



# the Long Game

**DEFUND, DIVEST, REFORM AND ABOLISH  
THE RESIDENT PERSPECTIVE OF THE CURRENT DEBATE ON WHERE  
WE SHOULD INVEST OUR PUBLIC SAFETY DOLLARS**

DIRECTOR RAY C. KELLY | CITIZENS POLICING PROJECT | MARCH 2022



# CITIZENS POLICING PROJECT

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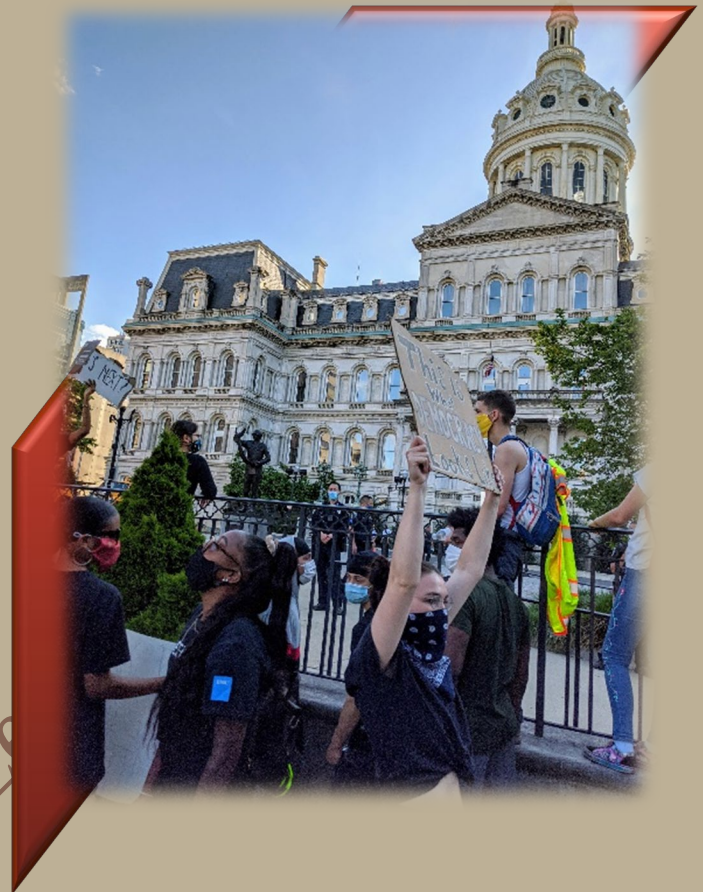
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## Defund the Police

Following the deaths, correction, homicides of George Floyd and Ahmaud Aubery, the outcry for an end to police abuses and racial targeting of Black men reached its boiling point. This was more than just a movement to bring awareness to the FACT that #BlackLivesMatter, as the nation sheltering in place to weather a world-wide pandemic, were inevitably destined to watch the last nine minutes of George Floyd's life under the knee of a Minnesota police officer. America and the world were collectively outraged, and masses of every ethnicity took to the streets in protest, the collective agreement was that the current state of policing, with its racist origin, was not the answer. Though many were and remain on the fence with the terminology, the nationwide call was to 'Defund the Police', once again calling for our governments, local and national, to invest more of our municipal funds in community-based solutions and social programming that have been proven to create opportunities that lead to more productive citizens and less violent crime, instead of the continued frivolous investment into enforcing laws targeted on people historically and systemically forced into poverty.



With funding support from the **Open Society Institute-Baltimore** and the **NAACP-LDF (Legal Defense and Education Fund)** Citizens Policing Project, in Partnership with partners from the statewide collaborative, the Campaign for Justice, Safety and Jobs, endeavored to collect stories from residents of Baltimore to gain understanding of their perspectives on Public Safety in their neighborhoods. Where do they feel our city should be investing funds that will result lowering crime numbers and safer communities? Using a custom sensemaking tool to collect data and record stories, we attempted to gain a sampling of the perspectives and



proposed solutions from those historically negatively impacted by previous public safety initiatives which were primarily concentrated in law enforcement.

This preliminary report speaks on the initial assessment of the first six months of our Citywide canvass conducted from June – December of 2021. Despite the uncertain and ever-changing protocols put in place to ensure public safety in a pandemic, we were able to engage more than 1,000 residents, collecting formal stories from over one hundred.

## HOW DID WE GET HERE?

### *Summarizing the recent history of police reform in Baltimore City*

Following the 2015 death of Freddie Gray, a young Black resident of Baltimore City, outrage, protests, and unrest erupted throughout Baltimore City. Mr. Gray died while in the custody of Baltimore City police. The viral cellphone video of Gray's brutal treatment by law enforcement officials that placed a spotlight on the problem of police misconduct and abuse in lower-income, primarily Black and Brown neighborhoods.

The War on Drugs supported the broadening of law enforcement discretion in detaining or arresting suspects, the weakening of due process in the case of search, seizure, and forfeiture. With increased emphasis on preemptive and preventative action in law enforcement the distinction between criminal and non-criminal members of the community was intentionally disregarded for reasons of efficiency and quotas. In Baltimore the introduction of 'zero tolerance' policing which relied on the assumption that serious crime is incubated by conditions in which disorderly, disreputable, and 'anti-social' behaviors are the norm; therefore, police departments should proactively address minor, street-level disturbances that allegedly leads to more harmful patterns of criminality. Police were armed with broad and flexible means of regulating public spaces and removing those designated as 'disorderly,' a catch-all term that encompasses the 'potentially' criminal, the homeless, the mentally ill, and anyone deemed 'unpredictable or suspicious.'

Mr. Gray's death, ruled a homicide, was the final push needed to spark the United States department of Justice to initiate a patterns and Practices investigation of the Baltimore Police Department. The DOJ's findings report identified BPD's decades long history of racially biased, oppressive policing and a long-standing culture of aggressive unconstitutional treatment of residents of inner-city neighborhoods where drug distribution and high crime levels exist.



Many claim these events also initiated a pullback in proactive policing, the proverbial taking of a knee. It was said by many officers that, “if we don’t do our job, the community will be begging for police soon enough”. This, in the perception of many, is exactly what happened. Noting that Baltimore City celebrated its lowest homicide total in over a decade just a year before, and in the Western district, where the officers indicted in the death of Freddy Grey were assigned, homicides rose from twenty-one in 2014 to sixty-six in 2015, recognizing also, that of those 66 homicides, 49 occurred after the April killing of Mr. Gray. The city has yet to return to the level prior to the unrest of 2015.

In April of 2017, the City of Baltimore, and the Department of Justice (DOJ) entered a Consent Decree, a court enforceable agreement to resolve DOJ’s findings that it believed the Baltimore City Police Department (BPD) had engaged in a pattern and practice of conduct that violates the First, Fourth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution, and certain provisions of federal statutory law. The mandated operational reforms with intentional focus on building **community trust, creating a culture of community and problem-oriented policing, prohibiting unlawful stops and arrests, preventing discriminatory policing and excessive force, ensuring public and officer safety, enhancing officer accountability, and making needed technological upgrades**. Under the agreement, overseen by Judge James K. Bredar, the parties recommended an independent monitor to the court to assess whether the requirements of the agreement are being implemented. The independent monitor will report publicly on BPD’s implementation efforts on a regular basis. As part of the process, the parties requested that the court provide an opportunity for members of the public and stakeholders throughout Baltimore to provide written submissions to the court about the proposed decree. The public hearing on the fairness of the proposed consent decree was held on April 6, 2017, wherein dozens of members of the community provided feedback and support for the consent decree. The Court then entered the Consent Decree the next day, on April 7, 2017.

Under Baltimore’s consent decree, the Baltimore Police Department will work with communities to implement comprehensive reforms that will ensure:

- Baltimore establishes a Community Oversight Task Force to recommend reforms to the current system of civilian oversight.
- BPD adopts a policing approach that is community-oriented and based on problem solving principles.



- Officers' voluntary interactions are professional and courteous, and officers conduct all investigatory stops, searches and arrests in a manner that protects people's rights.
- BPD provides equal protection of the law for all individuals, including providing impartial policing services.
- Officers use appropriate de-escalation techniques and attempt to resolve incidents without force when possible; use force in a manner that is proportional to the threat presented; and BPD's use of force policies, training and review systems provide sufficient guidance, skills, and accountability.
- BPD transports detainees in a manner that keeps them safe.
- Officers respect the First Amendment rights of all persons.
- BPD investigates sexual assault thoroughly and without gender bias.
- Baltimore conducts an assessment to minimize youth involvement with the juvenile and criminal justice systems, as appropriate, and that officers approach interactions with youth in a manner appropriate to their age.
- Baltimore conducts an analysis of gaps in the city's mental health system in consultation with a committee of behavioral health experts and service providers, and BPD instructs and dispatches officers who are properly trained in interacting with people in crisis or with behavioral health disabilities when a police response is appropriate.
- Allegations of employee misconduct are fully, fairly, and efficiently investigated; that all investigative findings are supported by the appropriate standard of proof and documented in writing; and that all officers who commit misconduct are held accountable pursuant to a disciplinary system that is fair, consistent and provides due process.
- Officers receive necessary equipment, policy guidance, training, and support to do their jobs safely and effectively, and BPD performs a staffing study to ensure enough officers and supervisors.

Baltimore's consent decree, the last on record in the US and arguably the most community-informed, clearly reflected the demands of the impacted community and boasted of the input from the community that crafted the reforms and the trust being built through this process of change. The tone of the progress changed with the election of Donald Trump. After two failed attempts from his



administration to halt the process, the federal court upheld the agreement, which was signed by all parties, including the Department of Justice, prior to his inauguration. Despite this small victory for the city, the direct contact between the DOJ and the residents would dissipate over the next few years.

On October 3, 2017, Judge Bedar appointed Kenneth Thompson to be the Monitor, together with a team of experts in policing and police reform, civil rights enforcement, psychology, social science, organizational change, data and technology, and community engagement. Skepticism was once again sparked in the advocacy community with this appointment as this team was a hybrid created by the parties of the consent decree in the thirteenth hour, behind closed doors. A process which started with twenty-six proposals, outreach to the community, and the opportunity for residents to give their recommendations and feedback, dwindled to what the City called the finalists, and despite overwhelming support for different individual teams, in the eyes of the parties, assumably, none were sufficient so they decided to create their own. Many issues arose, from the perceived conflict of interest with Venable previously handling Civil cases for the City, to despite an almost 1.5-million-dollar annual budget, there was no allotment for community engagement in the budget that couldn't be scrutinized by the public as were the initial proposals early in the process. There were also rumors that this was the 'b-team', and that other, community supported teams were asked to form a combined team, and for whatever reason they refused.

Initial progress on the consent decree progressed at a snail's pace as Baltimore seemed to be bombarded with every, obstacle, scandal, political fight, and distraction. Within the first year of the consent decree's inception, the commissioner was fired, the next, who had major community support, was indicted on federal tax charges, and subsequently went to prison. An interim was appointed until, another was proposed but rejected. After an intentional public outreach campaign, Michael Harrison, former chief of the New Orleans Police Department was appointed by the mayor and confirmed by city council. Within months of his appointment, then Mayor Catherine Pugh was also indicted on federal fraud charges and resigned her post before being convicted and sentenced to prison as well.

Besides the ongoing drama going on at City Hall and Police Headquarters, there was also the unfolding saga of the trials of the officers charged in the murder of Freddy Gray, which gained national attention with the Trump administration promising to restore law and order, while simultaneously taking jabs at





Baltimore's states attorney Marilyn Mosby, calling her actions disgraceful. This further fueled the debate over law enforcement's role in the public safety conversation, as well as broadened the divide between the police and their advocates, and the communities they are sworn to serve.

