Long-Term Racial Justice Efforts

- a. Enforce **anti-discrimination laws** more rigorously in housing, employment, and policing.
- b. Allocate city resources for **minority-owned businesses** and economic empowerment programs.
- c. Expand **educational equity policies**, including increased funding for schools in underserved neighborhoods.

2. Recommendations for Law Enforcement, Education, Housing, and Public Policy

- a. **Law Enforcement:** Mandatory **de-escalation training** and independent review of police misconduct complaints are required.
- b. **Education:** Develop **racial justice curricula** that reflect diverse histories and experiences.
- c. **Housing:** Introduce **stronger tenant protections** against discrimination and unjust evictions.
- d. **Public Policy:** Establish a **racial equity task force** to ensure that all city policies align with justice and reconciliation efforts.

Sustaining Truth and Reconciliation Efforts

1. Suggestions for Future Commissions or Ongoing Oversight

- a. Establish a **Truth and Reconciliation Council** as a permanent city entity.
- b. Provide **ongoing funding** for racial justice initiatives, ensuring sustained impact beyond TRC's work.

2. Community-Driven Accountability Structures

- a. **Citizen Oversight Committees:** Allow community members to oversee police conduct, educational policies, and racial justice initiatives.
- b. **Annual Equity Reports:** Require city departments to release public reports tracking racial disparities and progress toward equity.

- c. **Community Advisory Boards:** Form resident-led advisory groups that provide input on racial justice initiatives and hold public officials accountable.

These recommendations reflect the voices and concerns of Iowa City residents as documented in the TRC transcripts. The City Council can take meaningful steps toward a more equitable and just community by implementing these policies.

COMMISSIONER PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES ON THE IOWA CITY TRC

Personal Experiences and Reflections

Commissioners of the Iowa City Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) brought unique perspectives shaped by their lived experiences. Many found the work emotionally intense and personally transformative. As the commission's work unfolded, many members came away with new perspectives on justice, activism, and community resilience.

Commissioner Gathua spoke about the emotional toll of the TRC work, describing how both commissioners and community members were deeply affected by the stories shared.

"The whole work... was triggering... for all of us, it was painful, and I am able to talk for them, because we voiced this periodically, and we shared even publicly."

— Commissioner Wangui Gathua

Commissioner Kiche reflected on the emotional cost of participating in the TRC, particularly when dealing with systemic racism in housing and policing. Despite this, he believed the process could offer both exposure and healing.

"It's a time when you are reminded of the trauma, but it's also a time when you might derive some form of healing... But we also learned that a commission of this nature triggers more suffering too."

— Commissioner Amos Kiche

Commissioner Merritt offered a deeply personal reflection on the emotional and practical challenges she faced during her time on the TRC. Initially driven by ambitious goals, she came to recognize the limits of individual effort in confronting systemic injustice. Her experience underscored the need for collective support, trust, and sustainable engagement in justice work:

“I want to say, well, actually, biggest lesson I learned. I learned my limitations... I had grand ideas of what I wanted to see done and what I wanted to do... and I realized that... I do not help the cause by overextending myself... There’s a trust that we’re going to have to trust the people that we’re working with... We don’t all have to bear it on our shoulders... and we need to also ask for help.”

— Commissioner Lauren Merritt

Commissioner Simmons emphasized that the TRC was meant to interrogate the deeper truths of how structural racism operates—not just to collect stories.

“The key concept around Truth and Reconciliation is truly around raising the issue of what is the truth of how the system actually works.”

— Commissioner Chad Simmons

Commissioner Mohamed expressed disillusionment with the system’s response, noting that community suffering often went ignored. She voiced deep frustration with the TRC’s inability to move from discussion to action. She felt that while the commission acknowledged community suffering, it failed to implement solutions, leaving residents feeling ignored and disheartened.

“...you cannot have issue and just talk about it... people need solution.”

— Commissioner Lubna Mohamed

Challenges Faced During the Commission’s Work

From public mistrust to institutional resistance, commissioners navigated a variety of obstacles that complicated their mission.

1. Distrust from the Community

Commissioner Simmons emphasized that lack of privacy and secure spaces hindered honest testimony, undermining public trust.

