

# OVER-POLICED, YET UNDERSERVED:

BY THE WEST BALTIMORE COMMISSION ON POLICE MISCONDUCT AND  
THE NO BOUNDARIES COALITION

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IN COLLABORATION WITH BUILD AND THE UNIVERSITY  
OF MARYLAND, BALTIMORE COUNTY (UMBC)

## THE PEOPLE'S FINDINGS REGARDING

# POLICE MISCONDUCT IN WEST BALTIMORE

THIS REPORT DETAILS STORIES OF POLICE MISCONDUCT TOLD BY WITNESSES  
AND VICTIMS FROM WEST BALTIMORE AND MAKES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR  
POLICY CHANGE TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY-POLICE RELATIONSHIPS.

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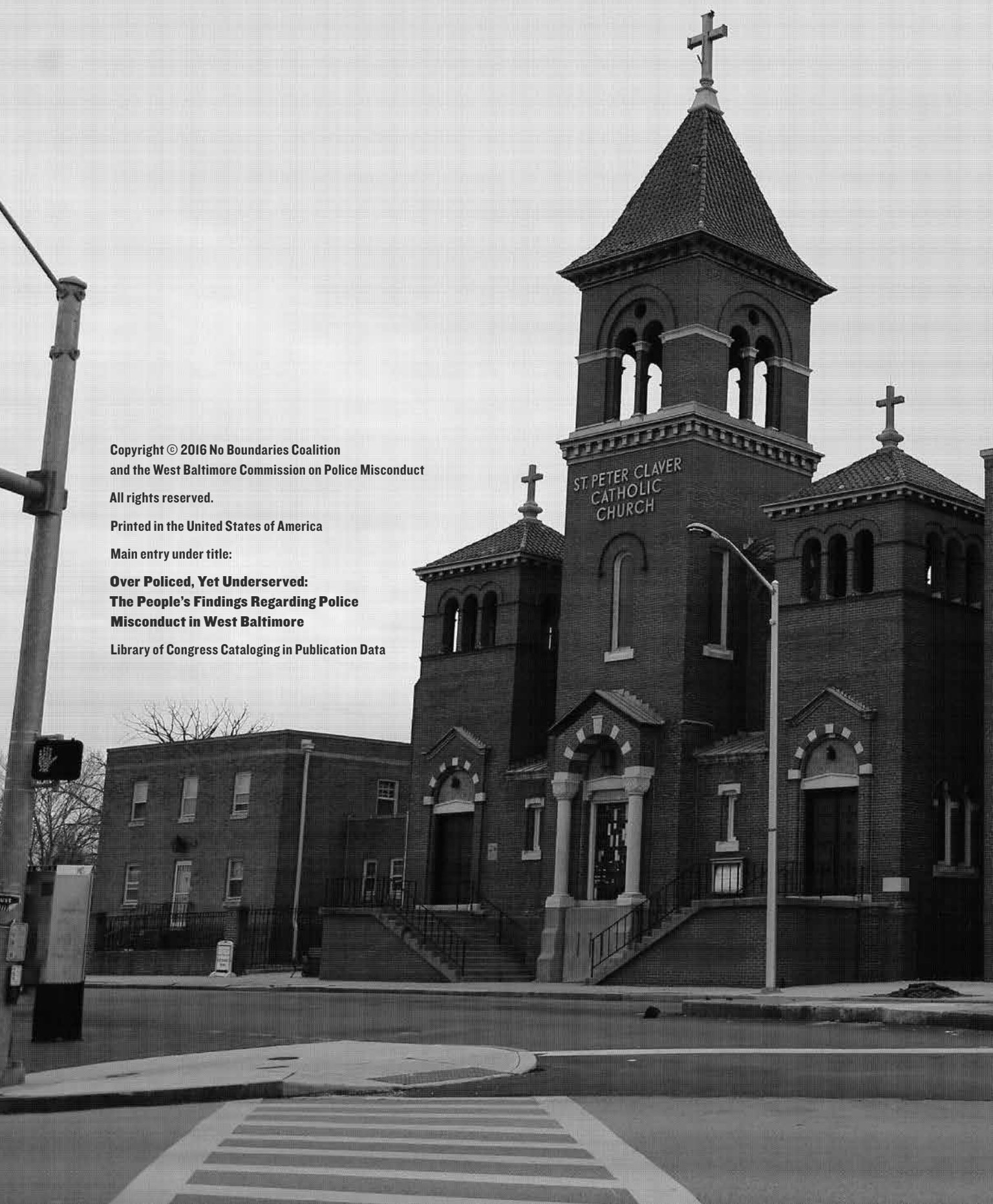
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### DEDICATION:

This report is dedicated to all the victims of police misconduct who are afraid to share their stories. In publishing these collected stories, we also remember the stories that will never be told.

## INTRODUCTION

Freddie Gray's Death and the Creation of the Commission

# THE APRIL 2015 DEATH OF FREDDIE GRAY,

**a young African-American resident of Baltimore,** led to outrage, protests, and unrest at the local and national levels. Mr. Gray died while in the custody of Baltimore City police. A viral video of Gray's brutal treatment by law enforcement officials opened up local and national conversation about the issue of police misconduct in lower-income, urban African-American neighborhoods. Following similar events in New York City, Cleveland, and Ferguson, Missouri, in which unarmed African-American men were killed by police, this incident brought attention to a growing divide between police and their communities.



**T**he week after Freddie Gray's death, Baltimore's Sandtown-Winchester community was in a state of crisis. Sandtown-Winchester is the neighborhood where Freddie Gray lived and where the police encounter that led to his death occurred. On Saturday, April 25, fifteen volunteers from the No Boundaries Coalition conducted a door-knocking campaign to hear directly from residents of Sandtown-Winchester what they needed and what they wanted to see happen in response to the death of Freddie Gray. 250 residents of Sandtown-Winchester spoke with the No Boundaries Coalition's volunteers that day. The decision to create the West Baltimore Community Commission on Police Misconduct arose out of that door-knocking campaign. In just that one afternoon, we talked to people who had had family members killed by police, people who had sustained broken bones in police encounters, and people whose house had been torn apart during a drug raid—only to find out that the police had the wrong address. From the stories we heard that day, we knew we needed to document the prevalence of police misconduct in West Baltimore. Although the community was well aware of the commonness of police misconduct, people outside of the community, policymakers, and the general public needed to be made aware.

### **THE NO BOUNDARIES COALITION**

**The No Boundaries Coalition is a resident-led advocacy organization building an empowered and unified Central West Baltimore (CWB) across the boundaries of race, class and neighborhoods. Founded in 2010, the No Boundaries Coalition advocates safer streets, greater police accountability, more fresh, affordable produce in the neighborhood, and increasing opportunities for young people. The No Boundaries Coalition works in eight neighborhoods in Central West Baltimore (ZIP code 21217).**

In 2013, the No Boundaries Coalition identified improving public safety and increasing police accountability as key issues in CWB through a listening campaign with residents. The No Boundaries Coalition successfully lobbied for police foot patrols along Pennsylvania Avenue through an eight-month campaign that included multiple meetings with city leadership, letter-writing, and community organizing. We also advocated for and successfully organized roundtable discussions between patrol officers and residents to improve police-community relationships. We have organized peace walks, marches, and a National Night Out Block Party to promote public safety. Beginning in December 2014, we conducted another listening campaign, in which we asked residents about their interactions with police and what they would like to see happen in order to improve police-community relationships. Based on the results of our listening campaign, we drafted legislation to reform Baltimore City's Civilian Review Board. The No Boundaries Coalition has met with and worked with every level of the Baltimore Police Department (BPD), from cadets and patrol officers to command staff and the Commissioner. We have worked with BPD to express residents' concerns, plan neighborhood events, advocate change, and improve police-community relationships.

### **OUR NEIGHBORHOOD: SANDTOWN-WINCHESTER**

**The majority of outreach to possible participants occurred in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood. Due to the concentration of our outreach efforts, the majority of individuals interviewed for this report are Sandtown-Winchester residents. However, everyone who expressed interest in sharing their story was interviewed.**

Sandtown-Winchester is a neighborhood of approximately 9,000 residents. The Sandtown neighborhood is located near downtown Baltimore, in ZIP code

21217. This 72-block neighborhood is part of “Old West Baltimore,” a historically Black area of Baltimore with a rich history of arts, culture, and civil rights activism. Performers such as Billie Holliday and Diana Ross performed at venues along the historic Pennsylvania Avenue, often called the “Harlem of the South.” “The Avenue” was known as the heart of Baltimore’s Entertainment scene during the time of prohibition through the civil rights movement. In the second half of the 20th century, Sandtown experienced economic depression, housing abandonment, increased crime, and, with the decline of Baltimore’s industrial sector in the 1990’s, middle class flight to the surrounding suburbs.

### AIMS OF THIS REPORT

**This report has several goals: one, document** community recollections of specific incidents of police misconduct in West Baltimore. Second, describe recent changes (2005-2015) in law enforcement practice that have produced new strategies, procedures, and techniques of policing in West Baltimore. Lastly, reflect on ways to improve police and community relations, including returning to an emphasis on community policing.

