

Bob Blackmon's Reflections on the February 22 Public Forum and the Subsequent Discussion:

I watched/listened to the speakers Monday (2/22) evening as well as the discussion that followed. The issue of racism is still being ignored. Several speakers challenged Chief Owens' continued denial. Why doesn't someone on the Collaborative turn to the chief and demand that he acknowledge the racism that EVERYONE knows exists in the TPD. How can you continue to serve on the Collaborative if you are unwilling to challenge the chief? How can the chief implement any sort of reform if he doesn't believe that reform is needed? If you are not willing to challenge him, just close up shop, got home and acknowledge your own weakness, timidity and defeat.

Jessica Ashley and others spoke powerfully about the Edson Thevenin murder and the cover up that continues. That murder alone provides more than enough evidence that racism is rampant in the TPD. Yet those comments were almost totally ignored by the Collaborative. Why? I can only assume that all of you feel that the police action was justified. The police department's own internal investigation clearly concluded that Mr. Thevenin's death was not justified. The mayor didn't like that report, so he hired someone to write a report that he would like. Will the Collaborative continue to ignore that fact? If you do, you are impotent and wasting your time.

Reform could start with accepting the internal investigation report and the report of the attorney general. Look at those reports and tell the governor how the TPD will change in response to those documents.

Most of us are not encouraged by what we see. Please prove us wrong!!

PS— I spoke at one of the public forums, and attended them all, including the Collaborative team's discussions. The more I think about it, the more I see the stark contrast between the speakers (both the affinity groups and the public forum speakers) and the Collaborative members. For the most part the former were thoughtful, well prepared, candid, focused and forceful. The latter were just the opposite, making comments lacking in substance and empathy, among other things. Sort of wondering in the dark.

With a few exceptions, it's like the Collaborative folks didn't hear the speakers.