“If the work required it to be taped in such a way it did not create a sense of security or a sense of confidentiality... it will never be confidential. So the location or the parameters in which you allow me to share can have an impact on whether I really can share or not.”

— Commissioner Chad Simmons

2. Lack of Institutional Cooperation

Commissioner Louis Tassinary explained that working within city structures meant they couldn’t guarantee confidentiality, which limited community participation and data access.

“We really couldn’t guarantee confidentiality... If we had been a private organization, we could have done something very differently.”

— Commissioner Louis Tassinari

3. Ambiguity of Mandates and Role Clarity

Commissioner Dillard expressed the emotional and organizational conflict within the TRC stemming from an unclear mandate and overwhelming expectations. She revealed the tension between the desire to make meaningful change and the vague, unrealistic goal of ‘fixing all racism,’ which left the commission feeling unsupported and set up to fail.

“I think that was an internal battle that we struggled with from the very beginning, because it wasn’t very clear... they gave us an impossible task of life, ‘Here, go fix all racism,’ and that is a huge, wide scope... So we often said, and I’ve always said, that we’re kind of set up for failure”

— Commissioner Chastity Dillard

4. Resource Limitations

Commissioner Dillard shared how structural delays and lack of administrative support hampered the commission’s ability to take timely action.

“We were ready to try a lot of different things, but... the city council told us we couldn’t move forward unless we had a facilitator... it took almost two years.”

— Commissioner Chastity Dillard

Positive Aspects of the Commission

Commissioners underscored key successes in community empowerment, healing, and policy engagement despite barriers.

1. Empowering the Community

Commissioner Kiche emphasized the importance of giving people a platform to express long-silenced grievances—an act he described as essential to healing.

“It is okay for people to be given an opportunity to express their complaints... They don’t want to be hurt by the same institutions that are supposed to help them.”

— Commissioner Amos Kiche

2. Restorative Justice Approaches

Commissioner Lauren Merritt described how restorative listening spaces created opportunities for people to feel heard and understood—even during conflict.

“...have a place where they feel like they being heard and not being pushed aside... it warmed my heart. And to be a part of that was, was amazing”

— Commissioner Lauren Merritt

3. Policy Influence

Commissioner Amos Kiche noted how the TRC's investigative work challenged the city to confront uncomfortable truths around systemic inequity.

“It forces you... for policy-wise reasons, to really touch into the hidden areas that people don't want to talk about.”

— Commissioner Amos Kiche

Lessons for Future TRCs

Based on their experiences, commissioners outlined several **key lessons for future truth and reconciliation efforts**:

1. **Stronger Institutional Support:** Future commissions should receive adequate funding, legal backing, and administrative support to ensure smoother operations.
2. **Greater Community Trust-Building:** It is essential to build relationships with marginalized communities before launching public hearings. More grassroots outreach and partnerships with local organizations can enhance credibility.
3. **Enhanced Confidentiality Measures:** Given concerns about retaliation, future commissions should have stronger confidentiality protocols to protect testimony providers.
4. **Structured Internal Governance:** The TRC faced internal conflicts and leadership challenges, which could be mitigated with clearer governance structures, defined roles, and better mediation processes.
5. **Long-Term Commitments:** Racial justice work cannot be completed in a short-term commission. Future efforts should integrate with long-term city policies and initiatives to ensure sustained impact.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

The Iowa City Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) faced various challenges in fulfilling its internal and external mission. These challenges impacted the commission's ability to implement recommendations effectively and gain widespread community trust. The obstacles ranged from legal and procedural barriers to political resistance and community skepticism.

Internal and External Obstacles in Executing the TRC's Mission

The Iowa City Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) encountered several internal and external obstacles while attempting to fulfill its mission. Legal and procedural barriers significantly constrained the commission's operational flexibility, impacting the commission's ability to respond swiftly to community needs. Commissioners consistently expressed frustration over bureaucratic protocols that required city council approval for expenditures exceeding \$60,000, thus limiting their effectiveness and independence.