While the city navigated through the next phase of turmoil, the mysterious killing of Detective Sean Suiter followed by the unprecedented indictment of BPD's Gun Trace Task Force, crime continued to rise, and division continued to grow, and the consent decree moved on. Without the ability to effectively educate or engage community members on new policies being drafted, which require a thirty-day period for public input, the process was allowed to move forward, mostly unchallenged for its first year. With the creation of the community engagement arm of the monitoring team, a wider swath of residents was able to engage in important components of the community policing plan, youth interactions and interrogations policy, as well as policies involving mental health crisis and alternatives to arrest, or diversion.

Following the murders of Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd in 2020, Baltimore's advocates and activists took to the streets once again to DEMAND immediate reforms to the way Black and Brown communities are policed, and the exclamation that #Black Lives Matter. Unlike the riots and unrest of 2015, there was a sense of "we've been here before" and residents asked, "What has changed since then?" This immediately called into question the effectiveness and costs associated with a consent decree, making Baltimore primed to become a lead proponent of the push to "Defund the Police". In a year of local campaigning at its worst, many candidates gravitated to the movement, including then City Council President Brandon Scott, who led a successful effort during his campaign to rescind \$28,000,000 of proposed overtime funding from the Baltimore Police Budget, only to reinstate it a year later as Mayor.

**PROTEST with  
PURPOSE**

**the COMMITMENT to  
REFORMING BALTIMORE**

**June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020 11:00am**

**U.S. District Court for Maryland  
101 W. Lombard St.**

A call for all prospective and incumbent elected  
representatives to commit to prioritizing EQUITABLE  
POLICING and ending RACIAL BIAS in Baltimore City

**"WE are the tools to DEMAND ACCOUNTABILITY"**

**#commUNITYpowered**

**Confirmed Speakers to date:**  
Ray Kelly, 2020 Faith in Baltimore Awardee  
Rev. Marvin McKenstry Jr., Pastor, Morning Star Baptist Church  
Erricka Bridgeford, Co-Founder, Baltimore CEASEfire  
Zainab Chaudry, Director, Council of American-Islamic Relations  
Bill McCarthy, Executive Director, Catholic Charities  
Rav. Daniel Burg, Beth-Am Jewish Community  
And more...

**Social Distancing will be achieved, and face coverings are STRONGLY  
RECOMMENDED and will be available, FREE OF CHARGE**



Which brings us to where we are now. Policies are written, trainings are completed, and we should start to see the changes that come from the consent decree mandates apparent in the way officers operate on the streets. Yet for those that live in those impacted areas outlined in the DOJ's findings, not much has changed, many have decided to leave the area we celebrated in Western district 8 years ago. Seeing the ever-growing violence fueled by an unchecked fentanyl epidemic, minimal effective police presence, and the continued blind eye shown by their elected representatives, who could blame them.

## Methodology

Led by our team of dedicated youth advocates, **Beyond Youth Organizing**, or **BYO** (pronounced bio) as they are affectionately known, we were able to kick-off our Divest/Invest sensemaking initiative on Juneteenth in the Mathew Henson neighborhood of West Baltimore. Using the data collection tool created by Equity Matters, we introduced a new, more appealing methodology that goes far beyond the surveys of the past. Recognizing the appeal and recognition to social media, the sense making tool incorporated modern technological advances such as audio and video to capture a more expressive story or experience from residents, while also eliminating the need for a lot of writing, typing, or reading.



The BYO youth advocates worked and trained hard to prepare for the interactions and story gathering involved with canvassing. Also, there was plenty of youth engagement and involvement where youth spoke about their communities and what they would like to see happen over the next few years to make Baltimore a safer place to live.



At our next engagement with the One More One Less (OMOL) Mentoring Program the youth asked questions after hearing a summary of who Beyond Youth Organizing is and what we do. Youth members talked about their concerns with their community's safety and expressed how they don't feel safe telling their stories about interactions with police because they feel as though the police will treat them worse after finding out how community members view them. Many asked questions about BYO and CPP's past efforts and how that helped change our community today.

BYO later engaged the Coldstream Homestead Community Association at their community meeting in July. Youth Coordinator, Christen, gave a brief background of who BYO is and what we have done, then introducing our policing questionnaire to another youth group in our community called Mentoring Male Teens in the Hood, with about 25 young men in the group. We invited them to submit their stories, with the help of our youth advocates and collected 4 video stories from some young men who volunteered to share their experiences with us. Though most of the youth were, to say the least skeptical of our formal process, Director Kelly facilitated a robust conversation with the youth participants that once made comfortable, contributed the valuable perspective of young Black men.

We can't leave out the block parties. First was a block party with CASA in July. BYO and CPP were invited by CASA to their community block party and vaccination clinic. While there we canvassed community members that attended the event. While here we worked with majority Hispanic and Latino community members and workers to get more people to submit their stories about how safe they feel in the communities they live in. Next was

a two-day Baltimore Ceasefire Weekend event August 7th & 8th. Using our sensemaking tool, our youth collected over 20 stories from community members and other vendors in attendance. Our youth advocates split up and went table to table, person to person to introduce BYO and what our plans were for our 2021 canvass, inviting EVERYONE to share their stories, perspectives, and ideas about public safety in Baltimore. The engagement that Beyond Youth Organizing has been





involved with has made an impact on the community, ourselves, and everyone we've come across and they cannot wait to make these changes happen for our commUNITY.

As summer drew to an end and we began to rethink our youth engagement strategies as the return to school was fast approaching, we used our final event of the season, our Annual Back 2 School bash to launch opportunity Avenue, hybrid job and resource fair combined with a free legal clinic, and though it was an outdoor open air event geared to ensure our communities young scholars had the tools needed to



succeed, the engagement garnered a total of sixteen (16) clients actually assisted with a legal service but we were able to collect twenty-one stories of our neighbors experiences with public safety and/or the police as well as their

ideas on what would be a wise investment to make their communities safer. Our final direct engagement of the year was a partnership with councilwoman Odette Ramos in Baltimore's Waverly neighborhood, where we combined her recurring job fair with the resource partners of opportunity Avenue at the Y of Central Maryland.

With the surge of infection with the OMICRON variant we were forced to postpone all opportunity Avenue engagements and resumed in February.





## Initial Findings

Information and data gathered to date surprisingly only shows about 30% of the residents we engaged are initially in support of the DEFUND movement and there is slowly starting to be more interest as we continue to explain that this isn't about less or abolishing police, but more about investing in community-based solutions and programs that reduce or prevent crime, reduce recidivism, and addresses the root causes of these issues.

The everchanging dynamic of police reform in Baltimore City has made it extremely difficult to emphasize the ongoing need for community investment as the media continues to paint a picture of war zones and anarchy when crime is high. We are constantly compelled to remind residents that Baltimore did not sign the consent decree to bring down crime numbers, but rather to correct the misconduct, corruption and blatant disregard for our communities and its residents perpetrated by the BPD. That should never be forgotten.

The immediate reaction to the proposed question, "Do you think we should defund the police?" usually was to emphasize how violent and dangerous our streets are currently, and we need more police to control it. This is a common misconception in communities that are distraught, suffering and are looking for a solution to violence they are forced to navigate in their day-to-day life. The increasing loss of hope often leads people to seek a savior in the solution, and too often in America, people erroneously think the police are supposed to be that answer.

The one thing we know for a fact is that the police are there to enforce the law, AFTER it has been assumedly broken. Crime prevention is the job of the municipality and the community, and the unwillingness or inability of these parties to equitably invest the time, effort and dollars needed to address the root issues founded in slavery and oppression that has created this environment, has resulted in a police force in Baltimore ruled by a corrupt culture that uses intimidation, excessive force, biased tactics and political prowess that has resulted in the federal oversight and the mandated reforms of a consent decree. It can no longer be disputed that Baltimore has historically fostered a broken police department, that has mistreated and abused many of its Black and Brown residents for decades.

Yet when crime is rising, residents continue to look to the police to essentially make them feel safer, and to date it has never worked out that way. Most residents engaged contend that the police need to do more, often referring to the vast open-air drug markets that plague our city. The common pragmatic thinking is that "they



see what's going on but aren't doing anything to stop it" or just as often, "they are sitting in their cars playing on the phone, while people are making drug sales right in front of them". Not many understand the constitutionality of simply forbidding people to stand on the corner, nor do they recall and recognize the legacy of the impact that mass incarceration has had on the Black community. Despite the consistent allotment of BILLIONS of dollars nationally, for decades, the same communities continue to suffer the ails of consistent disinvestment, redlining and systemic oppression. Crime is still visibly present, depression and addiction remain on our doorsteps and those communities continue to be left to their own devices to essentially feel 'safe'.

Many of those engaged during the canvas, had very different definitions of public safety and what it means to be or even 'feel' safe. Most participants, over 80% have a contradictory existence of safety in their communities. This is easily explained, many feel that they live in a neighborhood that has entrenched in drug and street activity, which could escalate at any moment, which to many on the outside looking in is an unsafe environment, but to those raised in these communities there is a certain feeling of safety, in the ability to identify and avoid areas and situations that are prone to escalate. Being accustomed to the circumstance and the situations that spawn as conflict, has afforded many residents a certain amount of comfort with the familiarity of what may happen in the neighborhood.

### ***I'm not scared***

A common question asked by the canvassers was simply, "do you feel safe in your neighborhood?". Often, residents said that they felt safe, but also felt the need to explain what that means. Using Sandtown as an example, many long-term residents claim to know who the drug dealers and violent offenders are, so they share a mutual respect, others are content in the thought that they mind their own business saying, "I don't bother them, and they don't bother me". There is an engrained reliance on preparedness to keep residents at a level of safety, yet there remains no type of resource able to ensure residents are *prepared* either.

Since the 1980's many communities were devastated by the addition of a crack epidemic to the ever-present heroin trade, and through both federal and local crackdowns on drug dealing, whole communities were deemed 'high crime areas' and their mere presence in those communities made them a suspect, or at least suspicious, and despite the change in rhetoric, and a consent decree, not much has changed in these communities. Many in these communities still feel it is systemic racism and intentional disinvestment that has allowed the community to dissolve



to this point, and the police played a big part in that, so there is no expectation for the law enforcement or the city for that matter to keep them safe.

It's a familiar contradiction when conversing with parents in the community to hear them speak fondly of their neighbors and community, yet also talk of how they alter the route they take to get home each day to avoid the strip, or the ability to sense when something is about to escalate and get the children in the house "before the shooting starts". For most in these communities the reliance is on the individuals experience and knowledge to ensure the safety of their household as there has never been any entity in place to alleviate that responsibility in most of their lifetimes.

One of the prominent stories from our series of engagements came from a homeless 28-year-old struggling with addiction, who attended a meeting co-facilitated by the greenlight fund. He spoke of how when he is ready to shut down for the night, he would find a place that *looked safe*, preferably somewhere with a wall behind him, where he could keep his eyes on what's coming towards him. He ended with, "***I'm good as long as I got my knife in my hand***". This validates the claim of resiliency of African Americans, not only has our history trained us to survive in the most oppressive of circumstances, it has also honed our ability to maintain a safe household in an environment recognized by the masses as unsafe.