### ORIGINS OF ZERO TOLERANCE POLICING

**An emerging pattern of police misconduct** has led to frustrations in many impoverished, inner-city communities in the United States. This frustration has helped fuel protests in cities across the United States since the summer of 2014. Moreover, this frustration is traceable to the same set of inter-related socio-economic, political, and discursive shifts that unfolded throughout the country from the late-twentieth century to the present. Baltimore is in many ways emblematic of these shifts because it pioneered the process of “red-lining” with residential segregation ordinances early in the twentieth century.<sup>1,2</sup> This model would later heavily influence post-industrial urban development and lead to the development of zero tolerance policing in African-American communities deemed to be high-risk.

Since 1975, employment in Baltimore has become increasingly irregular, precarious, and part-time; salaried manufacturing, which once employed a third of the city’s residents, represented less than 5% of workers in 2012.<sup>3,4</sup> In the crumbling inner-city areas of Baltimore’s East and West sides, a growing share of available jobs tended to be informal, and

**ALTHOUGH THE COMMUNITY WAS WELL AWARE OF THE COMMONNESS OF POLICE MISCONDUCT, PEOPLE OUTSIDE OF THE COMMUNITY, POLICYMAKERS, AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC NEEDED TO BE MADE AWARE.**

by the 1980s and 1990s, were primarily with trafficking gray- and black-market goods.

### CONTEMPORARY POLICING AND THE WARS ON DRUGS, CRIME AND GANGS

**The multiplication and diffusion of stereotypes** about crime and drug use fostered White demands for expansive prison policies directed toward harsh retribution and neutralization. The assertion that drug use was the “most important component and cause of street crime,” supported by sensationalized media coverage of inner city violence, linked America’s ‘drug problem’ to all of society’s ills, cultivating a “crisis mentality” among voters.<sup>5,6</sup> Consistent with this framing, the nation’s War on Drugs, War on Crime, and War on Gangs were focused primarily upon low-level dealers and users in African-American neighborhoods.

### REDEVELOPMENT AND PREFERENTIAL COMMUNITY POLICING

**Capital and population flight to the suburbs** prompted a coincidental shift in Baltimore’s mode of governance, from a managerial city to an entrepreneurial city.<sup>7</sup> Local business leaders formed an association, the Greater Baltimore Committee, to pressure local government into implementing a large-scale urban renewal project in the city’s downtown and Inner Harbor. This was part of a more extensive pivot in municipal governance, which saw city halls across the country forgo the continued funding of public services in favor of investment in commercial (re)development and public-private joint business ventures. The more enduring legacy of redevelopment has been the reconfiguration of policing strategies enacted to contain poor city residents to the “ghetto.” The fragmentation of urban space into zones within which citizens would be policed and treated differentially based upon their class, race, and residency has become a fixture of post-industrial Baltimore.

## CONTEMPORARY POLICING TERMS OF REFERENCE

The contemporary law enforcement regime has developed out of the interaction of local circumstances and national policing mandates. These mandates have led to a reciprocal and self-reinforcing dynamic, however, that has accelerated the estrangement between police and the very communities that they were designated to protect. These interrelated mandates and policies can be classified with the following terms:

- **The introduction of “zero tolerance” or “broken window” policing.** The Broken Window theory suggests 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 lead to more harmful patterns of criminality. However, in conceiving of nuisance behaviors as prerequisites to serious criminal offenses, police began to treat misdemeanors as being on par with felonies in terms of resource allocation.<sup>8</sup> Police, who hold broad and flexible powers to regulate public space, began removing those residents designated as “disorderly,” a catch-all term that encompasses the potentially criminal, the homeless, the mentally ill, and anyone deemed unpredictable or suspicious.
- **The legislation of “quality of life” and “civility codes.”** Ordinances which complement zero tolerance policies, which illegalize certain actions in public spaces, including sitting, sleeping, or loitering, provided a justification for the selective policing of certain residents in certain contexts. This strategy of policing permits officers the ability to enact a program of punitive containment, whereby law enforcement may target “undesirable elements” for detainment and removal for engaging in routine activities, in a manner that is legally defensible.<sup>9</sup>
- **The War on Drugs and the War on Terror.** The complementary rationalities of these imperatives support the broadening of law enforcement discretion in detaining and/or arresting suspects; the weakening of substantive due process in the case of search, seizure and forfeiture; a high emphasis on pre-emptive and preventative action in law enforcement; and the effacement of the legal distinction between criminal and noncriminal members of the community.<sup>10</sup> In accordance with “tough on crime” laws, not only are more residents arrested, convicted, and incarcerated for minor offenses, but sentences have grown steadily harsher and longer. Most significantly, the War on Drugs distorted police incentives, rewarding and steering law enforcement efforts toward policing drug-related crime—most of which is nonviolent in nature—and away from investigating homicides, robberies, and criminal intimidation.<sup>11</sup>
- **Community Policing.** This is a set of related policing strategies that emerged out of the Broken Window theory and subsequently developed into a line of theory and practices distinct from, and often in conflict with, “tough on crime” policies. In general terms, community policing refers to a philosophy that promotes the use of community partnerships to collaboratively and proactively address the immediate conditions that foster public safety issues (i.e. crime). In contrast to traditional policing, community policing maintains that it is the role of individual officers to be facilitators, working with community members to develop creative techniques that ensure a safe, orderly social environment.<sup>12</sup> By empowering the “beat officer” to take initiative in preventing crime and building community trust, this strategy represents “full service personalized policing, where the same officer patrols and works in the same area on a permanent basis, from a decentralized place, working in a proactive partnership with residents to identify and solve problems.”<sup>13</sup>



## METHODOLOGY

### Partners

# THE PRESENT COMMISSION Arose SPONTANEOUSLY

**from an outpouring of concern triggered by the death of Freddie Gray.** The No Boundaries Coalition and BUILD (Baltimoreans United In Leadership Development) realized that they were both engaging in fact-finding efforts and decided to join forces. This resulted in the creation of the West Baltimore Community Commission on Police Misconduct. This community-led Commission received organizational input from a lawyer who is active with the No Boundaries Coalition and who has 28 years of legal experience, including years spent investigating human rights abuses in foreign countries.



**B**UILD is a broad-based, nonpartisan, interfaith, multi-racial community power organization rooted in Baltimore's neighborhoods and congregations. BUILD is dedicated to making our city a better place for all Baltimoreans to live and thrive. For more than 35 years, BUILD has worked to improve housing, increase job opportunities, and rebuild schools and neighborhoods, among other issues. BUILD is affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation, a coalition of like-minded organizations in cities across the United States.

After conducting the interviews, the Commission invited the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) to assist with the data analysis. Interestingly, UMBC was founded during an earlier wave of civil unrest in the 1960s as the first integrated university in Maryland. As a member of the University System of Maryland, UMBC is a dynamic public research university integrating teaching, research, and service to benefit the citizens of Maryland. It strives to be innovative, interdisciplinary, and inclusive.

All evidence and findings collected by the Commission will be shared with the US Department of Justice.

### RECRUITMENT AND SAMPLING

**The Commission took as its mission an** intensive, on-the-streets investigation into the impact of police misconduct on the lives of those living in the Sandtown-Winchester. The Commission began by holding a public hearing in May 2015, during which residents willing to do so publicly testified about what they had encountered and endured. Despite the public nature of the hearing, numerous residents came forward and revealed their personal stories regarding police misconduct.

Thereafter, the Commission began to interview residents using a purposive sampling



technique. The Commission was interested in collecting further testimony from residents with a history of a negative interaction with the police. For uniformity, the Commission trained and used the same two people to conduct the interviews. The Commission publicized the effort with paper fliers and media coverage. The Commission distributed 3,000 fliers to West Baltimore residents, providing information about the commission and a related hotline. Through canvassing, door-knocking, and community meetings, the commission spoke with 1,500 people. The Commission conducted in-depth, one-on-one personal interviews (IDIs) of approximately 31 persons in addition to the 8 persons who testified at the public hearing. The total number of individuals who told us stories about police misconduct was 453 people. Yet, of these 453 persons only 39 were willing to give their accounts on the record, even when they were promised that their names would be kept confidential from the public. These individuals shared 57 unique accounts of misconduct with the Commission. The refusal rate to participate on the record—anonously—was 92%, showing the extremely high level of fear community residents have of police retaliation.

The extremely high level of fear of retaliation prevented many people from talking to the Commission. As one witness stated, “I understand we need to speak up on the way the police treat the community, but certain things ain’t nobody going to talk about.”

The interviews were conducted pursuant to a guideline interview document, which is attached hereto as Exhibit A\*. Testimonies were also collected using an incident statement, attached as Exhibit B\*. Before the start of each interview or focus group, interviewers explained the study and obtained oral and informed consent. The interviewees were promised complete confidentiality. Their identities were protected by the use of unique identifying numbers, and pseudonyms were assigned and used in order to attribute their quotes in the Findings section. Some witnesses wished to speak publicly

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**I UNDERSTAND WE NEED TO SPEAK UP ON THE WAY THE POLICE TREAT THE COMMUNITY, BUT CERTAIN THINGS AIN’T NOBODY GOING TO TALK ABOUT.**

about their experiences, and their photographs have been included to show the faces of the impact of police misconduct in West Baltimore.

