



# Contra Costa County Racial Justice Oversight Body

1025 Escobar Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room  
Martinez, CA 94553

Phone Number: (925) 313-4087

## Voting Board Members

### **Ex-Officio Seats**

Ellen McDonnell, Public Defender (Co-Chair)  
Diana Becton, District Attorney  
Lt. Adalberto Garibay, Office of the Sheriff  
Esa Ehmen-Krause, Chief Probation Officer

### **Other Appointed Seats**

Lynn Mackey, Superintendent, Office of Education  
LaShante Smith, WCCUSD  
Gilbert Salinas, CCHS  
VACANT, Local Law Enforcement

### **Community-Based Seats**

Melvin Willis, CB-Rep. 1  
Chala Bonner, CB-Rep. 2 (Co-Chair)  
Michael Pierson, CB-Rep. 3  
Ronell Ellis, CB-Rep. 4  
VACANT, CB-Rep. 5  
Alisha Jackson, CB-Rep. 6  
Cheryl Sudduth, CB-Rep. 7  
Gigi Crowder, CB-Rep. 8  
Stephanie Medley, CB-Rep. 9

To the Board Members of the Equity & Public Protection Committees:

The Racial Justice Oversight Body (RJOB), in its capacity as an advisory body to the Board of Supervisors which seeks to be the embodiment of the hard work and organizing power of community and to implement strategies that will achieve racial equity in Contra Costa County criminal legal systems, is profoundly disheartened by the recent news of the racist, sexist, homophobic, and xenophobic actions involving a significant number of officers within the Antioch Police Department.

Specifically, we condemn those Antioch police officers who have been exposed in the ongoing investigation for their use of racist slurs, jokes, and memes in text messages over a period of more than two years targeting members of the Black and Latino communities. We also vehemently decry the recent actions of Antioch and Pittsburg police officers involved in ongoing corruption investigations of alleged fraud, bribery, drug distribution, and civil rights violations related to the use of force.

We strongly condemn these actions in any form, but most especially among law enforcement agencies. We recognize that this has caused immense harm specifically targeted toward communities of color and has demonstrated an erosion of public trust. We know that these were not just meaningless words between officers but are indicative of racial bias and animus which has far-reaching implications as to how these officers, sworn to protect and serve the entire community, have directly impacted disparate outcomes for communities of color which the RJOB was assembled to address.

We also believe it is important to state that this incident only confirms the often-ignored complaints, allegations, and suffering of Black and Brown community members throughout the County who are fully aware of the existence of such blatant racism based on their experiences, but whom so often do not have the evidence to prove it. This is outright, explicit, and overt racism. There is no amount of implicit bias or other such related training that can reverse deeply held beliefs that are openly shared and met with complacency and silence among the leadership and the rank-and-file.

Over the last few years, the RJOB has worked tirelessly to uplift strategies and pursue opportunities to institutionalize change that will lead to a reduction in racial disparities across our local criminal justice system, and it is occurrences such as this that deter the County's movement to realize racial equity and social justice. It is of utmost importance that we begin the hard work that is before us of addressing the larger systemic issues that allow systemic racism to be pervasive in our legal system.



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We commend the Board of Supervisors for providing adequate resources to the county's Public Defender and District Attorney Offices to support the swift and timely reviews of cases that may have been compromised by the involved officers. We also commend Congressmen DeSaulnier and Garamendi for their calls for federal investigation into this matter, as well as Attorney General Bonta's pursuit of civil rights violations. While we understand the grave importance of the varying levels of governments' ability to respond to the incidents currently at hand, we must also work diligently toward structural change locally, which will ensure that such racism does not continue.

Finally, we call on County leaders to partner with experts in public safety redesign, such as the Center for Policing Equity, to identify, endorse, and implement strategies that will support making our ability to redesign public safety and justice a reality for all Contra Costa County residents. The Racial Justice Oversight Body looks forward to the day when we will no longer need to respond to the unveiling of entrenched racism within our local system, however, until that day comes, the work continues and we urge you to join us in leading that change.

We strongly condemn racism, hatred, and violence towards Black people, Brown people, Indigenous people, impoverished people, and all people of color and demand equal protection for ALL and an end to state-sanctioned police violence.

Respectfully,

**The Contra Costa County Racial Justice Oversight Body, *Voting Members***