

To whom it may concern,

On Friday May 15, 2020, the Oakland Police Department released the findings of the discipline disparity study along with the department's response. The Oakland Black Officers Association's Executive Board has been aware of the Racial Disparity Study from the outset, in fact, it was the OBOA that raised concerns related to racial disparities in discipline nearly two years ago, which ultimately led to the completion of this study.

Hillard Heintze LLC. conducted the study; the report captured data from the department's internal investigative process over a five-year period, dating back to 2014. The key finding from the report indicated, Black officers were found to be nearly 40% more likely to have complaints of misconduct result in a sustained finding, compared to officers of other races. While these findings came as no surprise to the OBOA, they are still deplorable and very disheartening. The department referred to the findings as "unacceptable" in its response, and we wholeheartedly agree.

While the study focused on the disparate treatment of Black officers in the discipline process, there were other significant findings worth noting:

- Disparities also existed for Black officer trainees in the Basic Police Academy and Field Training Unit, respectively.
- 80% of officers of all races surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed, the department's disciplinary process was fair and transparent.
- 80% of officers of all races surveyed agreed or strongly agreed, rank plays a role in the outcomes of internal investigations.

Clearly, the level of distrust in the internal affairs and discipline process impacts every officer of every race, and I believe it is reflective of challenges in departmental leadership and the culture within the organization.

The findings from the study clearly supports and validates the longstanding perception that Black officers are treated differently. The treatment starts in the academy and lasts throughout their careers. This unfair treatment has been a real challenge for all current, past, and future Black officers. These results clearly do not align with the department's core values of fairness and integrity.

If Black Officers are being treated unfairly internally, then how can our community have confidence that officers can treat them fairly?

The Oakland Black Officers Association has been advocating on behalf of its members for 50 years. During this time, the OBOA and its members have been subject to criticism, mockery, resentment, and departmental discrimination when speaking out about issues related to race. In the face of undisputable data, I am sadly aware that members of the OBOA and Black officers within the department will be confronted with trivial, confrontational, and counterproductive questions and comments regarding the findings of this study. This behavior is not acceptable at any rank and should be discouraged. Let me be very clear, the OBOA will vigorously advocate for its members and any officer or professional staff member who suffers mistreatment or retaliation as a result of this study.

Mayor Schaaf has offered her support and shares her deep disappointment in the findings of this study. Mayor Schaaf has been clear that she will personally prioritize the work being done to ensure the “Highest and most progressive standards of excellence” within our department.

I am proud the Oakland Police Department is taking steps to completely eradicate institutional racism and bias by acknowledging the need for change. The Oakland Black Officers Association will remain vigilant in its partnerships with stakeholders to mandate the fair and equitable treatment of all members. As President, I am confident that these broken systems will be identified and retrofitted to become inclusive, fair, and equitable for all.

In Service,



Aaron R. Smith
President - Oakland Black Officers Association



**“Proudly Serving Our
Community”**

Links:

[Oakland Police Department Discipline Disparity Study, Hillard Heintze](https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Hillard-Heintze-Report-for-the-Oakland-Police-Department-04-23-20-1.pdf)

(<https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Hillard-Heintze-Report-for-the-Oakland-Police-Department-04-23-20-1.pdf>)

[Oakland Police Department’s Response to the Discipline Disparity Study](https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/OPD-Response-to-Disparity-Study-final-1500-hrs.pdf)

(<https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/OPD-Response-to-Disparity-Study-final-1500-hrs.pdf>)