## **ETHICAL REVIEW**

**The scientific analysis of the transcripts was approved by UMBC’s Institutional Review Board (IRB).**

## **ANALYSES**

**The study design was both quantitative and qualitative, also known as “mixed-methods.”** For the quantitative analysis, we collated all of our data from 47 complete accounts and performed descriptive statistics of the results. These are available in Tables 1, 2 and 3\*\*. Then, we commenced the qualitative analysis. First, audio recordings were transcribed. Then, the transcripts were triaged to eliminate those of poor or inconsistent quality, leaving 42 usable IDI transcripts out of the 45 total. The study team developed a codebook, working together until they reached agreement on a set of thematic codes. Codes were based on topics of interest and additional themes that the team identified from the transcripts. The study team read these texts to identify themes, and codes were then applied to a sample of the transcripts by using a semi-automated process aided by Microsoft Word Macros (Redmond, WA).<sup>14</sup> This process allowed coded text to be extracted for further analysis. The key themes were developed into the findings presented in this paper. The teams used thematic analysis to identify, analyze, and report themes in the data.<sup>15</sup> Using the codebook, a line-by-line review of the transcripts was performed; first-level codes—descriptors of important themes—were noted in Microsoft Word 2010 Comments. Coded texts were extracted from the transcript comments using Word Macros.<sup>14</sup> They were analyzed using an iterative process that focused on finding the main narratives based on the connotation and denotation of coded text across cases.<sup>16,17,18</sup> From these analyses, we determined the dominant themes in the transcripts.<sup>19</sup> Preliminary findings were also presented to collaborators for feedback and discussion.

## FINDINGS

# A THOROUGH ANALYSIS OF THE COLLECTED BODY OF INCIDENT REPORTS, INTERVIEWS AND TESTIMONIALS PROVIDED A DETAILED CHRONICLE OF POLICE MISCONDUCT IN WEST BALTIMORE.

**This misconduct occurred in multiple forms, including physical and psychological abuse.**

More significantly, the narratives revealed a complex, intimate, and sobering illustration of how police misconduct has shaped the perceptions, attitudes, and relationships between law enforcement and the community.



**T**he positions expressed within the texts are sharply at odds with the dominant media narrative of the events surrounding Freddie Gray's death. Contrary to media representations, criticisms centering upon a personal vilification of individual officers were minimal. Rather than describing a few bad officers, witnesses described a prevalence of police misconduct that shaped their perception of all police.

From the wide variety of reports, reflections, and personal anecdotes and stories, a much more complicated picture of law enforcement emerged, through which broader issues of perceived institutional racism, corruption, neighborhood disinvestment, and community were discussed in revealing and unexpected ways. As such, the misconduct problem is complicated and layered; however, the level of abuse is excessive compared to policing in the city's other neighborhoods.

### PERCEPTIONS OF RACISM IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

**In conducting interviews, the Commission** found that Baltimore residents receive radically different treatment from police based on the race and class of their neighborhood. Residents in majority White neighborhoods were more likely to receive responses to crime complaints and 911 calls, as well as more likely to receive respectful treatment from the officers with whom they interacted. One informant from a White neighborhood was told by a police officer at her community meeting, "Hey, listen, we don't have the same problems here in South Baltimore. We know you; you know us. We love you; you love us. We don't have the same problems here as in West and East Baltimore. You all are going to be fine." The witness stated, "The comment really pitted residents of the peninsula [South Baltimore] against East and West Baltimore. The people in the room didn't seem to be bothered or troubled by [the] implications. Seemed like it was an everyday understanding."

After witnessing the extremely high level of police protection in the Inner Harbor during the civil unrest, in contrast to the lack of police protection for Sandtown, one resident commented, “The city was pretty much saying Sandtown doesn’t matter; the Black neighborhood can burn. They were protecting the White people, the richer people. Made it clear to me that even though we have a Black Mayor, Baltimore is still a very racist city.”

On Monday, December 1, 2015, the No Boundaries Coalition met with the Commander of Patrol for the Baltimore Police Department to request foot patrols along Pennsylvania Avenue in response to a marked increase in drug trafficking. The Coalition members were told that the police department did not have the resources. The very next day, the same group attended a Mount Royal Improvement Association meeting in the Bolton Hill community (a majority White community) at which the Major of Central District told Bolton Hill residents that due to an increase in robberies over the weekend, the deployment of officers to Bolton Hill would increase from 2 to 6 effective immediately. The same police district was unwilling to increase patrols on Pennsylvania Avenue until March (two months later), yet it would assign four patrols to Bolton Hill within days.

In a letter to then-Commissioner Anthony Batts, an advocate with the No Boundaries Coalition wrote:

“ How can you tell a community, dealing with a thriving open air drug market, as well as all the other violence that is associated with this activity, that they should be patient and wait for two months for our Police Department to take action, while neighbors only five blocks away, and patrolled by the same district, get an immediate allocation of time, money and resources?”

In the two weeks prior to our December 1 meeting with Lt. Col. DeSousa, the Pennsylvania Avenue corridor and surrounding blocks had five aggravated assaults, four burglaries and three car break-ins.

One witness in West Baltimore called the police because some children were throwing rocks at his dog. The officer who responded to the 911 call stated, “I don’t know what you expect living around these animals.”

Although residents live in neighborhoods that do not have sufficient police response to emergencies, residents report that officers do make a presence to harass them on the street or while driving locally. Some of the residents believe that this harassment constitutes racial profiling. In most cases, informants acknowledged, implicitly or explicitly, that the existing law enforcement regime has

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**I HAVE BEEN  
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AND HARASSED  
BY THEM JUST  
BECAUSE OF THE  
WAY I LOOK.**

████████████████████

served to disenfranchise African-Americans. The practice of profiling was recognized as prevalent, and even routine, with one informant remarking that, repeatedly, “I have been arrested by police officers and harassed by them just because of the way I look.” Similarly, there was a widely accepted belief that the violent deaths of African-American men are not afforded proper coverage or investigation, especially if the events in question involve law enforcement officials.

Rather than perceiving racism as a problem rooted in the individual officer, witnesses described the problem being rooted in policies and practices. They felt that they received unequal treatment from the police department based on the race of the alleged suspect and the predominant race and/or socio-economic level of his/her neighborhood. Indeed, witnesses shared that they had experienced unfair treatment from officers of all races:

“ I’ve had some ... you know, I’ve seen some Black officers who were not so nice and some White ones who were not so nice ...  
—Mr. T., Resident

Informants stated that, “America’s always been about race,” and African-Americans today still “live in a racist ... capitalist, sexist system.” The focus of frustration was directed toward the policies that have distorted the priorities of the department and transformed the ways in which law enforcement officials interact with the community. This shift was identified as responsible for normalizing policing strategies, tactics and techniques that multiply opportunities for misconduct to take place. Furthermore, residents lamented a police culture in which officers engaged in misconduct are not held responsible for their actions.

## **INEFFECTIVE POLICING AND CRIME RATES**

**One typical narrative of police brutality is that force is necessary in high crime areas to combat crime. However, our testimonies confirmed that the multi-layered problem of police neglect, corruption, misconduct, and brutality**

increased crime rather than deterring it. As one witness said, “It used to be that if you did something illegal, they patted you down, they arrested you, and they locked you up. Now, they don’t even arrest you, they just take you in the alley and they beat you up. It doesn’t matter what you do.”

If the theory of law enforcement is that it acts as a deterrent to crime, the problem in West Baltimore seems to be that the legal response to crime is not being applied fairly and consistently. Many witnesses who experienced the police’s excessive use of force, who were subjected to unreasonable stops and searches (“stop and frisk”), and/or who were even detained were not committing any crime at the time of their encounter with police. Most of the informants were not arrested and the overwhelming majority were not convicted of any crime; all the reported cases were thrown out. These testimonies were often also coupled with stories of police corruption and police neglect that allow drug dealing to go on in the community. One witness observed a police officer taking money from a drug dealer and stating, “My kids are going to have a good Christmas this year.”

Following the week of the Baltimore civil unrest in May 2015, a well-established homeowner in Sandtown made 35 documented calls to 911 regarding heavy drug activity on their block. There was no response to any of the calls. Documentation of the calls was given to the former Police Commissioner Anthony Batts, yet nothing happened.

Police non-response also includes a lack of thorough investigation into crimes committed in the community, including homicides. After a local store owner’s video surveillance camera captured a homicide that happened outside their store, the store owner called 911 several times over a period of two days and received no response. Then, the store owner called the Baltimore Crime Watch line and was told by the officer on call that someone would be in touch to collect the footage. After a week with no contact from the police department and no attempt to collect the footage, the store owner reached out to a Lieutenant Colonel (Lt. Col.) through a local advocacy group. Seven days after the homicide, the Lt. Col. came to store to collect the footage. As of this report’s release date, the store owner still has not heard anything more about the incident or investigation.