Community skepticism posed another significant external challenge, largely stemming from perceived ineffectiveness of previous racial justice initiatives. Commissioners often had to address skepticism from community members who doubted the efficacy and sincerity of the TRC's efforts due to historical disappointments. This skepticism occasionally hindered meaningful community engagement and trust-building efforts.

Implementation and Follow-through of Recommendations

The commission faced considerable issues related to the implementation and follow-through of its recommendations. Structural barriers, including rigid financial management protocols, impeded the timely execution of proposed community initiatives. Despite identifying essential community projects, commissioners repeatedly encountered difficulties accessing funds promptly due to procedural requirements, undermining the timely implementation of recommendations.

Overview of Commissioner Interviews: Challenges, Reflections, and Lessons Learned

Interviews with TRC commissioners revealed key insights into the challenges faced, their reflections, and critical lessons learned throughout the process. Commissioners frequently highlighted the need for clearer expectations, stronger internal coordination, and improved

external communication strategies. Reflecting on these experiences, commissioners recommended early-stage clarity regarding roles, expectations, and communication protocols to better manage operational challenges and community expectations.

Misaligned Expectations

Misaligned expectations among commissioners, city council, and community members significantly hindered TRC operations. Commissioners highlighted discrepancies between community expectations and the commission's actual operational capabilities, particularly concerning budget control and implementation authority. These misalignments created tension and frustration, highlighting the necessity for greater transparency and clarity in setting realistic expectations at the outset of the commission's work.

Internal Disagreements and Leadership Disputes

The commission faced notable internal disagreements and leadership disputes. Commissioners reported challenges related to differing perspectives on priorities and methodologies, which occasionally impeded cohesive action. Leadership disputes further complicated matters, with some commissioners expressing concerns regarding the distribution of authority and decision-making responsibilities within the commission. These internal conflicts sometimes led to operational paralysis, delaying essential actions and undermining community trust.

External Consultants and Commissioner Involvement

The involvement of external consultants posed additional challenges. Commissioners reported frustration with consultants who did not sufficiently involve them in decision-making processes or adequately incorporate their input. Commissioners criticized the disproportionate allocation of funds to consultants, particularly the limited engagement of commissioners in shaping project scopes and implementation strategies. This lack of involvement weakened commissioner ownership over projects and diminished the effectiveness of community-led initiatives.

Lack of University Involvement

Commissioners expressed disappointment regarding the lack of substantial involvement from the University of Iowa. The university's limited engagement represented a missed opportunity for partnership, resource-sharing, and intellectual contribution to reconciliation efforts. Commissioners frequently emphasized that greater university involvement could have enhanced the commission's credibility, expanded its resource base, and provided essential support for community education and healing initiatives.

COMMISSIONERS' ENVISIONMENT OF THE CITY COUNCIL ACTION ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Commissioners have repeatedly emphasized their expectation that the City Council should adopt TRC recommendations seriously and implement substantial policy changes. Commissioners consistently voiced that the council needs to allocate resources and legislative support to address systemic issues identified in the TRC's findings, particularly regarding policing reform, housing equality, economic empowerment, and educational equity. Commissioners also highlighted the need for ongoing accountability and transparent mechanisms to track how recommendations are being implemented, emphasizing that the City Council's responsibility extends beyond merely accepting recommendations—they must actively fund and drive them forward.

Concerns and Hopes for Implementation

Commissioners have expressed both cautious optimism and clear concerns about implementation. On the hopeful side, commissioners feel that the community-driven approach and detailed documentation of racial injustices provide compelling evidence for necessary reforms. They also hope the TRC's extensive public engagement will translate into strong community backing for implementation.

However, commissioners frequently raised concerns about bureaucratic delays, resistance from political stakeholders, insufficient funding, and a lack of sustained commitment. They worried that implementation might be watered down or deprioritized due to political pressures or competing city interests.

Possible Barriers to Execution and Proposed Solutions

Commissioners identified several barriers:

1. **Political Will & City Council Resistance:** Commissioners expressed fears about political reluctance to adopt more controversial recommendations, especially regarding policing reforms or reparative economic measures.
 - o **Proposed Solution:** Commissioners suggested establishing regular accountability sessions and ongoing community engagement meetings to maintain pressure on the council.

