

Reconciliation Between Police and Communities

CASE STUDIES AND LESSONS LEARNED



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Reconciliation between Police and Minority Communities: Why and How?

Issues surrounding race and public safety have become preeminent concerns for the United States yet again. As in the Civil Rights Era or the aftermath of the Rodney King trial, today's national reckoning has been particularly concerned with the interactions and lack of trust between African Americans and law enforcement. Since the public outcry¹ and sharp divide² over the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the 2013 shooting death of Trayvon Martin, incidents of violence involving police and African Americans have sparked local protests or unrest and drawn national attention. The deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Laquan McDonald, and many others have both highlighted the specific local legitimacy crises faced by many police departments and propelled new activist groups like those affiliated with the Black Lives Matter movement to push police-community relations to national prominence. At the same time, many police officials have suggested that violent attacks on police officers—the killings of New York City Police Department (NYPD) officers Wenjian Liu and Rafael Ramos;³ the attacks on law enforcement in Dallas, Texas,⁴ and Baton Rouge, Louisiana⁵—have been the result of a growing anti-police sentiment. A spike in homicides in 2015 contributed to a spirited debate over its cause—whether criticism of police hurt morale and proactive

crime prevention or whether publicly known police abuses delegitimized law enforcement and therefore encouraged crime and vigilantism.⁶

Although the relationship between police and minority communities has gained new relevance, the issues at hand are old. As the front line of government policy, the institution of policing was responsible for enforcing systems of racial injustice such as slavery and Jim Crow and for pursuing crime-fighting strategies that either disproportionately disrupted minority communities or left crime-ridden neighborhoods without adequate police response. The concentration of urban drug trade and violent crime in disadvantaged minority neighborhoods, in turn, has often bred a cynicism among many in law enforcement that residents of these areas are not interested in safe communities or in working with the police. In short, distrust is the lived experience and shared history of many minority communities and the police departments that serve them.

In some neighborhoods and cities, however, police and communities have undertaken innovative and substantial efforts to recognize and fundamentally reset the nature of their

1. Adam Nagourney, “Prayer, Anger, and Protests Greet Verdict in Florida Case,” *New York Times*, July 14, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/15/us/debate-on-race-and-justice-is-renewed.html>.

2. “Big Racial Divide over Zimmerman Verdict,” Pew Research Center, last modified July 22, 2013, <http://www.people-press.org/2013/07/22/big-racial-divide-over-zimmerman-verdict/>.

3. Danielle Tcholakian and Katie Honan, “Blood on the Hands’ of Mayor in Officers’ Deaths, Police Union Boss Says,” DNAInfo, last modified December 21, 2014, <https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/2014/12/21/bed-stuy/police-union-says-blood-on-hands-of-mayor-shooting-of-officers>.

4. Manny Fernandez, Richard Pérez-Peña, and Jonah Engel Bromwich, “Five Dallas Officers Were Killed as Payback, Chief Says,” *New York Times*, July 8, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/09/us/dallas-police-shooting.html>.

5. Steve Visser, “Baton Rouge Shooting: 3 Officers Dead; Shooter Was Missouri Man, Sources Say,” CNN, last modified July 18, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/07/17/us/baton-route-police-shooting/>.

6. Richard Rosenfeld, *Documenting and Explaining the 2015 Homicide Rise: Research Directions* (Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, 2016), <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/249895.pdf>.

relationship. The events of recent years have highlighted the continued need to understand how this long-held distrust can be overcome. During the administration of President Barack Obama, the White House and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) made that task a priority, convening the Task Force on 21st Century Policing,⁷ commissioning a number of ambitious projects to explore and implement new approaches to bridging the trust gap,⁸ and granting \$5.75 million for a three-year project called the National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice. Hosted by the National Network for Safe Communities (NNSC) at John Jay College in collaboration with Center for Policing Equity, the Yale Law School Justice Collaboratory, and the Urban Institute, the National Initiative is a six-city pilot project to improve relationships between police and minority communities. The project, which is substantially funded by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, focuses on three pillars of work: (1) procedural justice, (2) implicit bias, and (3) reconciliation. Work in these six cities has informed this document with concrete experience and has reiterated the urgent need for a guide for police-community reconciliation.

What reconciliation means in such settings is open to considerable debate and has had little systemic study. For this report, reconciliation refers to a process whereby police and community engage in joint communication, research, and commitment to practical change to foster the mutual trust essential for effective public safety partnerships. The reconciliation process attempts to directly address both the current and the historic relationship between minority communities and law enforcement that serves as a backdrop to daily interactions and the periodic flare-ups that continue to embroil American cities.