In one incident, a mother witnessed her own son’s murder. Although the police apprehended and questioned a suspect, as an eye witness, she was never brought in to identify the suspect. The corner where her son was murdered had video cameras, and her son had previously been convicted for selling drugs on the same corner with footage from the cameras. When she asked the police about the video tape of her son’s murder, they told her the video was not usable because of a sun flare.

## THE WAR ON DRUGS AND POLICE VIOLENCE

A shift toward police militarization, zero-tolerance enforcement, and tough-on-crime sentencing were all identifiable factors that have purportedly weakened community trust in the police. However, an additional emerging theme of many narratives is the function the War on Drugs played in criminalizing virtually the entire West Baltimore community. An “Us Against Them” type of policing produced a separation of police out of the conventional fabric of the community, and consolidated the two parties as mutually antagonistic opposites. When one witness went to the Western District to complain about her son being physically assaulted by a police officer, the officer on duty responded, “It’s the neighborhood you live in.”

The thematic pattern of the testimonies suggested that the tension between the community and police resulted from systemic changes in law enforcement policy. These changes facilitated, or even rewarded, abusive and illegal policing practices in Sandtown. More concretely, many informants placed explicit blame on the War on Drugs and War on Crime discourses that empower officers to act more aggressively and invasively and weaken the institutional mechanisms by which citizens could seek legal redress and hold law enforcement accountable for any perceived misconduct.

As a result, the emphasis on drug policing allows officers the legal pretense to “do whatever they want.” In the collected reports, police intervention is predicated or legitimated by suspicion of drug possession or distribution in 43% of cases, while loitering, nuisance behavior, or ‘disorderly’ conduct are implicated in 54% of cases. Of these cases, only 20% of suspects involved were subjected to arrest and detention; the number of suspects that were subsequently charged for a crime is nil (0%).

This variety of routinized, imprudent policing, often described as harassment, was referenced repeatedly in the accounts. Of the police interventions described, informants identify 67% as unwarranted (not prompted by a

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# “US V. THEM”: A COLLAPSE IN COMMUNITY POLICING

## LACK OF PROFESSIONALISM

**Although most informants were convinced of the illegality of police misconduct (83%),** a consistent theme within the accounts was that condemnation follows from an “appeal to decency” rather than an appeal to the law itself. The actions of officers were viewed as incompatible with, or hostile to, social codes of conduct within the community, as distinct from the legal code that is normally enforced by the department. Social code violations included failing to abide by conventions of due deference to certain community members, such as respectful treatment of elders and community leaders, exceptional treatment afforded vulnerable groups, such as children, juveniles, and the disabled, and appropriate treatment of men and women. In all reports (100%) involving senior citizens, officers acted in a manner that violated community norms of respectful treatment of the elderly. In all reports involving children or young adults, officers conducted themselves in a way that was viewed as indecent.

In one account, a lifelong resident, church pastor, and community elder in Sandtown approached a few officers who had blocked in his car with their police cars. When he politely asked them to move, they cursed at him, with one stating, “We do what the fuck we want.” In one account, a police officer arrived to a community lunch an hour late, did not apologize for being late, and chastised community residents for beginning to eat without him.

In cases in which the gender of an individual was a significant factor in the interaction, 74% of the accounts described conduct in which abuse was gendered or sexually inappropriate. These accounts included instances of sexual misconduct and sexualized language, a perceived unnecessary roughness directed towards women by male police officers, and abusive and derogatory language employed specifically to address female community members.

In addition, a number of accounts featured police behavior that humiliated and emasculated young men, with witnesses

being forced to undergo unwarranted strip searches that included officers asking the young men to remove their pants and handling the alleged suspect’s genitals. The young men were also subjected to embarrassing and disparaging comments by officers. 100% of reports indicated that officers failed to act in accordance with standards of professionalism expected of law enforcement.

Another witness, Mr. S., reported that when he was pulled over in his car, he asked the police for permission to go to the restroom at a friend’s house. The police refused and detained him, and he soiled himself. The police laughed at him when he soiled himself.



A COMMUNITY PARK IN WEST BALTIMORE

legitimate public safety concern), 73% as unwanted (not desired by those subject to the intervention), and 86% as excessive (the intervention resulted in a response that was disproportionate to what was expected or necessary in the circumstances described). Excessive punitive measures encompass acts of physical violence directed toward victims, which are reported in 57% of interventions, but may also constitute extended periods of detention, including “walk throughs” (46% of cases), and abusive, demeaning, and subordinating language (57% of cases).

Several stories give a sobering illustration of the routine and excessive stops and searches West Baltimore residents endure:

“ The officer picked me up and slammed me on my face, took my backpack off, and threw all my books out, and when they didn’t find anything kicked me in my stomach. I was just happy they didn’t lock me up and bounced.

—Mr. K., Resident

One witness, Mr. P., was on his way home from school and stopped at the corner of Fulton and North Avenues to chat with some friends. As they were talking, two unmarked cars pulled up, and eight officers ordered all the students to get down on the ground. A police officer subjected the witness to a “vulgar” and invasive search, which included the officer putting his hand in the witness’ underwear and handling his genitals. The officer also slapped him. His friends were treated in a similar fashion. All were let go without being charged with any crimes.

## LACK OF POSITIVE INTERACTIONS WITH THE POLICE

The perception that, as one participant stated, “officers need to be trained in human relations” accompanied a widespread belief that a lack of proactive engagement by law enforcement in schools and neighborhoods weakened trust and mutual understanding between police and community-members. Many informants lamented the withdrawal of engagement efforts and linked it to a decline in community confidence in law enforcement.

A reflection by one informant concisely articulated the worrisome effects of “Law and Order”-type policing:

“ By the time we were teenagers, we didn’t trust the police at all. And when the crack epidemic descended on Baltimore and the so-called war on drugs was declared with street sweeping and military tactics, it shifted to ‘us against them.’ When things became violent in our community, we were all suspects and treated as such. It was nothing to be stopped and searched by the police. As a young Black man in a high crime area, it was actual-routine.

—Mr. W., Resident

One informant recounts:

“ I ask my granddaughter, ‘Do Officer Friendly come in y’ all school?’ She said, ‘What that, ma?’ I said, ‘Lord, have mercy.

—Ms. M., Resident

Repeatedly, informants stressed the “need to have officers trained in public relations,” to “know how to talk to people.” A number of informants expressed a deep respect for police officers and an earnest desire

for relations to be rehabilitated; yet they also conceded a reticence to trust law enforcement, even in cases of emergencies. The perception that officers act unpredictably or arbitrarily, cited in 96% of cases, or may conduct themselves improperly, prompted community members to “actually avoid contact with the police.” One informant summarized the dilemma faced by many residents, especially parents:

- “ Because I want to teach my children, if you are ever in need and you need help, go find a police officer. And right now, the way this thing is going, it’s hard to teach your child to look for an officer for help, because they fear that the officer is not going to be the one to help them.  
—Mr. D., Resident

### **A CYCLE OF ANTAGONISM AND RESENTMENT**

The cycle of antagonism, recrimination, and resentment, which was a fixture of nearly all of the accounts surveyed, is perceived to reinforce a relationship of mutual disrespect and mistrust between officers and community members. In several cases, informants suggested that this process is sustained by an inability of law enforcement and community members to develop relationships with each other. As the two parties become more removed from one another and interact only in circumstances involving interventions and arrests, neither one is able to familiarize itself with the other and establish the basis for mutual trust and regard. A component of this is a perceived transience of officer assignments that are coordinated and executed from above:

- “ You get action for a while and then they are reassigned and you start all over with a fresh crew of police representatives who know nothing about your history, nothing about your situation. This is the other aspect of it. The police constantly changing their structure.  
—Mr. C., Resident

“

**THEY CAN’T POLICE OUR COMMUNITY IF THEY DON’T LEARN OUR COMMUNITY.**

The sentiment that community members do not know, or are not given the opportunity to know, their neighborhood officers was expressed throughout many in-depth reflections, especially by informants who could recall a time when police were a stable, integral part of the community itself. One informant, after recollecting these changes, argued:

- “ In conclusion, I have heard from many neighbors about things, and I gotta tell ya: people wanna see cops on the beat. They do not want to see cops sitting in their cruisers, being unapproachable.  
—Ms. P., Resident

Another informant stated,

- “ They can’t police our community if they don’t learn our community.  
—Mr. B., Resident

Most accounts pointed toward two interrelated, mutually-reinforcing processes as responsible for this collapse in community policing. The first is an institutional practice in which the Baltimore Police Department (BPD), responding to contingent circumstances in one district or another, transfers frontline officers between posts so often that they are not given an opportunity to become acquainted with the community members whom they are policing. Without the time necessary to develop a mutual rapport and familiarity, residents are hesitant to approach or engage with officers. This first process produces the other: since officers reasonably anticipate a brief assignment at a specific post, they have little incentive to get to know, appreciate and respect the norms of the community and rights of its members; similarly, community members are less likely to treat officers with respect or trust if they expect them to be only a temporary feature of the neighborhood. Several informants suggested that a positive relationship can only be cultivated when both residents and officers are committed to the long-term success of the neighborhood.

