



# **Seattle Human Rights Commission**

## **Established 1963**

### **Resolution # 12-01: Support for Police Reform**

**Whereas**, all Seattle residents are born free and equal in dignity and rights; and

**Whereas**, the Seattle Human Rights Commission is committed to protecting and advocating for justice, human rights, the equal treatment of all people, and the principle of civil rights and non-discrimination in the City and its departments; and

**Whereas**, several key human rights, enshrined in the international declarations and covenants that the United States has signed, should guide the City of Seattle as it works to reform its police department and best serve its residents; and

**Whereas**, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights delineate principles applicable to the function and civilian oversight of police departments; and

**Whereas**, these principles establish that every person has dignity, deserves human treatment, is equal before the law, and is equally entitled to due process protections and the equal protection of the law without discrimination on any grounds, including race; and

**Whereas**, every individual is entitled to feel safe and be safe in his or her person, home, and community; and no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention; and

**Whereas**, no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; and

**Whereas**, any person whose rights or freedoms are violated shall have an effective remedy; and injured individuals must have their complaints reviewed by a competent authority, and appropriate remedies applied; and

**Whereas**, past experiences with the Seattle Police Department and the use of force among communities of color and individuals with disabilities raise concerns about the violation of equal treatment, dignity, nondiscrimination, and the right to due process; and

**Whereas**, Seattle's current civilian oversight process does not provide for due process and appropriate remedy, which should include an open process, an impartial decision maker with authority to investigate and impose disciplinary measures, and a right to appeal; and

**Whereas**, the Commission recognizes the value of racial disparity baseline studies in Seattle drug enforcement commissioned by The Defender Association and the ACLU of Washington as model for assessing where biased policing may be occurring, and that the findings of such studies are important to the principle of equal treatment before the law,

**Whereas**, Seattle does not currently research and analyze use of force incidents by police officers to discern whether they disproportionately impact communities of color and vulnerable communities;

**Whereas**, the Commission recognizes the importance of community participation in the shaping and oversight of the City and its Police Department

**Whereas**, any Consent Decree between the City and the Department of Justice should include new reporting requirements so that the community can actually measure whether police uses of excessive force decrease or increase; and

**Therefore be it resolved**, that the Seattle Human Rights Commission hereby declares its support of recommendations proposed in the Commission's "Report on Police Accountability and Recommendations" issued on January 8, 2012; and

**Now, therefore be it further resolved**, that the Seattle Human Rights Commission further recommends that the Mayor direct the Seattle Police Department to collaborate with experts and community organizations to develop demographic baseline standards in order to determine whether Seattle police actions disproportionately impact communities of color or other vulnerable populations within Seattle, and, in addition, collaborate with the Seattle Office for Civil Rights to analyze and publish use of force incidents and firearm discharges by police officers using Seattle's Racial Equity Toolkit; and

**Now, therefore be it further resolved**, that the Seattle Human Rights Commission further recommends that City Council shall enact legislation to establish an independent civilian oversight commission with the power to provide fair and impartial review of police misconduct complaints that have been investigated by the OPA; that such commission shall have resources and professional staff to independently investigate complaints, issue subpoenas, gather necessary evidence, and issue its own findings of misconduct; and that in cases where the commission finds misconduct, it shall also have the power to recommend disciplinary actions to Police Chief; and

**Now, therefore be it further resolved**, that the Seattle Human Rights Commission further recommends the City adopt these reforms in a Consent Decree that includes a court appointed monitor and maximum community participation.

Adopted by the Seattle Human Rights Commission on June 7, 2012



Christopher Stearns, Chair



Joshua Marshall, Secretary