### **the School to Prison pipeline**

Almost all our participants, identified the education system and the state of our public schools as a major contributor to the current situation in inner city neighborhoods. Another area of historic disinvestment black people continue to fight to overcome. The environment in the school buildings in many neighborhoods with high crime rates, tend to be reflective of the blight in the surrounding community. Many have been poorly maintained for decades, lacking the basic necessities such as heat, and MOST do not have air conditioning. Often schools in the inner-city are plagued with rodent and insect infestations, issues compounded by lack of necessary custodial and maintenance personnel.

Residents feel these issues as well as the environment scholars must navigate to arrive have created an atmosphere not conducive to learning. Lack of proper investment in many of these schools have culminated into lack of textbooks or the use of outdated materials. As the city continues to close schools, classroom sizes continue to grow, leaving even less capacity for teachers to afford students the attention they need to fully comprehend lessons. Encouraging children to read has



become a thing of the past in today's school system as many lower schools in the city do not have a functioning library, or a librarian to operate it. In 2016, Gilmore Elementary School in Sandtown constructed a new library, but had barely any books to populate it. It took the efforts of the residents to initiate a book drive to ensure the students not only had a place to read, but also appropriate and plentiful books to choose from. This increased resident and community involvement with our students and also sparked advocacy and influenced the hiring of a full-time librarian the following school year, during which the decision was made to close its doors forever.

One example given on how schools impact our communities as one participant recollected was the closing of the William Pinderhughes Elementary school on Fremont Avenue in Sandtown. In the early part of the millennium, there was a decision made to combine this school with another West Baltimore school a few blocks north. Despite many meetings and conversations where neighbors expressed their concerns, the decision was finalized. Neighbors saw an immediate impact as the positive visibility and attention given to children, was gone, two square blocks of the city essentially became an unattended vacant lot attracting all sorts of nefarious behavior. As this building already bordered a flourishing open air drug market, the opportunity to broaden parameters without worry of anyone in this two-block area raising concern. Upset and frustrated neighbors pushed hard for the city to do something to the building and not let it spiral into disrepair, and the following year the Monarch Academy, a local Charter School was opened. Monarch struggled to maintain a student base and positive presence in the area, but that one year of disregard to the space had created an environment in the surrounding blocks that quite simply became an obvious deterrent to enrolling children there. After two years the school closed its doors, and the surrounding community would watch the continued decline neighborhood for the next decade.

Reported deficiencies, scandals like grade tampering, and continued conflict between the City, the Board of Education, and the teachers union continues to call to question the quality of education black and brown students are receiving in Baltimore City Public schools. Many teachers have complained about the lack of support, wages below that of the neighboring counties, overpopulated classrooms. As well as the lack of mental health personnel and school resource officers engagement available to address student misbehavior, and crisis' at home that are acted out on in the classroom. Many educators, despite their undying commitment to elevate students to the highest level possible, feel it is an unreasonable expectation to overcome these obstacles, give the children the attention that's





necessary and meet the curricular requirements put forth by the school superintendent.

Many believe that the concept of ‘no child left behind’ was perverted in Baltimore and created a mindset of just moving students along year after year instead of its intended implementation of assuring every child was prepared to progress to the next level with their peers. What was intended to create equity in education, degraded to sending youth into society without the primary skills needed to lead a productive existence. Proof of this continued dereliction of duty was once again brought to light in the case of a twelfth-grade student preparing for graduation while reading on a second-grade level. Also identified in these interactions was the lack of support for continued learning many students receive when they leave the school building. The mother of the student mentioned above was quoted as saying, “The school system has failed my son, I haven’t seen him with a book in 10 years”, this clearly identifies that the school system continues to fail our students, but so does the city government by not properly funding our educational institutions, and so do we as parents and community, when we don’t follow up or check on our young people’s educational progression.

## **The War on Drugs**

### ***The background of West Baltimore’s ‘Open-Air’ Drug Market***

The fast money associated with the illegal drug trade, long seen as a way out of the oppressed communities in our country has fueled the genocidal, drug-related violence that is rampant in Black communities across the nation. In some black community’s the hustlers are actually seen as a role model or something to aspire to because of their flashy cars, jewelry and lifestyles. The introduction of crack cocaine in the 1980’s and the ensuing hysteria surrounding the crack epidemic has been particularly devastating to our Black community, as we saw sharp increases in violence, crime, prostitution, child abuse and neglect. With ongoing media campaigns public support for a criminal approach to addiction or “the War on Drugs” was the catalyst for the accelerated degradation of what we call the hood. This public policy is believed to be directly responsible for an almost 800% increase in the number of African American women behind bars significantly higher sentencing laws for crack cocaine related arrests and subsequently more Blacks being in jail for longer periods of time.



According to researchers, more than one in every 100 adults in the United States is either in jail or prison. For African Americans those numbers are even higher with, 1 in 9 black males ages 20-34 and 1 in 100 black women ages 35-39 incarcerated making “the disparity in arrest rates alone one of the most devastating consequences of substance abuse among Black people, affecting the addicted, their families and communities.” Considering that all of these issues continue to progress as addiction does, it is no wonder that substance abuse in the Baltimore City’s Black communities and its related consequences; mass incarceration, homelessness, mental illness, HIV/AIDS and an increase in foster care costs, is one of the primary public health issues in this country. “It could be argued that addiction has been as effective as slavery in keeping African Americans oppressed, depressed and regressed.”

### ***The Current State of Addiction in Baltimore***

Historically, treatment programs have tried to fit everyone into a “one size fits all” model, failing to customize treatment to accommodate the different cultural needs, experiences, and beliefs of the individual client. Also, “Due to a history of oppression, discrimination, and racism, Black people tend to have a healthy mistrust of bureaucratic systems and services provided by persons viewed to be the oppressor.” Many times, clients either fail to successfully complete treatment, or are being discharged from programs for noncompliance. This is especially important when we consider that most African Americans gain access to treatment through the criminal justice and/or child welfare system, and failure to successfully complete treatment often results in loss of family, parental rights, loss of livelihood, a felony conviction with a long jail sentence and/or a return to previous drug use.



Once convicted of a felony, he or she has a whole new set of obstacles to overcome. Some of the consequences of a felony conviction include not only the lifetime loss of the right to vote in some states, but also the loss of many educational opportunities and social support services. Drug felons cannot obtain federal student loans, financial aid, food stamps, or public housing assistance. There are also limited job options for felons as many employers will not hire an individual who answers yes to the question, “have you ever been convicted of a felony”, regardless of whether the person served his time. All these obstacles combined are a set-up for failure.



## ***The Aggressive Enforcement***

Despite the constant attention to the detrimental effects the concept of ‘zero-tolerance policing’ initiated under Mayor Martin O’Malley in Baltimore’s urban communities, there has been little to no investment in remedying the impact it has had on the population of West Baltimore. Aggressive efforts to prosecute drug offenders with the knowledge that most of these crimes are committed out an individual’s desperation or their need to remedy a situation. Often the need is fueled by addiction.

Baltimore has an estimated 50,000 residents addicted to some sort of narcotic, nearly 10% of our city’s population, yet we historically ostracize those struggling to support their habit with those committing violence throughout the city. As science worldwide has identified addiction as a disease, that has not deterred the, public perception of those who suffer from it. Society continues to label a person criminal simply because of an action they took while in desperate need. One participant said we’ve heard countless stories of how systemic, so-called solutions to addiction influenced crimes such as the often referred to ‘drug court’, where detainees were offered enormous, suspended sentences or probation in plea deals to enroll in treatment programs in lieu of serving a prison sentence. This effort was fundamentally flawed from its inception as there was no intentional effort in increasing access to treatment, mental and social services for these individuals, nor was there continued oversight and case management to ensure participants were connected to the services needed to be successful. Many of those that participated in this initiative, were essentially released after a month or so in jail, to the very same situation that put them in the court system initially. It seems the courts did not recognize that addicts were being released to the same environment that fostered their addiction and forced to navigate their freedom without the proper guidance on how to travel a different path. The result is more of the mass incarceration, systemic involvement, and recidivism they were crafted to diminish, leaving many with scars on their records that will forever obstruct their ability to secure

*“A felony is the debt you can never repay” he explained, “you can be home for ten years and doing good, and someone can do a background check, and you’re a felon all over again”.*

*~Returning Citizen*



gainful employment, many, not believing they have any other option, return to a life on the streets, completing a cycle of release, relapse, and re-incarcerated.

The historic lopsidedness of Baltimore's investment into law enforcement and the lack of investment in addiction and mental health treatment seems an intentional and long-lived plot to keep a certain demographic down, and it has been working flawlessly. How does the City's leadership expect to ever lower crime and violence without a sustained investment in programs and initiatives that we know prevent crime? Do they want to? We know that when it's campaign season, candidates run on the promise to make our city safer, and pics with police officers in white shirts are a common theme, yet it seems that there has been a need to run on that platform for the past thirty years, and despite funneling hundreds of millions of dollars into the police department, safety still remains the top priority of almost every single resident.

Twenty-Seven percent (27%) of Baltimore's City operating budget is allotted to law-enforcement, a total of more than \$550,000,000 in 2021, yet we continue to flirt with 350 homicides annually. For every one dollar (\$1.00) into the police department, a mere one cent (\$0.01) is invested in the combined efforts of drug and mental health treatment. If a budget is a moral document that expresses the city's priorities through its willingness to invest in them, it is understandable that many in Baltimore's distressed neighborhoods continue to lose hope that the leadership in Baltimore will ever see them as more than a problem it must solve.

*The historic lopsidedness of Baltimore's investment into law enforcement and the lack of investment in addiction and mental health treatment seems an intentional and long-lived plot to keep a certain demographic down, and it has been working flawlessly.*

The culmination of these ingredients, combined with the fact that the drug trade is, or has the potential to be the most consistent employer in Baltimore and becomes a lure to those that are in a desperate circumstance. They don't do background checks, and you get a payment reflective of your experience every day. Many black men on the block argue that, there is no opportunity out there for people in their position, and that may very well be true, so once again it falls on our municipality to create and give access to opportunities to change their positions, and Baltimore can't seem to get that part right. What we know from our city's history is it was



structured through intentional oppression and racism, any moral administration that's fully aware of those facts, should be focused on undoing those wrongs.

### **The Non-Profit Complex**

It can never be said that Baltimore is lacking in non-profit resource and service providers, and many believe that is a hindrance to effecting actual change. There is no shortage of organizations providing every type of resource, program, and initiative from early childhood education to college prep courses. Brilliant initiatives ranging from holistic to pragmatic, positioned to address the perceived 'gaps' in the systemic structure that leave many Black and brown Baltimoreans at a disadvantage when achieving prosperity. This paradigm has created multiple obstacles to actually realizing change at an impactful level.