### **CORRUPTION, RETALIATION AND FAILED SYSTEMS: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN VICTIMS OF POLICE MISCONDUCT SEEK JUSTICE**

Informants identified a lack of accountability within the department and a willingness of law enforcement officials, at multiple levels, to protect officers accused of misconduct. Institutional unresponsiveness is perceived as highly conducive to misconduct, protecting and rewarding perpetrators and unfairly punishing the community. Instances of







PICTURED IS THE FAMILY OF JEFFREY MARROW, WHO WAS KILLED IN A POLICE INVOLVED SHOOTING IN 2006.

fraud were reported in 70% of accounts, while instances in which officers planted, tampered with, or invented evidence to advance a case were reported in 45%. It was alleged in 46% of cases that the department manipulated institutional procedures to frustrate the advancement of an investigation or unfairly penalize claimants. Similarly, 29% of accounts cited the utilization of excessive paperwork and filing processes to delay or exhaust an investigation. A failure to hold abusive officers accountable was presented as the factor most damaging to the legitimacy of the BPD:

“ When you got police officers that sworn to protect and serve the community, and you violate or take advantage of the privilege of your badge to violate, imprison and just have no disregards for anybody’s civil rights, you should be held accountable.

—Mr. O., Resident

There was a consensus expressed within the testimonies that misconduct from individual officers stems from and is perpetuated by an institutional culture that fails to hold wrongdoers accountable. In cases in which informants filed complaints and sought legal redress for their grievances, only 25% saw their cases officially resolved, and only 2% to their satisfaction. The sentiment that “the system is broken” and

that the law enforcement structure is riddled with corruption was echoed repeatedly among the testimonies.

A family that lost a loved one to a police-involved shooting shared the following account. The State’s Attorney deemed the shooting “justified” and refused to provide the family members with any information about the investigation leading to that conclusion. In addition, the government performed an autopsy without familial consent, which the family would not have provided for religious reasons. During the investigation, the family called the detective’s office “almost every day” and “couldn’t even talk to the detective.” The family was never given an autopsy report; the family learned that their loved one’s death was caused by a shot to the back of the head because the funeral home director provided them with photographs.

The result of this institutional corruption is diminished confidence in law enforcement as a whole. When it becomes clear that abusive officers are insulated from the consequences of their actions, the institution itself is perceived as being implicated in officers' crimes. As one informant noted, "We know all police ain't bad ... We know we need police," but "one bad apple make them look all the same to us." This lack of accountability leads many residents to conclude, with deep dismay, that they "can't trust the people that the City of Baltimore hires to protect us."

Witnesses described how the lack of accountability within the B.P.D. changes officers' behavior. One witness stated, "the whole neighborhood was outside when he did it. It was a summer afternoon, but he didn't care. He felt like his badge made him God." During another incident of physical assault, a witness observed the officers who were involved stating, "go ahead and film us."

Beyond frustration at the lack of accountability, many witnesses also described officers retaliating against those who sought redress for their grievances. The high level of fear of retaliation from Baltimore City police was demonstrated by the high percentage of people who told the Commission that they had experienced police misconduct but would not say so on the record (92%). One witness, Ms. R., had previously filed a formal complaint against an officer who harassed her son. She was later arrested by the same officer in her neighborhood for dropping a candy wrapper on the ground. During the arrest the officer called her a "bitch" and physically hurt her.

### **THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF MISCONDUCT: PANIC, FEAR, AND MISTRUST**

It is clear that a sense of mistrust and antipathy toward law enforcement is deeply rooted in many of Baltimore's communities. However, a narrative interpretation of the collected texts provides only a partial image of how interactions with police are negotiated, processed, and internalized by a community. Identifying the emotional or affective responses involved in police interventions is perhaps most telling. In the cases reported, 69% of informants disclosed an experience of anxiety or fear; 94% experienced a sense of confusion or frustration; 59% experienced a sense of shame or humiliation; 39% experienced a sense of despair or hopelessness; 76% described a sense of fatigue or exhaustion; and only 4% expressed feeling a sense of happiness or satisfaction. More explicitly, 28% of informants reported longstanding psychological distress as a consequence of their interaction.

### **ONE WITNESS, MS. R., HAD PREVIOUSLY FILED A FORMAL COMPLAINT AGAINST AN OFFICER WHO HARASSED HER SON. SHE WAS LATER ARRESTED BY THE SAME OFFICER IN HER NEIGHBORHOOD FOR DROPPING A CANDY WRAPPER ON THE GROUND.**

Cumulatively, witnesses described interactions with law enforcement eliciting panic. Some residents reported feeling a high level of anxiety that causes their ability to engage in rational analysis to break down. A majority of accounts explained an inability to anticipate or interpret the behavior of officers, especially with respect to a breakdown in legal order and social norms and conventions, or, simply put, "common sense." This disorientation and alienation is articulated in the following excerpt:

" You know, we want to respect the police. Just yesterday I almost had to call the police on another Black person in my community ... but at the end of the day, if you have the police causing the disruption in the community, where do you go?

—Ms. S., Resident

The long-term impact of negative interactions with police upon the community should not be understated. Even in cases in which informants do not cite enduring physical or psychological trauma, it is clear that the marks of police misconduct do not diminish quickly or easily in time. From the material consequences of a wrongful arrest or conviction, to a loss of confidence in the legitimacy of the institution of law enforcement, the legacy of abuse is complex, deep-seated and emotional. As one informant recounted:

" I gave it all up to God and let Him take it from there but I'm still having wounds from that past because they won't heal because of what they have done to me ... I'm feeling with what the families are going through because I know how police brutality is. I have been a part of police brutality. Some of the things that have [been] done to me, I can't forget.

—Mr. L., Resident

## SUMMARY

**T**his initiative has provided a unique insight into the conditions of West Baltimore, containing perspectives that resonate deeply with an ongoing national debate on race and law enforcement, as well as those which problematize all-encompassing narratives on the subject. There is a critical set of conclusions to be drawn from the accounts of residents of Sandtown-Winchester, which can be identified herein.

Informants agreed that the legacy of racism in Baltimore is a defining feature of community life and is experienced through concentrated poverty, disinvestment, discrimination, and police profiling and abuse in Sandtown, West Baltimore. Informants viewed the conduct of law enforcement today as a product of federal, state, and city-level policy changes that are prone to over-empower police to act with impunity. While informants expressed the need for individual officers to be held accountable, they did not view officers accused of misconduct as being the central problem, but rather a symptom of more extensive issues at a systemic level.

The raft of legislation which grounds the War on Drugs is perceived as enabling and incentivizing aggressive, intrusive policing. At the same time, it also shields those officers accused of wrongdoing from being held accountable by individuals whom they may have wronged. In other words, the community is “over-policed, yet

under-served,” and as a consequence, its residents are not as well protected as residents of other neighborhoods. The martial ethos propagated by the various Wars is seen as filtering down into law enforcement strategies, tactics, and behaviors, so that increasingly residents are perceived and treated as enemies rather than partners. At the same time, the B.P.D. is understood as prioritizing the sheltering of abusive officers while willingly obscuring misconduct from the public. These two perceptions serve to weaken the stability and permanence of police within communities, which in turn reinforces estrangement.

At a personal, subjective level, misconduct is deeply damaging to the psychological and, to a lesser extent, physical well-being of community members. Not only can interventions with abusive officers result in protracted and even lifelong trauma among individual victims, but they also leave more grave consequences. Informants reporting incidents of police misconduct expressed a deep concern that their children should be safe when interacting with police. Similarly, informants articulated that they would caution their children against contacting police officers in the case of an emergency due to fear of misconduct against their children. The long-term consequences of this transgenerational impact cannot be understated or ignored.