2. **Funding Constraints:** Lack of funding was cited as a major potential barrier, particularly for initiatives requiring substantial financial investment (e.g., housing vouchers, reparations, economic programs).
 - o **Proposed Solution:** Commissioners recommended pursuing state and federal grants, partnerships with local nonprofits, and leveraging public-private collaborations to diversify funding sources.
3. **Bureaucratic Delays:** Commissioners consistently identified administrative delays and red tape as significant barriers.
 - o **Proposed Solution:** Clear timelines and transparency measures were recommended, along with assigning specific city staff to manage the TRC implementation process.

Fear-Based Barriers to Execution

Commissioners directly acknowledged that fear-based barriers were substantial:

1. **Community Retribution:** Commissioners noted some community members feared backlash for participating in truth-telling sessions, potentially discouraging broader engagement and weakening the legitimacy of recommendations.
 - o **Proposed Solution:** Commissioners suggested protective measures such as anonymous submissions, third-party facilitators, and community education campaigns to foster a safer environment.
2. **Political Fear (City Council):** Fear that political figures or council members may distance themselves from controversial recommendations was a recurrent theme. Commissioners were concerned that political risks might deter meaningful action, especially during election cycles.
 - o **Proposed Solution:** Emphasis was placed on creating nonpartisan support networks and public transparency, allowing community pressure to incentivize political leaders to act courageously.
3. **State Funding Denials:** Commissioners openly worried about scenarios in which the state might deny or withdraw funding due to political disagreements, particularly with recommendations perceived as politically contentious (e.g., reparations, police oversight).
 - o **Proposed Solution:** Commissioners recommended exploring diversified funding, including local foundations, private-sector partnerships, and federal grants to insulate against potential state-level pushback.

RESOURCES, REGULATIONS, FACILITIES, AND FUNDING: OPERATIONAL CONSTRAINTS AND PROCEDURAL CHALLENGES

City Protocols and Bureaucratic Constraints

The Iowa City Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) operated under stringent city regulations and financial oversight, significantly restricting its operational independence. Specific city protocols mandated city council approval for any expenditure exceeding \$60,000. This bureaucratic requirement frequently delayed initiatives hindered real-time responsiveness and reduced the TRC's flexibility in addressing immediate community needs (TRC Transcript – September 14, 2023; TRC Transcript – October 5, 2023).

Additionally, funding reallocations required formal city council approval, introducing delays that impacted the commission's agility. Commissioners frequently expressed frustration about these procedural hurdles, emphasizing that constant city oversight and approval processes compromised their efficiency and effectiveness (TRC Transcript – August 17, 2023).

Structural and Procedural Financial Challenges

1. Allocation Imbalance and Underfunded Community Initiatives

The TRC was allocated \$450,000, of which \$359,457 was spent in fiscal year 2024. The TRC had no expenditures during the FY2020, FY2021, FY2022, and FY2023. A substantial portion—\$326,546.51 (**72.57% of the total allocation and 90.8% of the total expenditures**)—was directed towards consultant fees, primarily external facilitators. Commissioners frequently expressed concerns that grassroots community initiatives, essential for genuine reconciliation, were critically underfunded compared to consultant expenditures (TRC Transcript – September 21, 2023; TRC Transcript – October 5, 2023).

Other expenditures included \$9,900 for report writing, \$3,800 for venue rentals, \$3,414 for food and catering, \$1,797 for advertising and production, and \$14,000 for miscellaneous items such as promotional materials and event supplies (swag, videographer, plaques, t-shirts, brochures, a table, tablecloth, chairs, and printed materials). See Table 2 for more expenditure details. These detailed allocations were often points of contention, with commissioners arguing that the resources dedicated to consultants far outweighed direct community engagement and reconciliation efforts (Commissioners' Interviews, 2024).

2. Limited Authority to Disburse Funds Directly

The TRC's lack of direct authority over its budget was a major operational obstacle. City administrators strictly controlled financial disbursements. Commissioners frequently voiced their dissatisfaction, indicating that restrictive financial control severely impeded their ability to fund urgent community projects and initiatives promptly. The commission's limited autonomy was consistently identified as a significant barrier to achieving effective reconciliation outcomes (TRC Transcript – August 17, 2023; TRC Transcript – September 14, 2023).