Years of corrupt administering, kickbacks and favoritism has poisoned the not-for-profit sector in Baltimore. Though there are many notable non-profits doing great work in the City, lack of accountability and political alignment has become the

***“There are too many programs and initiatives, getting funding to elevate our neighborhood, that have no connection to the people that live here”.***

catalyst for an onslaught of initiatives and organizations that have diluted the integrity of the work with assigned exposure, and the promotion of false claims and accomplishments. Organizations proven to provide the resources that help move community forward, are often overlooked if not aligned with the influencers of the status quo and are forced to compete with highly funded non-profit giants or fight for smaller grants with other organizations struggling to do the work. In the opinion of many residents, and I'll paraphrase, often it is the administration that decides, once again without engaging the residents, what a particular community needs and what organization is chosen to address it. Once again, we refer to the former Pinerhughes elementary building in Sandtown. Mayor Pugh, as did many, saw the flagrant open-air drug trade engulfing that intersection, and as do most, deemed that area incorrigible. Without regard for the residents, mostly long-time homeowners through the Nehemiah Project, the Mayor, under pressure from homeless advocates decided this location would be the perfect location to transplant the homeless encampment she was intent to remove from downtown into a shelter environment. Beyond the lack of common sense in the decision to inject a population with a majority suffering from some sort of chemical addiction into the middle of what is arguably Baltimore's largest open-air drug market, there



was the arrogance of thinking her office knew what was best for them, force-feeding it to the community. The venture was a failure on multiple levels, and most egregious was the designation of an organization to manage its operation that had no connection to, or regard for the community surrounding the location. The immediate impact was obvious, with the institution of policies that mandated clients leave the premises during daylight hours, creating another encampment during the day that also fed the drug trade the community had been fighting against for years. Within weeks residents and the major of the western District reported sharp increases in crimes such as burglaries, robberies,

*Though Baltimore has a seemingly endless list of non-profit resource organizations, the city lacks a consistent collaborative effort to find solutions to the issues they are funded*

vandalism, and automobile incidents. This is just one example of how those unaffiliated organizations doing the consistent work aren't recognized and are continually overlooked when it comes to municipal support and funding, yet organizations deemed 'pet projects' by our elected officials tend to continue to receive support, despite a poor product with dismal results. It would seem our elected officials and organizational leaders are not interested in realizing change, job security maybe.

. The environment is more reflective of a battle royal with organizations competing for scraps of funding, and willing to deploy all sorts of deceitful and manipulative tactics to not only get funding but to destroy other organizations who presumably do good works in community as well. Baltimore's non-profit complex has moved from efforts to build community to efforts to build organizations. Too often organizations are elevated because of the recognition of a single individual via social media or political affiliation and become the go-to for everything in hopes of positive exposure, with very little regard to positive outcomes. Many organizations are corrupted by the individual aspirations of its leadership and board, and there is no vested interest in the work being performed or the community being served, and in many instances the community is used for a backdrop for photo ops for more funds and campaign pictures.

The concept of celebrity in non-profits has also polluted the city's ability to rely on organizations to reach the population where the resource is needed, too much attention is given to the number of people that show up and not the amount of resources provided and connections made. Many organizations, considered prominent or larger, cater engagements to attract politicians and supporters and



not the impacted population, consequently, direct engagement, flyering and canvassing, has become a distant memory, reiterating the feelings of disenfranchisement and exclusion, further diminishing trust as well as the hope that our structure wants to change.

### The Politics

The biggest hindrance to moving forward towards a safer and unified Baltimore, is the dominant influence politics and political ramifications have on decisions concerning the cities trajectory. Baltimore continues to suffer corruption and scandal throughout our political establishment, and the embedded 'clique' politics has all but eliminated the concept of elected officials holding each other accountable. In the public's perception '*they are all in it together*', and that is a very understandable observation. Baltimore, a traditionally democratic city, has devolved to two distinct "democratic clubs" that now make up almost the entirety of our elected representation, creating the equivalent to standing water as a place of festering blood suckers. Decisions are agreed upon in backrooms or at *happy hours* before most residents even know there was a decision to be made. While attempting to initiate best practices, representatives often recruit and hire brainiacs and talking heads who tend to recognize what has worked in other cities or districts, without recognizing what made it work. Unlike those cities where the initiatives were successful, Baltimore continues to exclude the input, knowledge and experience of the people that have lived in these communities for decades, dooming many to failure at its inception simply because of their ignorance of history and community culture.

The decades of documented scandal and abuse of power associated with Baltimore's electorate, peppered with multiple instances of officials being indicted and convicted, identifies the tradition of rising to power under false pretense with self-serving interests. Baltimore residents, groomed to name recognition and familiarity, is repeatedly forced to choose from a multitude of evils when selecting representation. Candidates, due to consistent low voter turnout, are forced to align with one of the established clubs, as funds are precious, this alignment is often the precursor to compromising their ideals with the hopes of getting on a card with the incumbents. Baltimore also has an issue with legacy or *family* politics, the practice of using a family name or association to leverage the conditioning of voters to continually vote for a name they recognize. In Baltimore this practice has resulted in what is seemingly the passing of the torch from one generation or family member



to the next, with no other valid argument then my family has been involved with Baltimore politics for decades.

*“The definition of public safety continues to be defined by the impact it has on the profit big industry garners from Baltimore’s marketability, with very little consideration for the tactics used to achieve their desired results”*

Despite the so-called **Black Face** of Baltimore’s leadership, the influential political machine continues to be controlled by the financial interest that dictate investment into the priorities of the City. The definition of public safety continues to be defined by the impact it has on the profit big industry garners from Baltimore’s marketability, with very little consideration for the tactics used to achieve their desired results, creating a space where elected

officials, even with their own lived experience of how oppressive laws and police misconduct has devastated their own neighborhood, are forced to continue to invest in mechanisms they know will have zero positive effect on the Black community. The repeated expectation of a corrupt administration and police department to establish an atmosphere of safety has become a point of frustration for advocates and residents of urban communities alike.

Trust that residents of historically Black districts will be adequately represented has deteriorated to a point of minimal voter interest, which in turn removed the need to campaign or engage residents of these communities. The use of campaign tools like NGP VAN (formerly known as Voter Activation Network) and other voter registries, continue to distance candidates from the communities that fight for change, as they focus on areas where voter turnout is higher, once again giving no credence to an increasingly disenfranchised population that is growing every day. There have been accusations that the Democratic Party has restricted access to its Vote builder feature to hold off challenges to incumbent office holders. When asked who their city council person was, more than half of Western district residents responded, “Nick Mosby”, who hasn’t served in that capacity since 2016, his successors have seemingly been able to fly under the radar, and focus primarily on the parts of their district that brings in votes and the most important, campaign funding. Other candidates have been elected with little to no experience because their last name is the same as a previous candidate with no relation.





## **The Numbers**

### **Preliminary Internal Interrogatories Organizing and Movement Building**

#### ***Preliminary Internal Interrogatories Organizing and Movement Building First***

#### **Interim Draft Thinking**

*Michael P. Scott, Executive Director, Equity Matters  
Donna D. Brown, Project Manager, Citizens Policing Project*

#### **Summary**

1. Confirmation Bias Risk: Not only are voices not heard, but that the movement is not currently sufficiently listening intentionally and amplifying stories that should be heard. This is a classic movement mistake and leadership that came to prominence under chaos often repeats the practices and patterns that initially led to initially successful impacts. Said differently, we think we are in simple or clear patterns and practice, when we are operating in a complex set of challenges and a complex system which often erupts into chaotic moments. This is literally a dangerous place to be (see Charlottesville Case Study)
2. Data responses indicate that people under 18 think that both police and community hearing stories will change things, whereas older folks seem to want to rely on community more. [Community & Police Should Hear together (30%)]
3. Hope is spread evenly among age groups except in the youngest group.[Stories w/ Existence of Positive Psycho Graphic Experiences (40%) ]
4. This graph, combined with the "who should hear" graph above, seems to suggest that younger people want a way for police to hear about their experiences, especially negative experiences. And that they don;t hold out much hope. What are ways that we can strengthen the connection and exchanges so that young people can make their experiences meaningfully heard by police? [Negative/ Strongly Negative Stories (39%)]
5. Including social service organizations in this work is a powerful third voice between community members, governments, and police to help work on and develop solutions. [ Non-Police Tax Funded Agencies and Schools Should be Engaging with These Stories (26%)]
6. The way we are going to make change is to pay attention to emergent solutions and be deliberate about designing some robust structures based on what we learn. [Organizing Insight Clustering By Tenure In City

***[Disrupt/ Emerge/ Design New]***

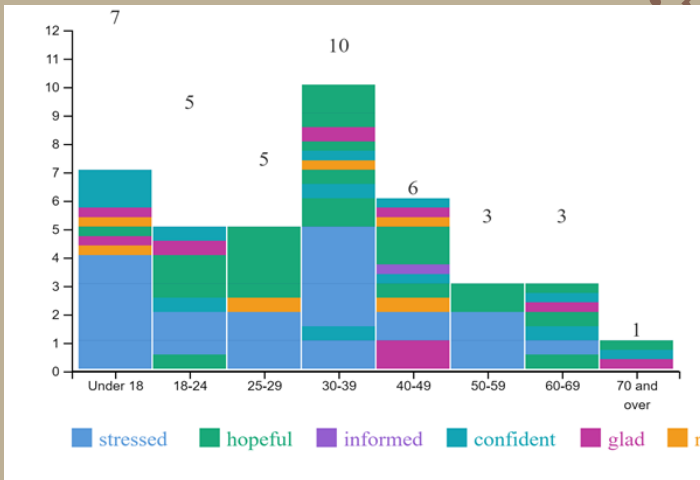


- 7. Possibility and vision is useful, but needs to be used to build a new system. [Patterns of Insights by Tenure in City Keep/ Imagine / Build]
- 8. Elders in the community can play a role in making sure everyone hears what has happened. Communication When It Goes Down: By Tenure In City.

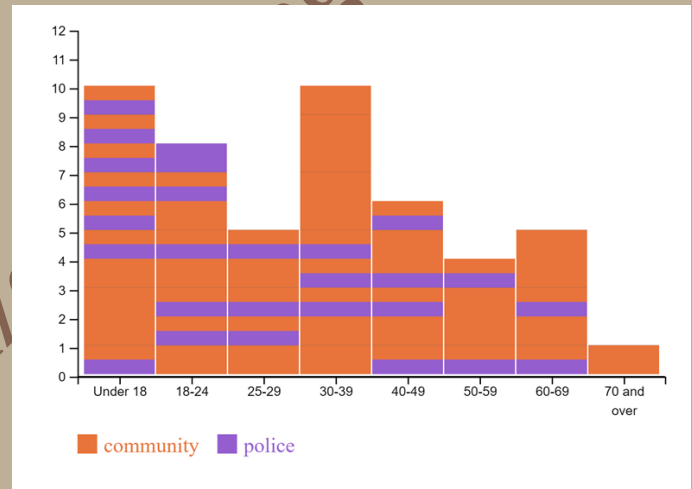
**Everyone Should Hear/ Only Share Solutions/ Personal Action**

9. Young adults (18 - 24) believe that other tax funded agencies, to include schools and social services, should be involved with these stories. Adults (40-49) believe that schools should be more involved. Elders (50-59) believe that other agencies to include schools and social services should be more involved. This is a critical space where young adults and older adults can connect in imagining a new system. Non-Police Tax Funded Agencies and Schools Should be Engaging with These Stories (26%)

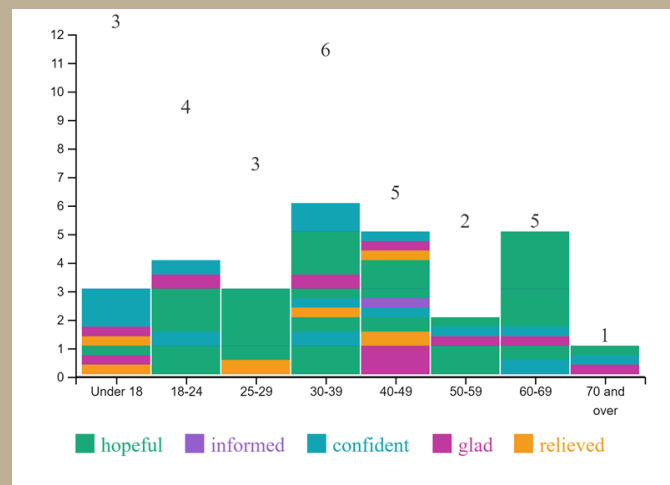
**Community & Police Should Hear together (30%) >**