**THE WEST BALTIMORE COMMUNITY COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT BALTIMORE CITY, THE BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT, AND THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY REFORM POLICY TO INCREASE CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT OF THE BALTIMORE CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT, IMPLEMENT COMMUNITY POLICING MODELS, AND ENSURE THAT EVERY BALTIMORE CITIZEN AND NEIGHBORHOOD IS POLICED IN AN EQUITABLE, EFFECTIVE, AND CONSTITUTIONAL MANNER.**



This Commission recommends that the Baltimore Police Department work to rebuild trust with Baltimore City residents in the following ways:

- **Provide anti-racism training** for seasoned officers, command staff, and cadets. These trainings should target common assumptions made by police officers when they interact with non-White suspects (i.e. profiling). These trainings should be led by skilled facilitators and involve members of the local community.
- **Provide de-escalation and community relations training** for seasoned officers, command staff, and cadets. Officers should be trained in how to de-escalate tense situations. Officers should be trained in how to talk with residents and community members, how to build relationships with residents, and how to patrol on foot. In addition to receiving anti-racism training, officers should be trained on how to interact with youth, people with disabilities, people with mental illness, women, and LGBTQ community members. This commission recommends a de-escalation training modeled after best practices in Richmond, CA, and by the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission.
- **Establish a community policing model** that includes fully funded permanent foot posts in resident-designated areas. Communities want to be familiar with their officers, see them “on the beat,” and know that they can be approachable. The police department should work with residents and community organizations to determine where permanent foot posts should go.
- **Redefine the policies that govern how and where officers are assigned.** Residents cannot establish good relations with officers when (re) assignments are made frequently and without warning; this includes command staff. The department should create better models for staffing that prioritizes officers and command staff being able to build relationships with communities. The department must actively work with the community to identify and penalize officers that engage in misconduct. These individuals must be held accountable for their actions, not have their abuses ‘swept under the rug’ by being shuffled around.
- **Meet regularly with local leaders and residents.** Through round table discussions, patrol officers should meet the residents whose neighborhood they patrol. Neighborhood leaders, faith leaders, and activists should have clear mechanisms to give feedback to B.P.D., including regular meetings with command staff and designated points of contact within the department.
- **Incentivize officers to live in the communities where they work.**
- **Reinstate relationship-building programs** (e.g. ‘Officer Friendly’ and ‘PAL Centers’) that introduce police officers to the community and the community to police officers in order to build relationships. Improve outreach efforts within neighborhood associations, schools, and community events. Focus on initiatives that build trust with children and youth.
- **Fully fund the Baltimore Civilian Review Board.** Without resources and staff, the Baltimore Civilian Review Board cannot be an effective mechanism for civilian oversight. The CRB should have enough funding for at least three full-time investigators and an attorney.
- **Increase transparency** by allowing public input on collective bargaining agreements between municipal government and the police union.
- **Increase civilian input into BPD reform, practices, priorities, and budgeting.** In addition to increasing civilian oversight in situations of wrongdoing, the Baltimore Police Department should have clear mechanisms in place for a diverse group of community stakeholders to be able to give input about departmental reforms and practices. The Commission recommends a stakeholder coalition modeled after Seattle’s Community Police Commission.



**THIS COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY MAKE THE FOLLOWING CHANGES TO THE BALTIMORE CIVILIAN REVIEW BOARD. THIS COMMISSION SUPPORTS HB1262 WITH AMENDMENTS:**

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**THIS COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY MAKE THE FOLLOWING CHANGES TO THE LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS' BILL OF RIGHTS:**

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**THIS COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE INCLUDE IN ITS CONSENT DECREE PROVISIONS TO ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING:**

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- Create mechanisms to increase community input on CRB board members by having the members of the CRB be nominated by neighborhood associations and selected by City Council.
  - The CRB should require the Executive Director to conduct a comprehensive investigation of filed complaints and report findings to the Board in a written report within 90 days.
  - The CRB should not be permitted to ignore a complaint filed by a citizen. Given the high level of fear of retaliation this Commission heard from citizens, the CRB should accept non-notarized and anonymous complaints.
  - All CRB reports should be sent to the Commissioner and Mayor. If the Commissioner and Mayor sustain the complaint, then the complaint is to be considered closed. If the Commissioner and the Mayor do not sustain the complaint, then the board's recommendation should move to City Council for review. The final ruling on sustained complaints should be public knowledge.
  - The CRB should no longer be able to "exonerate the police officer" or "find the complaint is unfounded." Instead, the Board should be limited to sustaining the complaint, not sustaining the complaint, or requiring further investigation.
  - All CRB investigative records should be kept for a period of 10 years and controlled by the board. The CRB should also retain independent records of the Internal Affairs Investigation.
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- Allow civilians or non-sworn officers to be involved in investigations of allegations of police misconduct.
  - Remove time restrictions for citizens to file a complaint.
  - Eliminate the 10-day rule that allows officers to wait 10 days before giving a statement.
  - Allow anonymous civilian complaints against police officers.
  - Add a non-collusion clause to LEOBR so that officers cannot unduly influence each other's stories.
  - Allow civilians to serve on trial boards.
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- Include the aforementioned recommendations for changes to the Baltimore City Police Department.
- Given the frustration with police non-response to 911 calls for service, instate external oversight of 911 response time and enforce equitable police response to different communities. Ensure that residents in communities of color are seeing the same emergency responsiveness as residents in White communities.
- Oversee the forwarding of Internal Affairs complaints to Baltimore Civilian Review Board and ensure that all complaints made to the police department are forwarded within 48 hours.
- We know that the Baltimore Civilian Review Board requires adequate staff and funding to be effective. We recommend that Baltimore City be required to fully fund the Baltimore Civilian Review Board with an annual operating budget of at least \$1,000,000.
- Lastly, we also recommend that the Department of Justice meet with local communities and advocacy organizations to get input on the community's need for police reform.

**TABLE 1. POLICING STRATEGIES AND TACTICS**

	REPORTED IN INFORMANT ACCOUNTS (%)
'QUALITY OF LIFE' OR NUISANCE LAW CITED BY LAW ENFORCEMENT AS PRETENSE FOR INTERVENTION (LOITERING, TRESPASSING, DISORDERLY CONDUCT, ETC.)	YES: 54% NO: 46%
ILLEGAL DRUGS (USE, POSSESSION, OR SALE) CITED BY LAW ENFORCEMENT AS PRETENSE OR JUSTIFI- CATION FOR INTERVENTION	YES: 43% NO: 57%
LAW ENFORCEMENT CONDUCT A 'STOP AND FRISK'	YES: 30% NO: 70%
INDIVIDUAL SUBJECT TO TEMPORARY DETENTION WITHOUT CHARGE (A 'WALK THROUGH')	YES: 39% NO: 61%
INDIVIDUAL SUBJECT TO ARREST AND DETENTION	YES: 30% NO: 70%
INTERVENTION INVOLVED VIOLENCE	YES: 57% NO: 43%

**TABLE 2. PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE MISCONDUCT**

	REPORTED IN INFORMANT ACCOUNTS (%)
LAW ENFORCEMENT ACCUSED OF PLANTING, TAMPERING WITH, OR MANIPULATING EVIDENCE	YES: 38% NO: 62%
LAW ENFORCEMENT SUSPECTED OF ENGAGING IN FRAUDULENT PRACTICES	YES: 57% NO: 43%
CONDUCT OF POLICE OFFICER(S) PERCEIVED AS DECEPTIVE OR DELIBERATELY OBSTRUCTIVE	YES: 81% NO: 19%
CONDUCT OF POLICE OFFICER(S) PERCEIVED AS NEGLIGENT	YES: 72% NO: 28%
VIOLENCE USED BY LAW ENFORCEMENT PERCEIVED AS EXCESSIVE (PERCENTAGE OF CASES WHICH REPORT VIOLENCE)	YES: 96% NO: 4%
CONDUCT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT CONSIDERED UNPROFESSIONAL	YES: 100% NO: 0%

**TABLE 3. EXPERIENCE OF MISCONDUCT**

	REPORTED IN INFORMANT ACCOUNTS (%)
INTERVENTION PRODUCED EXPERIENCE OF HAPPINESS OR SATISFACTION	YES: 4% NO: 96%
INTERVENTION PRODUCED EXPERIENCE OF FEAR OR ANXIETY	YES: 57% NO: 43%
INTERVENTION PRODUCED EXPERIENCE OF CONFUSION OR FRUSTRATION	YES: 96% NO: 4%
INTERVENTION PRODUCED EXPERIENCE OF SHAME OR HUMILIATION	YES: 59% NO: 41%
INTERVENTION PRODUCED EXPERIENCE OF DESPAIR OR HOPELESSNESS	YES: 39% NO: 61%
INTERVENTION PRODUCED EXPERIENCE OF FATIGUE OR EXHAUSTION	YES: 24% NO: 76%
INTERVENTION RESULTED IN LONG-TERM PHYSICAL INJURIES	YES: 22% NO: 78%
LONG-TERM PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS OR DISTURBANCE REPORTED	YES: 41% NO: 59%



## APPENDIX TO COMMISSION REPORT

# THIS APPENDIX SUMMARIZES THE HIGHLIGHTS OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED BY THE COMMISSION:



1. Witness was driving home from work with her child when she was pulled over by three officers. The officers told her “we know about your brother” (who had died prior to the encounter). The tall white officer placed his hand on her leg. She contacted several government agencies (internal affairs, States’ Attorney, Baltimore police, MTA police) to complain but received no response. (November 2006)
2. Witness, a resident, approached a few officers who had blocked in his car with their police cars. When he politely asked them to move, they cursed at him, with one stating “we do what the fuck we want.” (Winter, 2010)
3. Witness reported that when he was pulled over on Mount Street between Lorman and Laurens, he asked the police permission to go to the restroom at a friends’ house. The police refused, and snickered when he soiled himself. (1998 or 1999)
4. Witness called the police when her grandsons engaged in a fight. But when the officer arrived, the fight had ended and the scene was peaceful. Yet the officer attempted to assault one of her grandsons, causing her to have to protect him with her body. (Summer 2009)
5. Witness was riding a dirt bike near Leslie Street. Three officers chased him into the alley and beat him up. They did not arrest him. (Summer 2010)
6. Witness was chased into an alley and beat up by three or four officers near Leslie Street. When some neighbors began filming, one of the officers stated “go ahead and film us.” (Summer 2014)

7. Witness observed police officer robbing a drug dealer, and stating “my kids are going to have a good Christmas this year.”

