

# Contra Costa: Board approves task force on racial disparities in criminal justice system

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MARTINEZ -- The Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors this week unanimously approved the creation of a task force to study racial disparities in the county's criminal justice system.

The creation of the 17-member Disproportionate Minority Contact Task Force stemmed from data that showed that African Americans were disproportionately arrested and charged with crimes when compared to whites.

According to the county's data, blacks make up 28 percent of those booked for crimes, while they only account for 10 percent of the population.

The data showed that both blacks and Hispanics were underrepresented on the county's juries, which were 62 percent white.

The effort to create the task force was precipitated by the Contra Costa Racial Justice Coalition, which petitioned the board last year to do more to combat bias against people of color.

The task force will be composed of representatives from the Sheriff's Office, the District Attorney's Office, the Public Defender and other organizations.

Tim Ewell, senior deputy county administrator, said the county is looking for five representatives from community based organizations as well as another unaffiliated individual.

Anyone interested in serving on the committee should contact Ewell at (925) 335-1036. Contact Dan Lawton at 408-921-8695. Follow him at [Twitter.com/dlawton](https://twitter.com/dlawton)