3. Significant Unused Funds Due to Procedural Barriers

Despite clear community needs, \$90,542 of the allocated funds remained unspent, primarily due to bureaucratic procedures and delays. Commissioners highlighted that complex approval processes substantially delayed project initiation and access to necessary financial resources. The persistent presence of these unused funds was repeatedly discussed, underscoring commissioners' frustration and emphasizing the urgent need for procedural reforms to enhance operational effectiveness and maximize resource utilization (TRC Transcript – August 24, 2023; TRC Transcript – October 19, 2023). See Table 2 for more expenditure details.

Table 2 Iowa City Ad Hoc TRC Expenditures (\$) (Fiscal Year 2024)

	Expense Category	Amount (\$)	Percentage (%)
Consultancy Services	Kearns & West	326,546.51	72.57
	Think Peace Learning and Support Hub		
	Healing Partners		
	Native Partners		
TRC Operations	Venue Rentals	3,800.00	0.84
	Food and Catering	3,414.00	0.76
	Advertising and Promotion	1,797.00	0.40
	Miscellaneous	14,000.00	3.11
Report Writing	Report Writing Services	9,900.00	2.20
	Subtotal of Funds Spent	359,457.51	79.88
Unused Funds		90,542.49	20.12
Total Allocated Budget		450,000.00	100.0

Facilities and Logistical Challenges

The TRC faced logistical constraints, particularly limited access to suitable venues for public hearings and community events. The commission spent approximately \$3,800 on venue rentals, yet access remained inconsistent and often inadequate. These logistical difficulties, compounded

by financial restrictions and delays in securing city council approval, negatively impacted public participation and hindered effective community engagement. Commissioners frequently discussed the necessity of dedicated, accessible facilities to improve consistency and visibility for their public events (TRC Transcript – July 20, 2023; TRC Transcript – September 7, 2023).

Advocacy for Greater Autonomy and Procedural Reforms

Commissioners consistently advocated for increased financial autonomy and streamlined procedural frameworks throughout their meetings. They urged procedural reforms to expedite funding allocation, reduce dependence on external consultants, and enhance investment in local community-led initiatives. Transcripts frequently captured commissioners' appeals for increased budgetary autonomy and procedural flexibility, highlighting an ongoing dialogue with city officials aimed at necessary governance reforms to support more effective reconciliation (TRC Transcript – August 17, 2023; TRC Transcript – September 14, 2023).

Conclusion: Navigating Structural Barriers for Effective Reconciliation

Rigid city protocols, financial restrictions, and procedural complexities significantly constrained the Iowa City TRC's operational effectiveness. Despite these challenges, the commission persistently advocated for reforms and greater autonomy. Commissioners' ongoing advocacy and critical dialogue underscored their commitment to establishing a more responsive, community-centered reconciliation process. Addressing these structural barriers is essential for enabling effective, locally driven reconciliation and healing efforts.

APPENDIX 1

Prepared by: Council members Janice Weiner and Laura Bergus

Resolution No. 20-228

Resolution establishing Ad Hoc Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Whereas, in Resolution No. 20-159 (Initial Commitments addressing the Black Lives Matter Movement and Systemic Racism in the wake of the murder of George Floyd by the Minneapolis Police and calls for action from protesters and residents), the Iowa City City Council resolved as follows:

By October 1, 2020, create an ad hoc Truth and Reconciliation Commission to bear witness to the truth of racial injustice in Iowa City and to carry out restorative justice, through the collection of testimony and public hearings, with such work to include a recommendation to the Council of a plan for dedicating and/or renaming public spaces and/or rights of way in honor of the Black Lives Matter movement; and,

Whereas, the City Council committed to allocate City funds of \$1 during the present Fiscal Year to support Resolution 20-159, which includes a variety of initiatives, among them the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; and,

Whereas, truth and reconciliation underscores the imperative that confronting and reckoning with the past is necessary for successful transitions from conflict, injustice, resentment and tension to peace, equality and connectedness; and,