(Date unknown)

8. Witness observed an officer pat down a boy on the corner of Stricker and Presstman, apparently looking for drugs. The officer then took the boy’s money from his pocket, and told him “get the fuck off this corner.”

(Date unknown)

9. Witness’s son was sitting in his car in front of her house. Officers pulled up and told him to “get the fuck out of the car”. Officers told son he was being searched because it was illegal to be sitting in his car without his seatbelt on because the car was running.

(September 2014)

10. Witness recounted convening a community luncheon and inviting an officer to attend. The officer arrived one hour late, failed to apologize for his tardiness, but instead chastised the community members for having begun to eat before his arrival.

(March 2012)

11. Witness’ brother was shot in the back of the head and killed by a police officer. The State’s Attorney deemed the shooting “justified” and refused to provide the family members with any information about the investigation leading to that conclusion. In addition, government performed an autopsy without familial consent, which would have been denied because brother was Muslim. The family was never given an autopsy but learned the death was caused by shot to back of head because the funeral home director provided them photographs.

(2007)

12. Witness and her son went to the store. A police officer stopped her son and asked him why he was not in school. As he turned to the officer to respond, the officer punched him in the face. When the Witness

and her son went to the Western District to complain about the assault, the officer responded, “it’s the neighborhood you live in.”

(2004)

13. Police officer brought nephew to Witness’ door and claimed, while covering his badge, “he is eyeball fucking me” and “he’s looking at me.” Witness complaint to internal affairs at Western District, and believes the officer was suspended.

(2006 or later)

14. Witness threw a candy wrapper on the ground on Pennsylvania Ave. A police officer pulls up in a car, and says, “bitch, you’re going to jail.” Witness had previously filed a complaint against the same officer and believed the arrest to be retaliatory. Witness was brought to Central Booking, where she remained for 8 hours without being arrested or charged.

(2006 or later)

15. Witness’s neighbor observed police officer placing a bag in the glove compartment of son’s car on Presstman Street while son was being detained by a different police officer on the curb. The son was arrested for drug possession. The son’s car was confiscated and sold by police department while the charges were still pending. The government failed to obtain a conviction, but despite having retained a lawyer, the son was unable to recover the car.

(May 2010)

16. Witness’ stepson was visiting, and sitting on the steps of home at Presstman and Stricker across from Sharon Baptist. Police officer claimed that he could be “locked up” for sitting on the steps.

(Spring 2012 or 2013)

17. Witness saw a large pool of blood, EMT gloves, and fragments of a human body in the alley between Sharon Baptist Church and Lilian Jones Rec. Field on I300 block of Stricker. There was no police tape or

anything else cordoning off the crime scene from the nearby children. Witness and her neighbor cleaned up the blood and body parts left on the scene.

(late Spring or early Summer, 2015)

18. Witness was sitting on her own steps when a police car stopped, and an officer began to question her. When Witness began to walk into her home, the officer ordered her to stop. Witness explained she could prove she lived at the house if he would let her go inside. The officer told her he did not want to see any identification and ordered her to be quiet. He called a second officer, who allowed Witness to go into her home and get her identification.

(July 15, 2015)

19. Witness reported being physically mistreated by officers who arrested him. One officer placed him on a hot car hood. When Witness attempted to get off the hood, another officer threw him on the ground and cuffed his arms and legs together. At this point, an officer jumped on him, with a knee hitting into his chest. A separate officer pulled out a tazer, but did not use it. Witness was then placed on the floor of a van for transport. Witness was not placed on a seat or seatbelted. Witness complained to internal affairs without result.

(August 2011)

20. Witness and some friends were inside her home when they heard screaming outside. They went outside to see what was occurring, and observed police arresting a man, who was yelling, “get off me, you’re hurting me.” As a crowd began to congregate, the police told observers to “back up, get on curbs.” The police then began to spray mace into the crowd, and called for back-up. One of the Witness’ friend (a 6 foot tall man) was kicked and beaten by several police officers. Witness observed police body-slam her son. Witness asked why police were harming her son, and in response, the officer hit her on the chest with his baton. Police threatened to arrest Witness but did not do so.

The friend was arrested, held for 24 hours, and released without charges being brought.  
(2010)

**21.** Witness was in the parking lot of the Morning Star Baptist Church with a friend when police officers approached them. They told the women that there had been a lot of killings nearby, and asked for identification. Witness' friend did not have any identification. The police officer then frisked the friend, and gave her a citation for not carrying identification.  
(December 2011)

**22.** Witness' son suffered from lead poisoning, and was mentally slow. He broke into the home of an off-duty police officer, and was killed by that officer.  
(date unknown)

**23.** Witness was sitting on the front steps of his family home on Mt.

Holly Street when an officer began to harass him. When his mother stepped out and told that her son was her family member, the officer pushed her in the face and told her to move back. When the Witness went to the aid of his mother, the officer called for more officers and arrested Witness. After Witness was placed in an unlocked cell, several police officers came in and savagely beat him. Witness was not convicted of any crime. Witness attempted without success to file a report with Internal Affairs.  
(1983)

**24.** Witness was walking towards his home on Holly Street when an officer arrested him on a drug charge and brought him to the Southwestern District. There, a group of officers beat him up.  
(1992)

**25.** Witness was on his way home from school, and stopped at the corner of Fulton and North Avenues to chat

with some friends. As they were talking, two unmarked cars pulled up, and 8 officers ordered all the students to get down on the ground. A police officer subjected Witness to a "vulgar" and invasive search, which included the officer putting his hand in Witness' underwear. The officer also slapped him. His friends were treated in a similar fashion. All were let go without being charged with any crimes.  
(2010 or 2011)

**26.** Witness was walking home from school when a police officer tackled him from behind, slammed his face into the ground, pinned him to the ground and began to conduct an aggressive and invasive search with his knee jammed into Witness' back. The officer dumped all the contents of his bookbag onto the ground. The officer let him go after detaining him

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ELDER C.W. HARRIS, SANDTOWN RESIDENT AND  
FOUNDER OF NEWBORN COMMUNITY OF  
FAITH CHURCH AND WITNESS



for approximately 15 minutes.  
(October 2012 or 2013)

**27.** Witness observed his neighbor calling the police to report his mother's car had been stolen. The police were disrespectful to the neighbor, who was able to identify the perpetrator. As a result of the police failing to listen to the neighbor, they failed to apprehend the perpetrator, who appeared during the encounter.  
(November 2000)

**28.** Witness observed the police manhandling and yelling at her mentally disabled neighbor on the 1500 block of Leslie Street. Witness intervened.  
(2015)

**29.** Witness arrived at his home in Cherry Hill, intoxicated after attending a party. He and his wife began arguing, when an officer arrived. Witness' wife informed the officer that she did not need his assistance, but the officer told her that she did not have any choice in the matter, and pushed past her into the back yard, and pepper sprayed the Witness. At this time, other police officers arrived, and began to beat and stomp on the Witness. Witness had to go to the hospital. Witness filed a report with the Baltimore Civilian Review Board but nothing happened.  
(July 2006)

**30.** Witness observed police being disrespectful to him and other demonstrators during a peaceful demonstration at the corner of Charles and Mount Royal.  
(September 2011)

**31.** Witness was walking with a group of friends when police car stopped. Police officers accused one person in the group who was carrying a stick as the culprit a beating that had occurred a few blocks away. Witness observed the officers handcuffing his friend, placing him on the curb, and then beating him, bruising his ribs.  
(2015)

**32.** Witness was getting off at Upton Metro station and saw a police

officer pull a gun on a young man who had been accused of stealing a cell phone. Witness believed that if the young man had not stopped the officer would have shot him. Witness was with three younger siblings and did not want her younger brothers and sisters to watch someone be shot.  
(Dec 2015)

**33.** Witness was at a community meeting in a mostly white neighborhood in South Baltimore in June 2015 after the Baltimore civil unrest. After the community liaison officer was asked what the police department was doing to keep South Baltimore safe, the officer replied, "Hey listen, we don't have the same problems here in South Baltimore. We know you, you know us. We love you, you love us. We don't have the same problems here as in West and East Baltimore. You all are going to be fine."  
(June 2015)

**34.** Witness was walking home from a friend's house at Erdman and Manassota, when a police car pulled in front of him and an officer got out and tackled him. The officer then stopped and left. Witness assumed the officer realized he had the wrong person.  
(August 2011)

**35.** Witness' 82 year old mother was knocked over in the attempt to arrest him, while police were serving a warrant for theft, and witness was physically assaulted when coming to her aid.  
(April 1990)

**36.** Witness was present on W. North Ave. and Monroe St. when a police officer hit an inebriated man in the forehead, causing him to bleed.  
(July 1987)