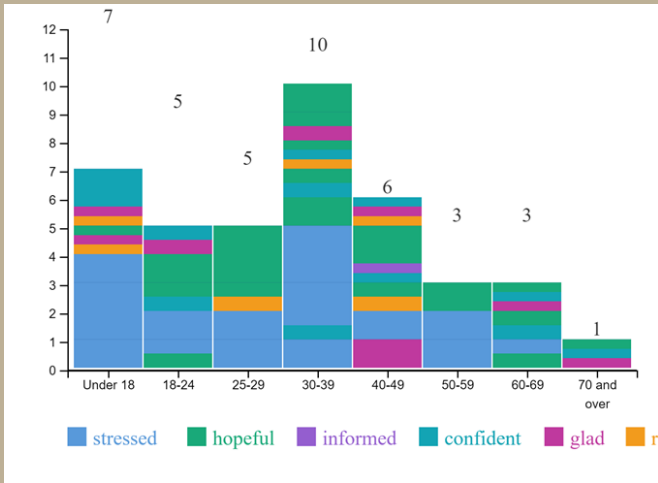


**Stories w/Existence of Positive Psycho Graphic Experiences (40%) >**



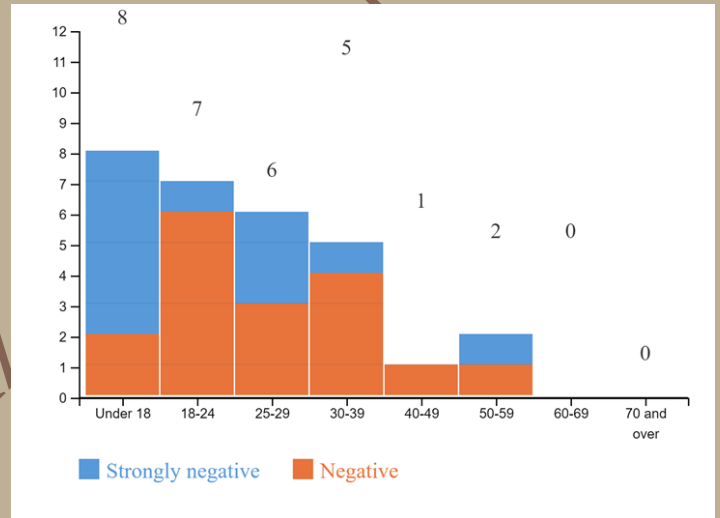
**< Positive with No Police Involved (54%)**



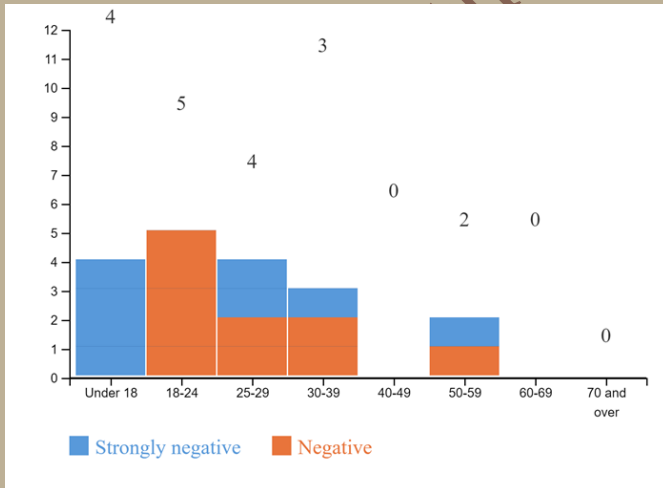


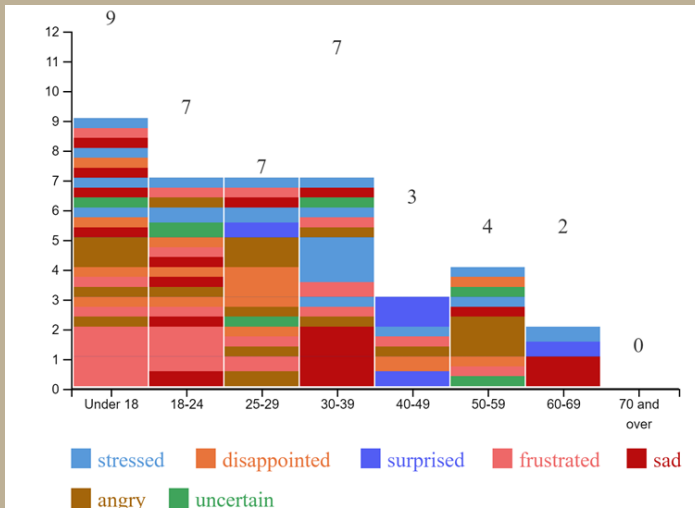
*< Positive Psych with No Police Involved (54%)*

*Negative/ Strongly Negative Stories (39%) >*



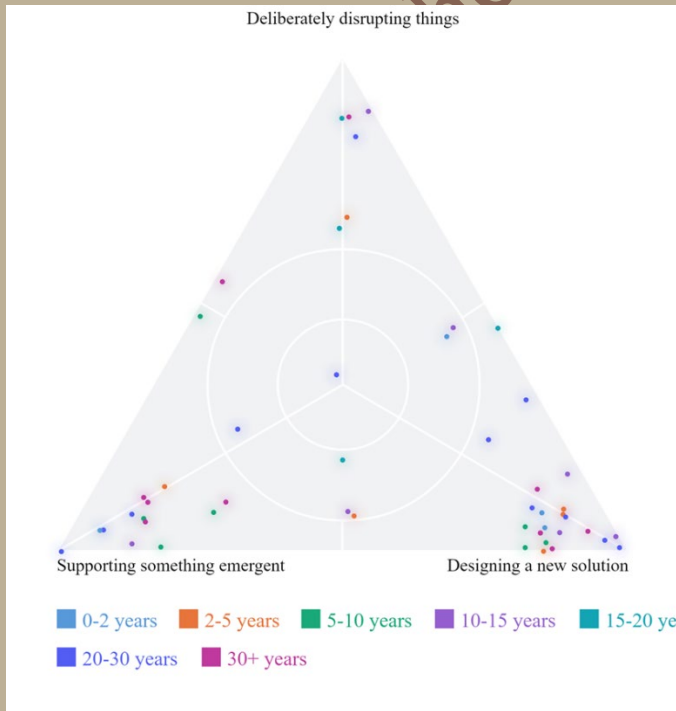
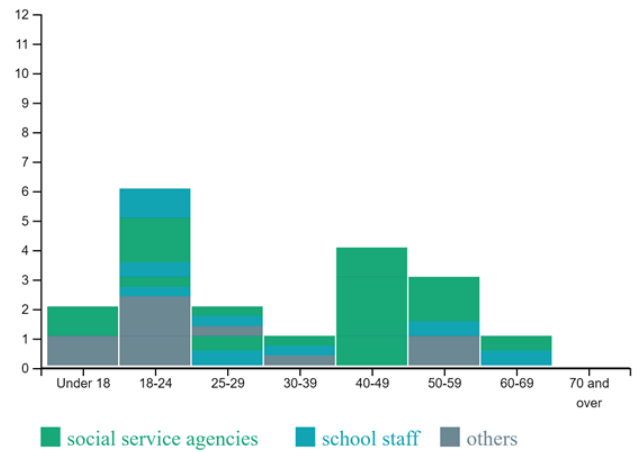
*< Police Involved in Negative/Strongly Negative Is 62% of Strongly Negative Stories*





< *Negative  
PsychoGraphics w/  
Police (53%)*

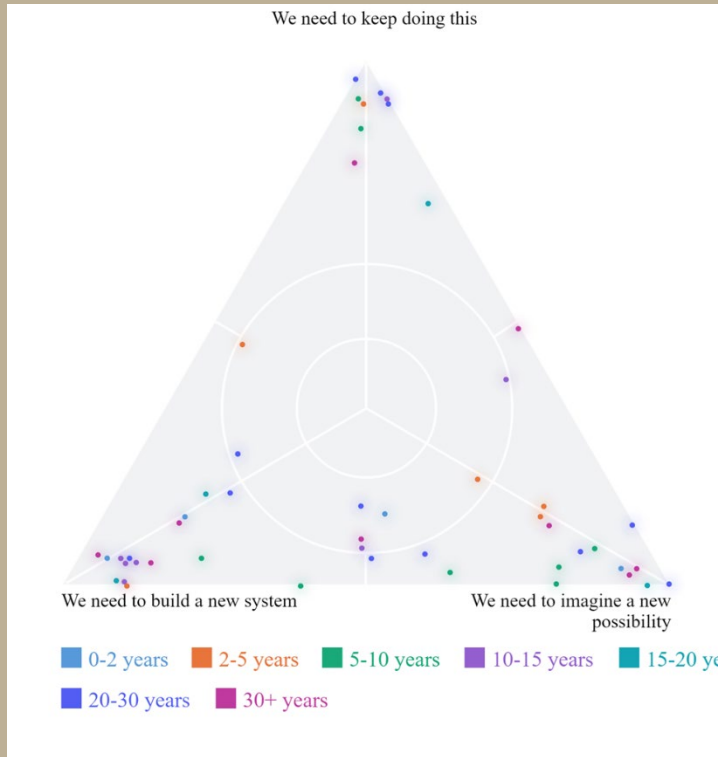
*Non Police Tax Funded  
Agencies and Schools  
Should be Engaging with  
These Stories (26%)*