Whereas, while we acknowledge that other forms of injustice and challenges have occurred over the course of the history of the city of Iowa City, the focus of this Commission is on race; and,

Whereas, the City Council acknowledges the existence of painful, systemic, persistent, and varied forms of racial injustice in Iowa City, and acknowledges that such injustice persists despite past efforts to address it, consistent with observations that systemic racism and white privilege are deeply resistant to change; and,

Whereas, the Iowa City community must look comprehensively into its past and bear witness to the truth of racial injustice in order to provide the best possible foundation for moving into a future of equity based on healing and hope; and,

Whereas, the City Council recognizes that, for a Truth and Reconciliation process to be meaningful, it must include bold action to confront privilege, stimulate difficult conversations,

and reach and engage a full cross-section of the community, including those in the community not inclined to engage or resistant to engagement; and,

Whereas, a comprehensive process will require that City of Iowa City departments and the City Council itself participate, including individual councilors, in good faith, in the process and to actively encourage broad participation throughout the community, and the City Council hereby commits to such participation and encouragement; and,

Whereas, creation of an Ad Hoc Truth and Reconciliation Commission is in the best interests of the City and its residents.

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved by the City Council of the City of Iowa City, that:

1. The Ad Hoc Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is hereby established.

20-228

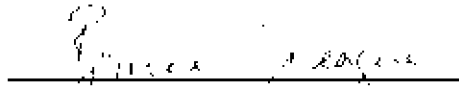
2. The TRC shall have nine members who are representative of the City's BIPOC communities and organizations, including those who have direct lived experience with systemic racism, as well as experts who support those communities. To the extent possible, as determined by the City Council, the TRC shall include representation from groups such as the Iowa Freedom Riders, the Black Voices Project, the South District Neighborhood Association, the Iowa City Human Rights Commission, and the Community Police Review Board. Johnson County residency is required. Iowa City residency is preferred but not required if an applicant offers expertise or representation not available from applicants who reside in Iowa City. Members of other City boards and commissions are eligible to serve on the TRC.
3. Applications for membership on the TRC shall be announced, advertised, and available in the same manner as those for all City boards and commissions.
4. The TRC shall select the Chair, who when present will preside over all meetings, and the Vice-Chair, who will serve as chair in the absence of the Chair.
5. Within the charges of the TRC set forth herein, the TRC is not required to seek approval from the City Council, mayor, or city manager to set its own agenda and prioritize its activities.
6. The TRC shall be facilitated by an independent consultant, funded by the City, with expertise in group facilitation and human rights, and to the extent possible, experience with diversity, implicit bias, mediation and conflict resolution, until such time as the TRC concludes by the favorable vote of at least three-fourths of all the members of the TRC (7/9) that facilitation is no longer needed.
7. To conform with the requirements of laws pertaining to open meetings and public records and to facilitate transparency and public education and participation, administrative/clerical assistance and media/event assistance shall be provided by City

staff as determined by the City Manager and City Clerk. Media assistance may be supplemented by outside expertise on a case-by-case basis if the Commission believes it will substantially expand outreach.