**37.** Witness' son was on a dirt bike when he was cut off by a police officer driving a car. When the son swerved and hit a tree, the officer gave him the choice of going to the hospital followed by jail, or simply leaving. The son left. As he was walking home, another police car

pulled alongside him, and an officer got out and assaulted him.  
(date unknown)

**38.** Witness was sitting on her front stoop during a family birthday party, when officers came and began harassing them. The officers told the family members that they had to go in the house. The Witness called the officers' supervisor, and maintained calm.  
(July 2015)

**39.** Witness was being arrested for prostitution. The arresting police officer helped her by giving her information about drug rehabilitation programs, and helping her enter such a program.  
(date unknown)

**40.** Witness got out early from school because of a water issues, when she exited the Metro at Upton Station there were other kids from the school throwing snowballs at cars and buses, other kids gathered in front of Legends Restaurant. When the police officers arrived, they told all of them to show their school ID to prove they went to Douglass, those that did not have ID's had to sit on the icy curb for a half hour before being told to go home.  
(February 2015)

**41.** Witness was exchanging cell phone photos with a friend, when a policeman jumped out, put her in a headlock, choked her and caused her to urinate on herself. After the incident told her to "take her ass home".  
(date unknown)

**42.** Witness saw her son murdered in West Baltimore, and though she was an eyewitness to his homicide with she was not considered a viable witness and was subsequently "blocked" from giving or receiving information about the investigation.  
(February 2015)

**43.** Witness recalls being a 14 year old child and seeing from her window the paddy wagon pull up and drag out a popular neighborhood resident named 'Leprechaun' out of an



- establishment. A group of police beat him with their clubs and left him.  
(summer 1976)
- 44.** Witness was involved in a verbal altercation on the block where she lived. When police arrived and intervened, she informed them she had her child in the house. She was subsequently arrested for child endangerment and leaving a child unattended.  
(June 2015)
- 45.** Witness was working in Harbor East the night of Civil Unrest on April 27, 2015. As she was leaving work, she witnessed the police barricading in the Inner Harbor, but did not see that level of police protection in West Baltimore. Witness viewed the discrepancies in levels of police protection protecting the white parts of the city but “letting the black neighborhood burn”.  
(April 2015)
- 46.** Witness’s sister was at Mondawmin Mall and saw the police pulling schools kids off MTA buses. The police told the students they were there to start a riot. Sister observed students were trying to get home, but couldn’t because they weren’t being allowed on buses or the metro.  
(April 2015)
- 47.** A Witness/homeowner called the police 35 times in the week following the civil unrest about heavy drug activity on his block. He documented the dates and times of his calls. The police never responded to any calls. The Witness gave the information to Commissioner Batts, but nothing happened.  
(April/ May 2015)
- 48.** A homeowner found bullet casings from a shooting in front of his house while sweeping his front. He called Western District, but could not get in touch with any officers that he knew at the station. He called his city council representative who said the police would send a person to get the casings from his house.  
  
No one ever came to collect the evidence.  
(Summer 2015)
- 49.** Witness’s car was stolen, The Witness reported the theft to an off duty police officer who he saw at a nearby food store. Officer called a detective who took Witness to police station to make a statement. At the police station, officers accused Witness of fabricating story and interrogated Witness for several hours. During the interrogation, Witness falsely confessed to hacking (offering someone a ride for money) in response to police pressure. Witness was arrested and was in jail overnight. On the day of his trial, the police officer did not appear, and the Court dismissed the charges. Nothing was done about the Witness’ stolen car.  
(April 2015)
- 50.** Witness called 911 after an incident where young people were throwing rocks at his dog. The officer who came stated, “What do you expect living around these animals?”  
(summer 2011)
- 51.** Witness was on Fulton St when someone told him that his childhood friend had been shot a few block away. Witness arrived at crime scene and overheard an officer stating, “I’m glad that happened.” Witness perceived the officers verbally celebrating friend’s death, likely because the friend was a drug dealer. Witness was unsatisfied with the limited extent of the police investigation into the homicide.  
(September 2013)
- 52.** Witness was told by police he was being pulled over because his tags were suspended on Harford Rd. Officer pulled him out of his car by his neck through his car window. After being detained, officers told him that dispatch had made a mistake and there was not a problem with his plates. Witness was in the 11th grade at the time of incident.  
(2005)
- 53.** Witness was being arrested on a drug charge. During arrest, officer had witness stand with his hands behind his head and then punched him in the face. Witness stated, “That’s what the knockers do.”  
(2003)
- 54.** Witness was pulled over on Reisterstown Rd and subjected to an invasive search. Officer hit him twice in his private area and looked down his pants to search for drugs. Officer asked witness to go into alleyway but Witness refused because he did not want to be strip-searched.  
(2013)
- 55.** Witness was on Presstman Street when a group of police officers jumped out of their cars, and drew their guns, with one officer stating “Shut the fuck up”. The officers did not nothing further, however, and quickly left with one saying, “let’s get out of here.” The Witness interpreted the incident as the officers playing a joke.  
(February 2016)
- 56.** Witness’s store video surveillance taped a homicide that occurred outside store. The Witness (store owner) called 911 several times over a period of 2 days and received no response. The Witness then called Baltimore Crime Watch line. The officer on call said that someone would be in touch with him to collect the footage. After a week, with no contact from the police, the Witness (store owner) reached out to a Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col) through a local advocacy group. Seven days after the homicide, the Lt Col came to store to collect the footage.  
(Summer 2015)
- 57.** Detective requested footage from surveillance camera from a local store owner. At the time of the request, the system was under repair. The store owner explained that the footage could not be copied, and that the detective would need to come back to the store to watch the footage. Detective filed a complaint with the liquor board against store for failing to cooperate with the police. Store owners filed a complaint with the Baltimore Civilian Review Board against the detective.  
(Fall 2015)

## EXHIBITS

The Commission interviewed witnesses pursuant to the below guideline interview document:

Testimonies were also collected using this incident statement:

Interview Guide for qualitative pilot inquiry related to Police Brutality in West Baltimore  
Interviewers: R. Nagle & R. Kelly

### PERSONAL INFORMATION

Date of interview:

Start time of interview:

End time of interview:

Location of interview:

Name of person conducting interview:

Contact phone and email of person conducting interview:

Interview Questions Address (neighborhood):

Years local:

Date of birth:

Family status: (married, children, etc)

Many witnesses will have more than one incident to report to us. It is important to fill out a separate incident report for each incident. Indicate total number of reports after you conclude the interview.

Please prepare a separate incident report even if the witness was not personally involved in the incident but simply observed police misconduct from afar.

Total number of incidents reported by witness:

Email completed forms to noboundaries@nbc.org.

WITNESS ID CODE:

Date?

Time of day?

Day of week?

Physical location

Why there?

Was anyone with you?

Who?

Did they observe what occurred?

What were you doing before the police officers approached you?

### PHYSICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF ALL INVOLVED OFFICERS

How may police officers?

Do you know any names? Badge numbers?

Please describe officer no. 1

Please describe officer no. 2

Etc.

### STATEMENTS BY OFFICERS

Have the witness quote exactly what was said as precisely as possible Ask for details on tone, inflection, body language (e.g. loud voice while glaring)

Please describe any statements made by officer no. 1

Please describe any statements made by officer no. 2

Etc.

### PHYSICAL CONTACT MADE BY OFFICERS

Have the witness explain exactly what occurred as precisely as possible using the officer designations

Please describe any physical contact made by officer no. 1

Please describe any physical contact made by officer no. 2

Etc.

Did these contacts cause you pain?

Did you take any steps to protect yourself during this encounter? What did you do? (describe any physical reactions with specificity – e.g., after officer no. 1 placed his hand on my left leg, I swung my right arm and hit his right side)

### STEPS TAKEN AFTER INCIDENT BY WITNESS

How did the incident conclude? (e.g. arrest, walked away)

Were you charged with any crime? If so, what crime?

Were you convicted?

Did you ever complain about the police officer misconduct to anyone? (e.g. yes, told my mother)

When did you tell them? (e.g. day after happened)

Are you able to provide us their contact information?

Did you complain to any governmental body? If answer is no, why not?

To whom?

When?

Did you prepare anything in writing?

Do you have a copy of what you prepared?

Will you give us a copy?

What happened?

Did you ever contact a lawyer about the incident?

When?

Who did you contact?

What happened?

### PERSONAL INFORMATION

WBCCOPM respects your right to anonymity, this section is completely optional.

Name:

Sex: M/F

Age:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Are you willing to meet with the WBCCOPM for a formal interview: Y/N

Signature:

### INCIDENT INFORMATION. Please be as specific as possible.

Date of Incident:

Location:

Officer no. 1

Officer no. 2

Were you arrested? (if yes, what charge)

How did this incident conclude?

Account. Please describe as best you can what occurred:

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SAMIRAH FRANKLIN, SANDTOWN RESIDENT  
AND WITNESS

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BY THE WEST BALTIMORE COMMISSION ON POLICE MISCONDUCT AND  
THE NO BOUNDARIES COALITION

MARCH 8, 2016

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IN COLLABORATION WITH BUILD AND  
THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, BALTIMORE COUNTY (UMBC)