

Morgan Holm
Senior VP and Chief Content Officer
Oregon Public Broadcasting
7140 SW Macadam Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97219

Wednesday, December 7th, 2016

Dear Mr. Holm,

DECISION NOT TO BROADCAST THE CITY CLUB OF PORTLAND FRIDAY FORUM EVENT OF 12/2/16

We write as members of a panel on the impact of mandatory minimum sentencing on communities of color organized by the City Club of Portland to express our disappointment and frustration at your decision not to broadcast our panel. City Club's decision to devote a Friday Forum to mandatory minimum sentencing is recognition of the importance of this issue and the particular harm these laws have done to communities of color.

As OPB has reported this year, people of color are over-represented in our prisons and jails in Oregon. Oregon has the seventh highest rate of African-American imprisonment in the nation and, here in Multnomah County, people of color are negatively impacted in greater numbers relative to whites at every stage of the journey through the criminal justice system. The Friday Forum on December 2nd raised vitally important concerns about the excessive power that mandatory minimum sentencing laws give prosecutors and how these policies are harming Oregonians.

As you have informed us, OPB rarely takes the decision not to broadcast Friday Forums. Given the importance of the topic at hand, we are at a loss as to why this particular panel did not meet your editorial standards. City Club's own online archive of Friday Forum recordings illustrates that panels are regularly held that do not necessarily represent all possible perspectives on an issue, but nevertheless provide valuable insight and information to Forum attendees and to your listeners.

The underrepresentation of people of color in our media is a longstanding problem. We note that your own CBP 2016 Diversity Report acknowledges that it is your stated goal to "give voice to our community in all its diversity, and we are wholly committed to doing so." Honoring that commitment means recognizing that the voices of people of color – among others – have been systematically shut out of the conversations that shape our community.

Our concern about the silencing of the voices of people of color is not abstract. We learned from another media outlet shortly before the Friday Forum began that the Oregon District Attorneys Association had sought to bully City Club over their decision to put together a panel focused on the impact of mandatory minimums on communities of color and not to include a district attorney.

We ask that you reflect on your responsibility intentionally to create space on OPB's platforms for minority voices. A truly diverse media allows all Oregonians to participate to inform and educate us on the issues facing our communities. OPB has a vital role to play in upholding the best ideals of our state by allowing everyone to share their stories. We all lose out when our media do not reflect all of our perspectives, experiences and struggles.

Yours sincerely,

Lucy Flores
Former Nevada Assemblywoman

David Rogers
Executive Director, ACLU of Oregon

Bobbin Singh
Executive Director, Oregon Justice Resource Center

Shannon Wight
Deputy Director, Partnership for Safety and Justice

cc Walter Robinson II, Chair, City Club of Portland Friday Forum Committee
Eddy Morales, Member, City Club of Portland Friday Forum Committee