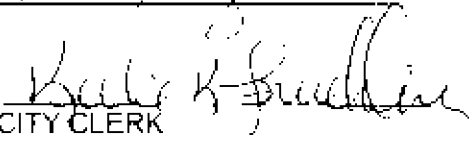
8. The TRC shall determine the frequency and conduct of its meetings. The meetings will be open to the public and conducted in accordance with Chapter 21 of the Iowa Code. Records, documentation, and communications of the TRC will be public records under Chapter 22 of the Iowa Code.
- g. The TRC shall serve from the date of appointment of all members to June 30, 2022. The TRC shall have an organizational meeting no later than 30 days after the appointment of all members.
10. Within 90 days of its organizational meeting, the TRC shall recommend to City Council a preliminary budget for funds needed to carry out the charges of the TRC beyond what existing City staff, programs, and services can provide.
11. The charges of the TRC are as follows:
 - A. Fact-Finding The TRC shall collect evidence, including first-hand testimony, of discrimination and racial injustice in multiple settings and compile a complete record of racial injustices that will inform and support the fundamental institutional and policy reforms necessary to address systemic racism.
 - B. Truth-Telling The TRC shall:
 - 1) Provide multiple fora and creative opportunities for persons impacted and traumatized by racial injustice to share their stories of racial injustice and experience to be heard by: (a) fellow communities of color; (b) a broad cross section of the entire Iowa City community; and (c) key decisionmakers in city government, the business community and the University;
 - 2) Explore ways to provide such opportunities through art, music, theater, workshops, rallies and other forms of congregation, multimedia and listening designed to reveal truths that cannot be fully expressed in traditional fora; and,
 - 3) Create a repository for community stories expressed in multiple media (written, video, audio, art) that can be catalogued and used to educate and inform members of the community.
 - C. Reconciliation The TRC shall:
 - 1) Provide opportunity for and facilitate direct conversation among and between community members of color, white community members and representatives of various sectors in which people of color experience discrimination and injustice (e.g. police and protesters, landlords and tenants, students and teachers, patients and health care providers, business owners and staff);
 - 2) Create a replicable model that provides a structure for enabling these conversations throughout the city;
 - 3) Make available opportunities for a broad cross section of the community to learn about discrimination and racial injustice in our community; and,
 - 4) Identify and recommend to the City Council institutional and policy reforms, new social practices, expectations, protocols, habits, rituals, conversations and celebrations that will move Iowa City toward a shared experience of race and difference, justice and equity and community and harmony.

12. The TRC shall strive to provide a safe and supportive space for its work, premised on mutual respect, and shall conduct its work so as to promote healing and justice. The TRC shall consider the possibility of adverse actions against those who participate in its work. The TRC shall carefully consider mechanisms to protect participants, and shall work to support those who allege harm due to their participation in the TRC process.
13. The TRC shall submit periodic updates to City Council to include, but not be limited to: its plans for community education; recommendations for Council action; requests for resources the TRC needs to carry out its work; and recommendations to dedicate and/or rename public spaces and/or rights of way in honor of the Black Lives Matter movement.
14. By May 1, 2022 the TRC shall submit to City Council:
 - A. A report summarizing the work of the TRC.
 - B. A repository of community stories expressed in multiple media (written, video, audio, art).
 - C. Recommendations to the City Council for: 1) Institutional and policy reforms to end systemic racism; 2) Opportunities to create new social practices, expectations, protocols, habits, rituals and celebrations that will move Iowa City toward a shared experience of race and difference, justice and equity and community and harmony; 3) Measures to enhance the autonomy/security/sovereignty of communities of color and mitigate disparities in social and economic power; and 4) A recommendation on whether and in what form the work of the Commission should continue.
15. At any time in its work, and no later than June 30, 2022, the TRC shall strive to submit to City Council a replicable model and structure for conversations between people of color and white community members and representatives of various sectors in which people of color experience discrimination and injustice.
16. Absent further action by the City Council, the TRC will dissolve on June 30, 2022.

Passed and approved this 15 day of September, 2020.



Mayor

ATTEST: 

CITY CLERK

Approved by 



APPENDIX 2

Timeline of Key Events for the Iowa City Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

2020: Formation of the TRC

- **June 2020:** In the wake of widespread protests following George Floyd's murder, the City of Iowa City recognized the need for a formal Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to address racial injustice, inequality, and community healing. A city council initiative led to the formation of the TRC with the goal of promoting racial equity and justice in Iowa City.
- **Fall 2020:** The TRC was officially launched, bringing together commissioners from various backgrounds, with a mandate to gather testimonies, facilitate dialogues, and make recommendations for policies and practices that could address racial disparities in the community.