< *Organizing Insight  
Clustering*

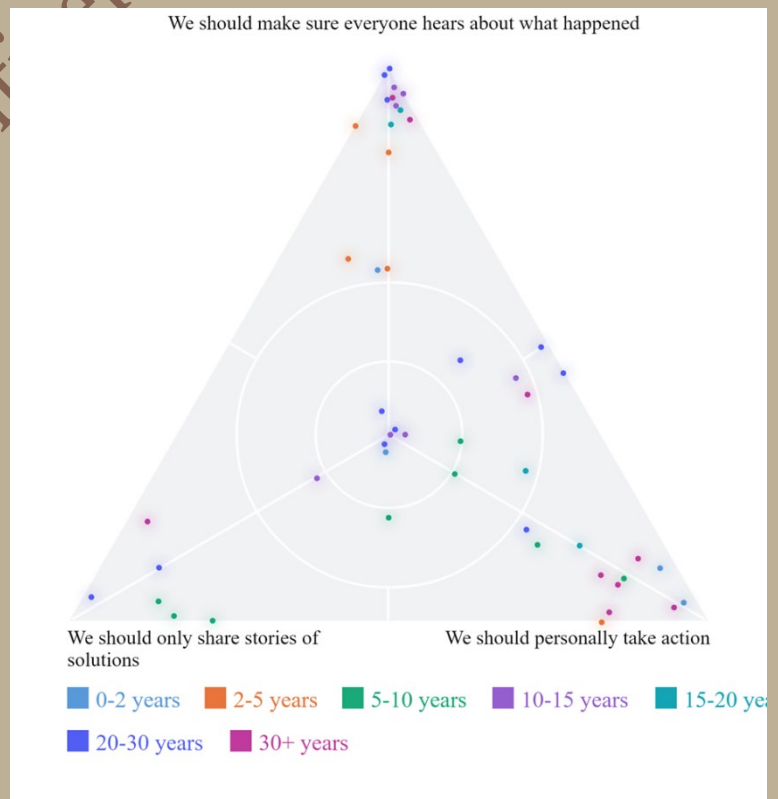
*By Tenure In City*

*Disrupt/ Emerge/ Design New*



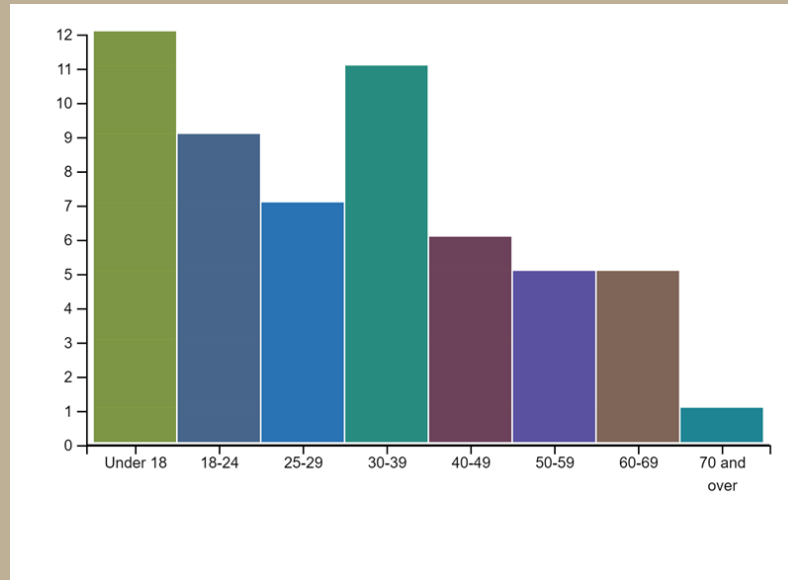
*< Patterns of Insights by Tenure in City  
Keep/ Imagine/ Build*

*Communication When It Goes Down:  
By Tenure In City  
Everyone Hear/ Only Share Solutions/ Personal Action >*





## Age Distribution



### Demographic Breakdown of (POC Respondents)

**61% Black/ African American**

**4% African Diaspora (Caribbean/ African)**

**11% Latino/Latina/LatinX/Hispanic**

**1% Persian/ Middle Eastern**

**9% Mixed, White, or Other**

**0% Asian**

**0% Indigenous**

**14% Declined to Answer**



## **INSIGHTS**

### **Narratives and Key Takeaways**

**Organizing Insight Clustering By Tenure In City ~ Disrupt/ Emerge/ Design New Communities** are inclined to take action and disrupting current system, while acknowledging the need to identify emergent ideologies.

### **Patterns of Insights by Tenure in City ~ Keep/ Imagine / Build**

Community members agree significantly that change must be made. Between building a new system and imagining a new possibility, there is share perspective that could bridge perspectives to bring about change that connects emergence and the drive for change in current systems.

### **Communication When It Goes Down: By Tenure In City ~ Everyone Hear/ Only Share Solutions/ Personal Action**

Sharing stories drives as well as informs action. Community members connect through stories to create/build movement. The capacity for change comes through understanding their own experiences.

### **Age Distribution**

While a small data collection, a diversity of ages are reflected in the participants.

### **Demographic Breakdown of (POC Respondents) By Age**

The majority of respondents were from communities of color, there was a small demographic identified as "other" who were white or mixed race. Design team will include all racial identities in the next iteration.





## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***Do we REFORM, DEFUND or ABOLISH the police?***

The question should be, why should we (the Black Community) must choose?

Recognizing the racial construct and oppressive history of policing in America, reforms are necessary to immediately end the unjust targeting of Black people, to feed an unjust criminal justice system. Noting that 'war on drugs' tactics used by previous administrations created and us against them mentality, that Baltimore has yet to figure out how to overcome. All of that is to say, choosing one or the other will only impact one community, ours.

The consent decree takes all the guess work out of how officers are not only expected but mandated to perform their duties when interacting with residents. And after decades of misconduct, corruption, and abuse of authority, those that have suffered these traumas, lost children because of police brutality, and have been unjustly victimized by the culture, deserve the guarantee that our city is doing all that's required to ensure this doesn't happen to another family.

***“Choosing one  
or the other  
will only  
impact one  
community,  
ours.”***

Defund, the latest installment of words that trigger a defensive response from law enforcement and law makers alike, is only the frustrated reiteration from people who have been advocating for equitable investment and opportunities for their communities for decades. Why is this an option and not a mandate at this point? The truth behind the defund movement is the continued struggle of historically disenfranchised and underinvested in communities, for our municipality to invest equitably, not equally into the resources, educational and economic needs of a community long overlooked as a viable investment in our city. The truth is that police have never been tasked to prevent crime, but rather to enforce the law AFTER a crime has already been committed.





What we cannot allow is the resurgence of any narrative that presents law enforcement as the solution to the climate of crime and violence plaguing our inner-city neighborhoods, as history clearly shows us that has never been the case, and the definition of insanity would clearly be Baltimore's continued over investment in that Methodology.

Full compliance with the consent decree does and has required investment from the city, and the residents of those communities impacted and traumatized by practices demand the city honor the terms of the agreement brought forth on our behalf, but also expect the promised "reimagining of public safety" promised in many campaigns.

The concept of true community policing can only be realized when there is full cooperation and collaboration between law enforcement and the communities they serve, and that is manifested through relationships and trust, and that should be the foundation of all future endeavors.

Not only is there an issue with trust between residents and police, but also a long-standing distrust of city government. Until residents see a change in the cycle of disinvestment and broken promises from former representatives and administrations, until there is a visible and intentional effort to address root issues of crime in our communities, we can't trust it. Which makes investment in our communities a priority in reaching compliance with the consent decree, NOT a hindrance or alternative.

In a recent article it was said that "Ray Kelly has made defunding the police his life's mission" and that has never been the case. My life's mission is to help create a safer environment within my community, so my neighbors can flourish, so we can share in the blanket of safety enjoyed by our more affluent neighbors. What we do know is the current concept of law enforcement and criminal justice has created a situation, intentionally targeting the Black Population that we begrudgingly still fight to undo. Instead of continuing to blindly throw money at an institution with documented operational deficiencies, is insanity, yet the idea of an earnest investment opportunity for all people is out of the question. To be honest, I don't care where the money comes from as long as my community and neighbors receive the resources and opportunities they deserve. It just seems logical to me that if we invest MORE in removing the root causes at the front end of these scenarios, you'll have less need for law enforcement on the backend.



## **The Long Game**

The fact of the matter is that Baltimore is in such a desperate situation, that the concept of having safer streets by divesting from law enforcement is inconceivable. With consistent increases in almost every crime category and on target for another flirt with 350 homicides in 2022, Baltimore residents are frustrated and demanding the city, and its police department, act immediately to quell the surge violence. That public outrage continues to translate into investing more money into a dysfunctional, understaffed, and overburdened law-enforcement agency that has repeatedly failed the city in every way. The same narrative, that we need the police to keep us safe, remains the prominent declaration of the city leadership and the constant list of 'needs' the department presents like silver bullets or the panaceas, to correct the flawed practices of previous administrations, continues to cost the city millions of dollars a year with seemingly no effect. People are conditioned to call the police for almost any situation they feel is out of their control, and the impulse to call 911 is embedded in our DNA at this point, and that's where the Long Game begins, unlearning all of the BS we were conditioned to believe about Public Safety, properly educate ALL residents on the real history of the impact of Baltimore's war on crime and zero-tolerance policies on the black community, and how specific neighborhoods have been deemed incorrigible: and not even on our elected officials radar for investment. Until ALL of Baltimore's residents know and understand the truth of where our city is and how we got to this place, we are doomed to continue the ill-advised path of years prior and continue our current trajectory into demise.

### **Recommendation 1 ~ Investment in Public Education**

The city must start with a committed investment where they have failed us most, our public school system. There have been multiple initiatives, such as the 21<sup>st</sup> century schools project and others, but the investment must be more than bringing buildings up to code, but rather an intentional, long-term investment in the quality of education children receive in inner city neighborhoods. The city cannot continue to cater to schools in more affluent neighborhoods where their votes and funds come from, but rather begin the process of undoing the wrongs committed against generations of black and brown students who were essentially denied an equitable education, through lack of investment because of the location of their school and the condition of its surrounding community.



In the same manner it finds funds for law enforcement, Baltimore must find the money to invest in the future of scholars, long seen as the numbers at the low end of the scoring spectrum. The endeavor will be costly, but the children are worth it. We must be intentional about hiring the best teachers possible for these schools and pay them like we want them to succeed. Like we want these little Black and Brown children to succeed. Increase the amount of funds designated to bring school buildings up to twenty-first century standard and complete the project expeditiously. People are tired of hearing the excuse there is no funding, find it, all children deserve an environment conducive to learning, and many neighborhoods have waited long enough.

***“Our schools must return to a ‘village’ dynamic where all responsible adults take on the task of raising, nurturing and protecting the children.”***

Education goes beyond the classroom, and our schools must return to a ‘village’ dynamic where all responsible adults take on the task of raising, nurturing, and protecting the children. In this context, city leadership is charged with ensuring that all schools have adequate medical personnel on site, counselors with the experience and capacity to guide children through the many adverse circumstance’s children in

their community encounter. Schools should be adequately staffed to ensure students receive the amount of individual attention they require. Schools should be equipped with staffed libraries, with full shelves of culturally diverse reading and research materials to engage scholars on every level. After school programming, tutoring and mentorship must be baked in the budget also, as we’re being honest with ourselves, we must plan on the going being rough and be prepared to leverage the man hours needed to fill the gaps.

Baltimore must dismantle its school to prison pipeline, and that starts with the discontinued use of uniformed police officers patrolling school hallways in the same manner they patrol the streets in the neighborhoods where these schools are located. The presence of the officers overseeing the everyday movements of students



in juvenile educational facilities only feeds the distrust already prominent between their community and law-enforcement. This punitive approach to engaging our youth to many residents are just an introduction to how our justice system works and tells children at an early age, “we’re watching you; we’re just waiting for you to step out of line, and we’re here to dole out the consequences when you do”. In the 1980’s Baltimore had officers without uniforms placed in every school, and if there was a serious problem, then uniformed school police would be called. The school operated with an escalated level of discretion in areas such as disciplinary issues, they didn’t want to make a scene because that wasn’t proper behavior in a learning environment. It seems now that every incident in a city school becomes a learning moment for students, and scholars are often paraded through the halls, into cars, and in front of cameras in an attempt to be made an example of. When schools and the attitudes of the personnel perpetuate these procedures, what do the children learn? Nothing but distrust and disdain, as well as the affirmation of what they are hearing on the streets, it’s us against them.

### **Recommendation ~ 2 Initiate a REAL war on drugs**

Policies put in place beginning in the 1980’s under the umbrella of a supposed war on drugs have been detrimental to many urban communities, what was promoted as an effort to stem the surge of addiction during what is now referred to as the ‘crack epidemic’, essentially became a war on the Black community. If these communities are where Baltimore fought this war, the ground zero, why have these communities not received the resources this country provides for refugees and casualties all around world? Where is the funding for reconstruction expected of the United States? Acknowledging the documented targeting and mistreatment of Black Baltimoreans throughout history, where is the reparations? Is anyone EVER going to be held to account or will our BLACK leadership once again tell its Black constituency to brush it off, swallow your trauma, and prepare your children for what’s to come? Baltimore is desperately seeking an answer to what has plagued this city for centuries, the pain.

