



COUNTY OF YOLO OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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Statement of District Attorney Regarding Attack on Yolo County's Criminal Justice System by Public Defender

Yolo County Public Defender Tracie Olson's recent broadside against the justice system in our county was inaccurate, irresponsible, and insulting to both prosecutors and the judiciary.

In a recent local television interview, Ms. Olson made an exaggerated claim that Yolo county's jail had a more than "800% overrepresentation" of black inmates compared to the 3% black population in the county. Ms. Olson ignored the residency of those inmates from her data; verified black Yolo County residents only made up approximately 10% of the inmate population.

While Olson's "attack piece" claimed a statewide black inmate population of 28%, the total of black inmates in Yolo (from all counties) was approximately 21%. In fact, according to the California Sentencing Institute (CSI, <http://casi.cicj.org/>) Yolo County's rate of prison incarceration for black inmates was around 27% *below* the state average for 2016, the most recent period tracked. Moreover, Yolo's state prison "footprint" in general is extremely small; we represented one half of 1% of the entire state prison population according to Department of Corrections 2018 data.

With the turmoil gripping this nation over racial inequities in policing and justice, the last thing we need is this type of shameful demagoguery.

Perhaps even more alarming than Ms. Olson's spurious comments attempting to paint Yolo as a bastion of racism, was an assertion by her and Monica Brushia, a supervising public defender in her office, that a client of Ms. Brushia's was arrested in Yolo County carrying \$12,000, but that the police only documented \$2,000, the clear implication being that \$10,000 was stolen by the police. In another instance, they claim that a defendant was arrested with five grams of methamphetamine, but only two grams were reported; again, the supposition being that law enforcement stole the three grams of methamphetamine.

These are grave and disturbing allegations. However, neither attorney offered one scintilla of proof to support their claims. I have never been made aware of them, nor to the best of my knowledge have they been reported to any law enforcement agency.

Ms. Olson and Ms. Brushia are both officers of the court and have a professional and ethical responsibility to report allegations of police misconduct. Instead, they opted to air these charges on television without providing any supporting information or documentation that would allow them to be properly investigated.

Finally, Ms. Olson indicts our local judges by claiming she has been witness to specific acts of discriminatory sentencing. She alleges that she has seen our judges sentencing black defendants to prison for crimes that "white people do not go to prison for."

These are remarkable allegations and one must wonder why Ms. Olson has chosen to remain silent until now instead of using her position as the county's public defender to alert the community and outside judicial authorities to these reputed miscarriages of justice.

In point of fact, Ms. Olson knows that the Yolo County District Attorney's Office has been a state and national leader in bringing transparency and racial equality to our justice system. Her office has even participated in those efforts. For example, Ms. Olson took part in our annual academy for at risk youth in which our local court also participated. She stayed with members of my office in the multi-day immersive program we developed with Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco to address racism, drug addiction and homelessness.

We are also one of the few DA offices to have a fully developed restorative justice program through which we have diverted almost two thousand cases instead of prosecuting. And most notably, our office recently announced a "race-blind charging" program where police cases will be sent for prosecutor review with all possible references to race and name stricken from the report.

I don't know what propelled Ms. Olson to launch her baseless critique of justice in Yolo County, especially while emotions are so raw in the aftermath of the George Floyd tragedy. I do know that she is wrong and I call upon her to immediately bring her allegations and any supporting documentation to the next hearing of the Yolo County Board of Supervisors.

Now, more than ever, we need the public we serve to have faith and reliance on the fair and racially neutral administration of justice. Ms. Olson, it is time to either put up or apologize to the police, prosecutors, and judges you have recklessly and unfairly maligned.

Jeff Reisig, Yolo County District Attorney

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