2021: Early Struggles and Leadership Instability

- **March 2021:** Royceann Porter was appointed as the first chair of the TRC, but leadership instability began to surface shortly after. Porter faced internal and external challenges related to community engagement and the commission's visibility, which led to her resignation. Amid mounting pressure, Royceann Porter resigned as chair. Her departure led to a leadership vacuum, which delayed progress on the TRC's work. Commissioners struggled to find a stable direction under these conditions.
- **April 2021:** Mohamed Traore assumed leadership as the new chair, only to resign a few months later, citing burnout and the difficulty of steering the commission amid political tensions.
- **July 2022:** Amel Ali took over as the third chair, but her leadership was similarly short-lived due to disagreements with the City Council over funding and the commission's operational autonomy.
- **August 2022:** Chastity Dillard, who had served as vice chair under Amel Ali, assumed the role of interim chair following Ali's suspension in August. After Ali formally resigned on September 27th, the commission voted for a permanent chair, which Dillard won, becoming the last chair of the commission.

2022: Tensions with the City Council

- **February 2022:** The TRC faced heightened tensions with the Iowa City Council, primarily over the commission's calls for greater financial independence. The council

imposed strict limitations on the TRC's budget and authority, creating significant barriers to its progress.

- **August 2022:** City Council members, led by Mayor Bruce Teague, proposed dismantling the TRC, citing frustration over the lack of progress and ongoing internal conflict within the commission. This proposal sparked backlash from community members and advocacy groups, temporarily halting the commission's work.
- **October 2022:** After public outcry and continued internal debates, the City Council agreed to a six-month extension for the TRC, but only on the condition of a new leadership structure and clearer goals for the commission's activities.

2023: Request for Extension and Continued Challenges

- **February 2023:** The TRC, under new leadership, presented a detailed plan for continuing its work. It called for more transparency, consistent community engagement, and revised financial structures to allow for more flexibility in responding to urgent community needs.
- **May 2023:** In light of its ongoing struggles to meet its objectives, the TRC formally requested an extension of its mandate. The request focused on the need for additional time to complete the fact-finding phase, facilitate more community forums, and develop actionable recommendations for the City Council.
- **July 2023:** The City Council granted the TRC's extension but revised the deadline to December 31, 2024. However, the TRC continued to face internal conflicts regarding its purpose and scope, as some commissioners felt the City Council ignored their recommendations.
- **September 2023:** The TRC presented a set of recommendations on racial equity and justice, but the City Council remained resistant to implementing key aspects of these proposals, further straining the relationship between the two bodies.

2024: The Final Push and Dissolution

- **December 2024:** The TRC faced its final hurdle as the City Council denied a request for yet another extension of the commission's mandate. By the end of the year, the TRC was effectively dissolved, and the City Council declared that other city agencies would take up all efforts related to the commission's goals.
- **January 2025:** The dissolution of the TRC left many community members disappointed, with some arguing that the commission's potential to drive meaningful change was never fully realized due to institutional resistance and lack of support from key political figures.

APPENDIX 3

Consultants Final Report; TRC Agenda 5-16-2024

<https://www.iowa-city.org/WebLink/Browse.aspx?id=2186968&dbid=0&repo=CityofIowaCity>

TRC videos can be found here:

<https://citychannel4.com/boards-commissions-and-committees.html>

<https://www.icgov.org/government/departments-and-divisions/police-department/disproportionate-minority-contact-study>

report of study

<https://www.iowa-city.org/WebLink/DocView.aspx?id=2029774&dbid=0&repo=CityofIowaCity>

Annual report

<https://www.icgov.org/home/showpublisheddocument/2274/638581907062570000>

<https://www.iowa-city.org/WebLink/Browse.aspx?id=1481390&dbid=0&repo=CityofIowaCity>

https://policescorecard.org/ia/police-department/iowa-city	Page	75
https://www.icgov.org/home/showpublisheddocument/867/638157030419830000		

Police training on implicit bias [NYPD Study: Implicit Bias Training's Effect On Policing Unclear : NPR](#)

Hispanic	homelessness
https://www.press-citizen.com/story/news/local/2024/07/19/immigrant-community-asks-iowa-city-for-minority-specific-affordable-housing-help/74444406007/	

<https://cbs2iowa.com/news/local/escucha-mi-voz-members-talk-on-affordable-housing-at-iowa-city-council-meeting-department-housing-urban-development-immigrant-immigration>

<https://iowacitycatholicworker.org/application/files/4617/1077/2078/SaludTechoYTrabajo.HealthEquityReport.3.8.24.pdf>