*“Why is there so much pain here?”  
or “why do so many in our city feel the need to be anesthetized?”*



It's my firm belief that Baltimore must first address the issues of the pain it inflicted on Black people throughout history. The city must ask itself, "Why is there so much pain here?" or "why do so many in our city feel the need to be anesthetized?" If we know that hurt people hurt people, why do we waste time and money researching the obvious? Not only are people hurting, even when screaming at the top of their lungs, no one of influence or with the ability to change the situation is listening.

Addiction is not only the fuel needed to drive a thriving open air drug market, but the catalyst for more than half the crimes committed in Baltimore City. It's more than logical and long overdue to address a problem we know has been feeding this beast for as long as it's been in existence. It is time for the city to take a proactive approach to crime prevention in our city, and the obvious starting point is providing no cost in-patient rehabilitation to anyone in Baltimore who wants it. If it costs almost \$40,000 to incarcerate an addict for one year in a correctional facility, wouldn't it be cheaper to place that person in inpatient rehab for 30 days?

Modern science recognizes addiction as a disease, yet it is an almost exclusive phenomenon that those that have been inflicted with it must bear the severe consequences for the actions taken while under the influence of one of the most debilitating ailments. It is also one of very few diseases that one of the common symptoms is prison. A lot of the pain in Baltimore, can be associated with the decline of Baltimore industry or devastation from the 80's and 90's, but the commonality is something is always going to trigger those actively addicted and after the compounding of circumstance, hope is diminished, and addiction gets accepted as one's course. This isn't the case, and our city, guilty of so many atrocities over the generations, should make every mental, addiction and health service available and free to every resident, finally accepting responsibility for its role in the intentional infliction of this plague on our community and our people.

***Modern science recognizes addiction as a disease, yet it is an almost exclusive phenomenon that those that have been inflicted with it must bear the severe consequences for the actions taken while under the influence of one of the most debilitating ailments.***



### ***Recommendation ~ 3 Embrace the true foundation of the Consent Decree and IMPLEMENT IT***

Baltimore must finally accept the fact that our city is under a consent decree because of its long standing oppressive and unconstitutional treatment of residents of Baltimore's Black and Brown communities, not because of escalated violence or recorded homicides. The consent decree was not crafted as mechanism to lower crime statistics, but rather to protect citizens from continued abuse and mistreatment of Black people. In concept, the consent decree should start a process of reducing the anxiety Black people have when encountering an officer of the law. With the many obstacles placed before young Black men in these communities, unlawful treatment by those sworn to protect them should no longer be a factor with the consent decree mandates.

Implementation of a consent decree at its infancy must start with rebuilding trust between police officers and the residents they serve. The first required step in a venture to build trust is establishing relationships. Baltimore has failed miserably in this area. Five years into the consent decree and there has been very little change in their tactics on the streets. Baltimore's leadership must address implementation of the mandates of the consent decree with the urgency the residents of communities negatively impacted by BPD's practices feel are deserved of the civil and human rights violations outlined in the Department of Justice findings report.

In a memorandum dated September 13, 2021, Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta put forth several guidelines concerning the monitorship and implementation of consent decrees moving forward under the Biden. In this memorandum she outlines five principles of monitorship of State and Local Governmental Entities (*Gupta, Garland, 350OAG, 2021*):

- Monitorships should be designed to minimize the cost to jurisdictions and to avoid any appearance of a conflict of interest.
- Monitors must be accountable to the court, the parties, and the public.
- Monitors should assess compliance consistently across jurisdictions.
- Sustained, meaningful engagement with the community is critical to the success of a monitorship.
- Monitoring must be structured to efficiently move jurisdictions into compliance.

AAG Gupta writes, "The benefits derived from a monitorship are substantial, as the human and financial costs of permitting unconstitutional police practices to persist



are enormous. But the Department must also recognize that implementing the changes involved with a consent decree often requires expending substantial public resources as the agency puts in place new systems, training, and policies. Though the cost of a monitorship ultimately depends on how swiftly a jurisdiction comes into compliance, monitorships must nonetheless be designed and administered with awareness that every dollar spent on a monitorship is a dollar that cannot be spent on other policy priorities”. Baltimore must find a way, if the goal for our city is the overall public safety of all communities, just as we find the funds to improve the Police Department, the city must also find ways to invest in crime prevention methods, to ease the load. She also writes, “The Department should thus take several steps that will both constrain costs and ensure that monitors are not viewed, rightly or wrongly, as making their monitoring work into a career, and recommends the following:

- Cap Monitor Fees:
- Encourage Use of Pro Bono Time, Reduced Rates, and Non-Profit Organizations and Academic Institutions.
- Explore Alternative Fee Arrangements: Third, Department attorneys should explore
- Restrict Lead Monitor Participation in Multiple Monitorships

The final principal serves to remind us that Monitors must be accountable to the court, the parties, and the public. It states, “When consent decrees involve state and local entities, monitors hold a position of public trust, not only as agents of the court, but also as drivers of significant change in public institutions that are central to the communities that they serve. Monitorships thus must be structured to ensure that monitors are accountable for their work. To effectuate this, the Department should take the following steps:

- Collect Public Input during Monitor Selection
- Impose Term Limits Subject to Judicial Reevaluation and Reappointment
- Make Monitoring Documents Publicly Accessible:

If the consent decree is ever to reach it’s intended goal of equitable and fair treatment of all citizens, our elected representatives must take every measure to hold the entire process accountable to the residents the DOJ brought this case before the court in representation of. Understanding the many complications Baltimore has had since the consent decree’s signing, our residents expect an earnest effort. City leadership can no longer accept every excuse presented by BPD leadership on delays and minimal movement. If for no other reason, the continued



cost should be a motivator, even for representatives who have never experienced police misconduct. Recognizing the distrust in the process resulting from Baltimore's shady selection. Or rather creation of a monitoring team, the process at 5 years in is due for an assessment of every component, reassessment and feasibility of each mandate, and a declaration of expectations, including an enforceable timeline, with dated benchmarks.

Baltimore's leadership cannot allow the false narrative that the homicide rate or escalated violence being lowered is contingent on the successful implementation of the consent decree, be the dominant perspective, when we know that this mandate is in place because of the unconstitutional acts of a police department that still has not demonstrated a willingness to change or accountability for their actions in the past, some of which are seemingly undeterred. It should be unacceptable to any elected representative for a police department to continue with the amount of scandal and corruption that continues to befall the BPD and it is inconceivable that Black parents must still endure the pain associated with the loss of a child, nor the perpetuation of its historic trauma when they are unarmed and at the hands of the police.

Five years after the commitment that this reign of terror would end, residents don't see a change. They heard enough about the investment and advancements made. We've heard enough about groundbreaking policies and scenario-based trainings, but until people see a visible change at street level, they'll continue to feel like the city is kicking the can.

### **Recommendation ~4 A CITYWIDE movement for CHANGE**

For decades Baltimore has operated under the guise of recycled, corrupt, and scandalous politics, that continue to perpetuate the status quo and has fueled the disenfranchisement of many residents. Many believe change will never come if our representation continues to concede to influencers whose interest are not aligned with public safety or reform in the eyes of the Black community. With its prominent culture of kickbacks, favors and alignment, the concept of who elected officials are accountable to has been irreversibly biased.

If Baltimore is ever to commit to an equitable strategy for public safety, it would mean that we as residents and voters have finally taken a stand and uprooted the stagnant political machine that has stymied the elevation of the Black communities for the past four decades or more. To realize the change in neighborhoods that have received nothing more than broken promises and disappointment from generations





of politicians, residents must shed the culture of tolerance adopted with the acceptance of disgraceful representation, and DEMAND and FORCE the city forward. Residents can no longer be content in complaining that nothing has changed and organize a sustained movement to ensure we change it. The singular benefit of being redlined into densely populated communities, is that now with legislation allowing almost all adult Marylanders to vote despite criminal background, we can actually control who represents our community, with the sheer power of our vote, but convincing residents their vote can matter with the city's history is more long game.

The key to change is the ability to hold someone accountable for making it happen, and as long as Baltimore operates on the ideals and priorities of the same entities that created the oppressive state Baltimore's inner-city communities are in thirty years ago during another initiative to protect their interest from the threat of Black infiltration. Baltimore continues to be recognized as a 'black city' but in the eyes of many residents, it does empathize or prioritize Black people.

At this point it should be obvious that the only hope that Baltimore has for realizing a shift in trajectory is a population that is fed-up with the repeated cycle of mismanagement of the meager resources the city has and rises together to replace it with better. Many residents express the city's need to clean city hall from top to bottom, removing all remnants and associations to administrations that have failed us repeatedly and intentionally in the past.

Baltimore must ignite an all-out movement, similar to the civil rights movement, with a prominent focus on education around civic engagement, voter rights, and the legislative process to create a path led by those who have been

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through the worst, created a strategy to navigate it and survived. We can no longer wait for our elected officials to make promises they know they are willing to concede for the support of the status quo perpetrators. Long game is grooming our own, home grown representatives, groomed in the principles of our elders and a inherent vested interest in the community they will serve. Baltimore is in desperate need of leadership not reliant on the endorsement of big industry or past politicians that did little to impact change in their tenure, but rather candidates elevated by a community confident that his priorities are founded in a community he not only has direct ties to, but also loves.



## **Recommendation ~5 Renewed Audits and Accountability**

A major consequence of years of corrupt leadership is the continued derelict performance of the Agencies, contractors and organizations assigned to ensure Baltimoreans has access to the resources they require. There is no excuse for the state of our communities considering the millions of dollars invested into the various remedies and solutions proposed over the years. How can Sandtown, with the worldwide recognition of it's ails and plight in 2015, still suffer the same conditions seven years later, with all the talk of investment the community still suffers the effects of the opposite. Baltimore has fallen into a cycle of employing the same one dimensional thinking agency heads and organizational support that are content to report on why their services are not having the desired impact then request continued funding to support the same outcomes, and the city obliges. Why is that?

I joking relate the Baltimore's agency and resource distribution to in-breeding, liken it to hiring your illiterate cousin who can't count to run the store, simply because he'll do what you say. There is no concern if the isles are dirty, the produce is rotten, and the profits are negative if you are the one in control, and it isn't, well, someone other than yourself. The common practice of cherry-picking friends, supporters, and flunkies to manage agencies and operations they have no relative experience in, has proven detrimental to Baltimore's progression, and too often individuals who have benefitted the city with their leadership, are replaced for their previous affiliation or the simple fact that it was promised during a campaign. The repetitive phenomenon in Baltimore of a new face and new ideas has successfully guaranteed that we go nowhere.

***Baltimore must take the first step in creating a true accountability which is to deploy a independent and fully comprehensive audit of all of its agencies, contracts and structures.***

Baltimore must take the first step in creating true accountability which is to deploy a independent and fully comprehensive audit of all of its agencies, contracts and structures. We must start with an honest diagnosis of what is working and what is not. Who is performing well and who is not? Are the agencies and resource designated for certain communities to grow, reaching the

populations they are intended to assist? Millions of dollars in grant and municipal funds are spent every year on organizations structured to create opportunities through training and job readiness, programs that focus on addiction treatment and



education, early childhood education, afterschool programming, the list could go on and on, yet in 2022 Baltimore is still a city in distress. Are we getting what we pay for? Or are we stuck because of agreements made a generation ago or are we so limited in club circles? Either way the residents never seem to get what they were promised or what they expect but rather the solution proposed by a new face with no relevant experience, to a problem residents don't consider an issue at all. Cleaning up our city's stained past must include the elimination of the historic past practices of not partisanship alone, but dismantling functioning, beneficial programs and structures because of petty political beefs. Building trust with residents is going to take stability and consistency and the constant undoing only hurts the impacted community, not a candidate no longer in office.

