

Women's Justice Center Centro de Justicia Para Mujeres

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PO Box 7510, Santa Rosa, CA 95407



March 30, 2015

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Sonoma County Law Enforcement Task Force
Santa Rosa, CA

To Sonoma County Law Enforcement Task Force,

We're writing to comment on the draft recommendations of the Law Enforcement Task Force Community Policing Sub-Committee as they pertain to women and to the Task Force goals, in particular the goals of ending officer excessive use of force and enhancing community policing.

On January 8, 2015 we received an alarming statistic from the Sheriff's Department in response to our public record request for sex/race demographics of the department. As of January 2015, of the 232 sworn law enforcement officers employed by the Sonoma County Sheriff's Department, only 8 of these officers, a mere 3%, are female; far below the national average of 15%, abysmally far from parity at 50%, and completely unchanged from over 20 years ago. (See Sheriff's reply below.)

That we have only 3% female law enforcement officers in the Sheriff's Department in the year 2015 is, by itself, of extreme concern. The Sheriff's exclusion of women calls for urgent targeted analysis and remedies, especially given that for two decades the Sheriff has defiantly pushed back against all attempts by the community, government agencies, and by the courts to reverse the department's entrenched hostility to women.

But we mainly want to express our concern that the Task Force draft recommendations themselves have neglected to address this exclusion of women in any specific way. In fact, the recommendations don't even specify the low percentage of women, though they do specify the fact that there are only 9% Latino officers. Though the Task Force has certainly had this data on the Sheriff's exclusion of women at hand, it has deemed it virtually irrelevant to the Task Force goals other than to insert the two words, "and women" at a couple points along the way.

The recommendations also provide no specific means for correcting this defect. These omissions are a major disservice to the community given the many ways in which the exclusion of female law enforcement officers bears directly on the issues the Task Force has been called on to resolve, especially the issue of officer-involved-shootings and officer excessive use of force. In fact, it is unlikely that any of the goals of ending officer excessive force or instilling community policing norms, can be achieved without specifically and centrally targeting an end to the hyper-male culture and highly distorted male makeup of the department.

Multiple studies by both government and academics have repeatedly demonstrated that officer race makes little difference in rates of officer-involved-shootings and use of excessive force. But officer sex is highly significant. Female officers having dramatically lower rates than male officers of officer-involved-shootings and excessive use of force, dramatically lower rates of officer misconduct of every kind, and dramatically lower rates of citizen complaints.

Further, the studies show that female officers overall outperform male officers in precisely the community policing traits the Task Force claims to be seeking. Most germane, female officers tend to de-escalate volatile situations where male officers tend more to respond to these situations as a challenge and to escalate.

The gravity of the situation in our Sheriff's Department is greatly magnified by the decades that have gone by in which the Sheriff's exclusion of women has been allowed to continue. As a result, the department's hostility to women has become badly institutionalized and cemented into a warped and dangerous hyper-masculine culture. The problem is so entrenched that despite over a dozen lawsuits by female officers, interventions by both federal and state departments of justice, community petitions and pressure, the Sheriff's exclusion of female officers has not budged from 20 plus years ago - to the great detriment of the community.

Yet despite the obvious gravity of this problem, the only reference to women at all in the recommendations comes at two or three points after laying out detailed timetables and targeted remedies for the hiring, recruiting, and bridge building to the Latino community, where the two words, "and women" are tacked on to the end of a sentence. This is perhaps worse than no mention at all, as it communicates that, yes, the Task Force is aware of the Sheriff's Department's problem with women, but deems it not worth wasting time or words to focus on.

Further, the Task Force seems sorely insensitive to the fact that the remedies laid out to address the Sheriff's shortcomings in the Latino community cannot be simply pasted on to dealing with the Sheriff's failures with women. For example, the problem for women at the Sheriff's Department does not so much the need the neighborhood outreach, recruiting, and hiring that is delineated for the Latino community. Following high profile lawsuits by female officers, the Sheriff's Department has never had any trouble hiring on big batches of female officers. Rather, the problem is deeply rooted within the Department where abusing and driving out female officers reaches the level of a vicious company sport.