**Recommendation ~ 6 An inclusive budgeting process**

To ensure that public safety funding is going into the areas where and when it is needed most Baltimore must diversify the method of establishing and proposing its annual budget by creating a more public-engaged or what is known as a 'participatory budgeting' methodology. While serving as a councilmember and later president, current Mayor Scott was a leading proponent of taking some of the budget's creation power from the Mayors office and dividing it with the city council as its membership has a more immediate relationship to constituents in any given district. This still should be the equitable path even though he now sits in the mayor's seat himself.

*It is said that your budget is a moral document, directly reflective of what means most to you and your priorities, in a city as culturally diverse as Baltimore, there is no way that responsibility should rest with any single individual.*

It is said that your budget is a moral document, directly reflective of what means most to you and your priorities, in a city as culturally diverse as Baltimore, there is no way that responsibility should rest with any single individual. People are not ignorant to the fact that the mayor has a harem of advisors, but they are just that, his advisors, hired to help this individual strategize how to get what he or she wants, rarely is there objection in a group with one boss. Sharing this power with city council guarantees at least fifteen perspectives, influenced by and accountable to the residents of as many districts, forcing representatives to support what happens



in their individual proximity, compromising their ability for party or 'club' directives. Currently city council is limited to removing items from the mayors proposed budget, the logical first step would be to find out why something was removed and what the council thinks should be in its place, but logical is not the direction Baltimore decided to take as city council only has the power to poke holes in a budget but not fill them, allowing the Mayor to fill them once again.

An effective participatory budgeting process must be established through the input of the community and Baltimore has to establish processes that solicits the ideas and perspectives of all residents in real-time, meaning while the budget is being drafted, not the day it's being submitted or at a taxpayer's night event. This outdated practice initiates the community's involvement at a place of conflict, without the ability to collaborate residents have no choice but to compromise. Long game strategy would be proposing recurring budget line items committed to improving historically disenfranchised communities and undoing the racist systemic structures that created them so administration and advocates won't have to engage in this debate on an annual basis.

### *Concluding Thought*

Baltimore's residents are in no way disillusioned into believing there is some miracle potion the city can take to cure its ills. Nor are they persuaded to believe that the answer lies in a campaign promise. In fact, residents have been asking for the resources they believe would have a positive effect in their communities for decades. Remarkably the same communities have been asking for the same investments for just as long. For too long our legislators focus on what they wish to accomplish while in office, yet the viable solution must be structured beyond term limits. When addressing over fifty years of intentional oppression, disinvestment and neglect, our elected officials must endeavor in an initiative that more than likely will and must outlive any individual's tenure. Undoing the racism and supremic governance that shaped the city's current dynamic will take a multi-pronged approach inclusive of all Baltimoreans will take years of restructuring, re-educating, and sustained investment. At this juncture, residents are less concerned with how long it will take or how much it will cost, but rather when are we actually going to start the process.

The obvious starting point is the commitment to a long-term investment in the underperforming public schools that continue to reflect the forgotten neighborhoods that surround them. A reasonable commitment would be for twelve (12) years, the expected educational tenure of a public-school student. The investment must be focused on equitable, not equal disbursement, meaning prominent schools and schools whose performance meets or exceeds national standards, should be willing to accept lower designations to ensure schools that need more attention to reach those levels are afforded



what is needed to achieve those metrics. Similar funding should be committed to supports prevalent in the communities where these children live including early and after care services in primary schools, and adequate intermural, athletic and other extracurricular activities for upper school students. The school should be the one safe space where parents can entrust their children without anxiety, and the city should expend every effort to ensure that they are excelling in that role.

Students continue to be influenced by what they see every day, and parents are not naïve and know the impact of navigating these communities regularly, which makes safe passage a priority. Increased attention in the way of Blight removal, increased visibility during school

commute hours, clearly designated routes to school from the neighborhoods and sustained personnel to ensure the heightened safety protocols are maintained.

The acquisition of American Rescue funding creates an opportunity to address many issues at once if properly dispersed. It's often spoken about the correlation between "crime and grime", Baltimore would be wise to invest the lions share of those funds into opportunity, a commodity many feel are negligible in their community. Rescue funding could finance a city-wide effort to clean up the city and rehabilitating communities while at the same time creating multiple levels of labor and skilled trade positions in agencies like the housing authority, public works and recs and parks. And didn't encounter a single resident opposed to the return of a second trash day, buy some trucks and hire some trash men, the city will appreciate it.

With the change in city policy to not perform a pre-employment drug screen for many positions, a conduit is opened for many walking a thin line with addiction to occupy their time, be productive, earn a living and inject a small bit of hope that change is possible. To further expand access collaboration should be established with the city's health department, the office of employment development and treatment providers to provide support for all potential and current municipal employees and their families. Investment in all aspects of addiction and mental health treatment is a important component in establishing safer neighborhoods, and with almost 10% of it's residents living with some form of chemical dependency, it would be a smart investment for the city to establish free inpatient and outpatient treatment for any residents seeking a new life in sobriety. The continued punitive approach to addiction and it's incorporation with privatized prisons, has yet to change the paradigms with violence in the community, leaving the big business of prison ownership the only beneficiary, let's try something different.

We have been under a consent decree for five years, and communities have yet to see the change it's signing promised to translate into a difference residents can identify at street level. Recognizing the many unified good will efforts and kind words spoken during the

**The city and police department continue to proclaim that the community's priority is getting killers and shooters of the street, when all residents have ever desired is to have less killings.**



protests of 2020, that doesn't reflect the reality of the day-to-day interactions residents have in communities where illegal activity and escalated violence continue to surge. There is a feeling that after the election of Donald Trump, the residents of Baltimore lost the representation and aggressive pursuit of justice initiated by his predecessors that I also share. The Monitoring Team serve as the agents of the court and proclaim a neutrality in the process, that allows them to educate the public on progress, but they are accountable to the Judge, not the people. With shift of priorities at the executive level, the DOJ reserved to appearances at the court proceedings, leaving the only other party, the police department, the only entity to voice our concerns to, opening the door for renewed protests and conflict. It is now more than ever, imperative that our city leadership become intentional about the implementation and compliance with the consent decree.

It's time for our mayor and city council to take a hands-on approach to getting this thing going in the direction it was intended and stop using it as conversational rhetoric as an excuse for Baltimore's continue. Leadership must once again initiate a public education campaign to define the expectations of the consent decree and STOP the misleading narrative that the consent decree will make communities safer. The consent decree takes on the daunting task of attempting to change the culture of policing in a city that is scarred by scandal and corruption, and a police force indoctrinated to do whatever they want to as long as the powers that be maintain what they have. The consent decree was established to protect the constitutional and human rights of residents historically impacted by past practices and policies, and they should remain the lead influencer in ensuring compliance, not subject matter experts from around the world or the familiar talking head who has never had a negative interaction with police.

The city must also take advantage of opportunities to increase accountability, through civilian oversight, increased public engagement and full transparency, creating mechanisms that inform residents of, officer conduct issues, policy drafting, trainings and implementation to encourage real-time feedback and continued engagement. Increased transparency should consist of a balanced dissemination of information and access to information. There shouldn't be a need for defensive press conferences blaming a generalized population for increases in shootings and homicides every week if there is committed investment in preventing crime and building community. The City and Police department continue to proclaim that the community's priority is getting killers and shooters of the street, when, all residents have ever desired is to have less killings. To many 'abolishing' the police is an inconceivable fantasy, but investment in the righting of past wrongs, remains the only logical path to safer communities, which in return will dilute the exaggerated need for law enforcement.

The question remains is this the political will of Baltimore's Leadership? At this point residents seriously doubt it. Residents have the power to change it by going into our next election cycle with an attitude of out with old and in with what we want? I'd love to draft a



report in twelve years outlining all of the positive changes to Baltimore, but it starts with who WE charge to change Baltimore. Think about it, then let's realize it.

### About the Citizens Policing Project

Established in October 2018, The Citizens Policing Project (CPP), focuses on five major components of the process and procedures that have traditionally omitted the input and concerns of the residents of communities of color and lower socioeconomic status, and institute methods that empower the community to take the initiative to get involved and in front of the Consent Decree implementation process and Police policy and procedure in Baltimore City. 1) Education (Accessibility) 2) Investigation 3) Documentation 4) Collaboration and 5) Sustainability

CPP embarks in a series of workshops, community gatherings and forums through which they will assist residents in recognizing indigenous leadership and creating sustainable entities to perform a structured process of involvement that is inclusive of the general population of the community directly affected by the issues that prompted the DOJ's investigation. The CPP and residents will set and schedule a series of day visits that will engage different Organizations, Activist Groups and Residents.

CPP is COMMITTED to sustaining a commUNITY-informed policing model to ensure implementation and compliance of Baltimore's Consent Decree, while creating a conduit to trust and collaboration with the BPD for a SAFER Baltimore City. Comprised of 'experts' so to speak, who have employed diverse tactics in different parts of the city and have gained comprehensive knowledge of what has been proven to be of benefit to the process as well as tactics and Initiatives that have proved frivolous or unfruitful. The members of the CPP will act as organizing Consultants and serve in a capacity of advisor to the local organizations and general population. CPP also serves as facilitators in the initial gatherings and falls into a supportive role as indigenous leadership emerges and will encourage residents to spearhead all efforts as well as become voices in their communities to help quell the fears of retaliation and reprisal. Our youth component, **Beyond Youth Organizing** (BYO) is a group of trained youth advocates, who have been engaged in the processes that require a youth voice throughout Baltimore City. They boast their commitment to inform and influence all processes and policies that they feel will impact the future of their respective inner-city communities.





## About the Author

Ray Kelly is a lifelong resident of West Baltimore and a seasoned community organizer who is internationally recognized for working for social and restorative justice, better community and police relations, as well as legislative reform with the residents of Baltimore City. He also serves as Chair of the Pastoral Council and Executive Committee at St. Peter Claver Catholic Church in Sandtown where he was baptized in 1973.



Since 2001, Ray has served as a Steward to the residents of the many communities that surround Baltimore's Pennsylvania Avenue corridor. As CEO of the No Boundaries Coalition, he was also the driving force behind forming the West Baltimore Community Commission on Police Misconduct, whose report, "Over Policed, Yet Underserved, The Peoples findings..." received international recognition, referenced multiple times in the DOJ's findings Report and presented to a United Nations Special Repertoire.

Ray, along with members of the Statewide Collaborative CJSJ (Campaign for Justice, Safety and Jobs) partnered with the DOJ Civil Rights Division to conduct "The People's Decree Summit", where almost 100 residents, 13 organizations, and 11 representatives from the DOJ gathered in St. Peter Claver Hall to fine-tune recommendations on how their neighborhoods should be policed, that document, The People's Decree of Central West Baltimore was reflected in the Consent Decree and continues to frame and influence the new era of policing for Baltimore City and many others around the Country. Most recently Ray was appointed by Mayor Catherine Pugh and served as chair of the Community Oversight Task Force, mandated by the Consent Decree to review the current mechanism of Civilian oversight of BPD and draft recommendations to the courts on how it could and should be strengthened.

After the signing of the Decree Ray was appointed Lead Community Liaison for the court-appointed Monitoring Team and served in that post for two and a half years and was recently appointed by Mayor Brandon Scott to serve on the Local Control Advisory Board, tasked with creating a path to return control of the Baltimore Police Department to the City after 160 years of state control.





## **Acknowledgments and References**

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