Read any one of the dozens of lawsuits filed by female Sheriff's Deputies and you'll see that the Sonoma County Sheriff's Department is defiantly determined to keep female law enforcement officers out of their ranks. This problem will never be solved by simply recruiting and hiring more women for the department to crush, nor by tacking the words, "and women" onto Task Force recommendations, nor by failing to understand how the exclusion of women augments police brutalities and warps police culture.

We've sat down with individual Task Force members to discuss these and related issues. We've provided written materials, and attended meetings. That the Task Force recommendations now so cavalierly dispense with women raises the obvious question of whether the Task Force is serious about preventing more heartbreaking homicides like the Sheriff's killing of Andy Lopez, Jeramiah Chas, Teresa Macias, and the dozens of others who have died unnecessarily at the Sheriff's hands.

Sincerely,

Marie De Santis
Director

NOTE 1 - Note that Windsor and Sonoma Police are Sheriff Department deputies.

NOTE 2: Note that it took over seven weeks for the Sheriff to finally properly respond to our records request for information they have on hand at all times, and then only after a heated phone call. Their December 2 response was a 'we'll get to it later' letter. Law requires that they provide the information within 10 days unless they don't have it.



Sonoma County Sheriff's Office

STEVE FREITAS
Sheriff-Coroner

ROBERT GIORDANO
Assistant Sheriff
Law Enforcement Division

RANDALL WALKER
Assistant Sheriff
Detention Division

January 8, 2015

Marie C. De Santis
Women's Justice Center
P.O. Box 7510
Santa Rosa, CA 95407
mariecdesantis@gmail.com

Via email & USPS

RE: California Public Records Act request dated November 19, 2014

Dear Ms. De Santis,

The Sonoma County Sheriff's Office ("SCSO") is in receipt of the request you have made under the California Public Records Act ("CPRA") dated November 19, 2014. The SCSO provided you with an initial response on December 2, 2014. This letter is in follow-up to the SCSO's initial response.

The following is the responsive information for your request.

1. A. Total number of sworn law enforcement officers in your department,
 - **232 Total**
 - **201 Sonoma County Sheriff**
 - **19 Windsor PD**
 - **12 Sonoma PD**
- B. Total number of sworn law enforcement officers in your department who are female,
 - **8 Total**
 - **8 Sonoma County Sheriff**
 - **0 Windsor PD**
 - **0 Sonoma PD**
- C. Total number of sworn law enforcement officers in your department who are Hispanic,
 - **14 Total**
 - **13 Sonoma County Sheriff**
 - **0 Windsor PD**
 - **1 Sonoma PD**
- D. Total number of sworn law enforcement officers in your department who are Asian,
 - **4 Total**
 - **3 Sonoma County Sheriff**
 - **1 Windsor PD**
 - **0 Sonoma PD**

Administration Division
2796 Ventura Avenue
Santa Rosa, CA 95403
707.565.2781

Law Enforcement Division
2796 Ventura Avenue
Santa Rosa, CA 95403
707.565.2511

Detention Division
2777 Ventura Avenue
Santa Rosa, CA 95403
707.565.1422

Coroner
3336 Chanate Road
Santa Rosa, CA 95404
707.565.5070

E. Total number of sworn law enforcement officers in your department who are African American,

- 4 Total
- 4 Sonoma County Sheriff
- 0 Windsor PD
- 0 Sonoma PD

F. Total number of sworn law enforcement officers in your department who are Native American,

- 2 Total
- 2 Sonoma County Sheriff
- 0 Windsor PD
- 0 Sonoma PD

G. Total number of sworn law enforcement officers in your department who are Latina,

- 3 Total
- 3 Sonoma County Sheriff
- 0 Windsor PD
- 0 Sonoma PD

2. A. Total number of sworn law enforcement officers in your department who hold the rank of Sergeant and above.

- 46 Total
- 40 Sonoma County Sheriff
- 3 Windsor PD
- 3 Sonoma PD

B. Total number of sworn Female law enforcement officers in your department who hold the rank of Sergeant and above.

- 2 Total
- 2 Sonoma County Sheriff
- 0 Windsor PD
- 0 Sonoma PD

This completes the Sonoma County Sheriff Office's response to your CPRA request.

Sincerely,



Shannon Dower
Discovery Clerk
(707) 565-3933