This report offers essential components, concrete lessons, and early guidance for those interested in pursuing a reconciliation process in their cities. Its findings are based on a multidisciplinary research, writing, and action process that has included consultation with police and community leaders, academics, and experts in transitional justice; detailed case studies of reconciliation experiences from three American cities; research into and collection of police acknowledgments of harm; and initial reconciliation implementation in the National Initiative cities. The document also draws from on-the-ground experience during one of the original instances of operational police-community reconciliation: the 2004 implementation of the Drug Market Intervention (DMI), a strategy the NNSC used to close down open-air drug markets, in High Point, North Carolina. The DMI relies heavily on the power of the community to stand with police to set and uphold norms against drug dealing and disorder and rests on a reconciliation and truth-telling process that encourages police leaders to acknowledge the legitimacy of community grievances while expressing that they want the community to be safe and need the community's help to make it so.⁹

Using this body of work, this document describes the component parts of a reconciliation process using evidence from the field to illustrate the role of reconciliation in building trust and helping to achieve traditional public safety goals. It details the choices and practices that together created current situations and which the reconciliation process must address, including how present dynamics are related to past tensions; how police leaders have grappled with the roots of police-community distrust; the internal departmental dynamics that have promoted and discouraged change and leadership responses; the

7. *Establishment of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing*, Executive Order 13684, 79 Fed. Reg. 77,357, December 24, 2014, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-12-23/pdf/2014-30195.pdf>.

8. Office of Public Affairs, "Justice Department Awards over \$23 Million in Funding for Body Worn Camera Pilot Program to Support Law Enforcement Agencies in 32 States," press release, U.S. Department of Justice, September 21, 2015, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-awards-over-23-million-funding-body-worn-camera-pilot-program-support-law>; Office of Public Affairs, "Attorney General Holder Announces the First Six Pilot Sites for the National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice," press release, U.S. Department of Justice, March 12, 2015, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/attorney-general-holder-announces-first-six-pilot-sites-national-initiative-building-0>; see also "National Initiative Updates," National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice, accessed May 24, 2016, <http://www.trustandjustice.org>.

9. National Network for Safe Communities, *Drug Market Intervention: An Implementation Guide* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2015), 27, <http://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P303>.



Photo: Sam Cullinan

Birmingham (Alabama) Police Chief A.C. Roper makes an acknowledgment of harm to civil rights leaders and other community members, August 2017.

policies and practices police leaders have installed to change the dynamic; community reactions to police changes; communities' own initiatives and the results; and steps that have been taken to make the trajectory toward reconciliation sustainable.

The entire report has three parts: (1) an executive guide summarizing the core components of reconciliation and providing highlights from the field, (2) a thematic report on the “acknowledgment of harm” component of reconciliation, and (3) three comprehensive case studies on cities’ experiences with reconciliation-based projects. The case studies offer further reading on reconciliation projects in very different contexts: resetting a policing model and growing relationship-based policing in a large city (Los Angeles, California), layering reconciliation on a community policing strategy in a mid-size city (Las Vegas, Nevada), and building reconciliation into a

problem-oriented policing intervention in a small city (Rockford, Illinois). The executive guide can be read as a standalone guide for understanding police-community relationships or as an introduction to the longer thematic and city case studies completed for this project.

This executive guide presents the core components of reconciliation and highlights examples and lessons from city reconciliation attempts. As National Initiative sites and other cities take up explicit reconciliation projects, best practices will be identified and refined from the lessons learned along the way. The concepts here are meant only as a first entry to the practice of reconciliation between police and minority communities in the United States but will hopefully move police agencies and communities a little closer to beginning this crucially important work.

Introduction

The divide between American police and the communities (especially minority communities) they serve is not a single divide. It plays out in different ways in thousands of neighborhoods across the country; state to state, city to city, neighborhood to neighborhood, even block to block, the local experiences and histories on which distrust is based are unique. However—and encouragingly—our research suggests that effective efforts at reconciliation are made up of a set of generally applicable practices. Not all sites that begin on a path toward reconciliation engage all of these areas, or in this order, and some do more. The most promising efforts to overcome the distrust between police and minority communities, however, share these four components: (1) an acknowledgment of harm, (2) listening and narrative sharing, (3) fact finding, and (4) policy and practice changes.

1. Acknowledgment of harm. A public acknowledgment by the police of harm they have done—as an institution, a department, or, at times, as an individual officer—and a commitment to improvement

2. Listening and narrative sharing. Sessions and outreach to air and collect group concerns and individual narratives

3. Fact finding. Compiling a clear, objective account of the history that has necessitated the reconciliation process

4. Policy and practice changes. Collaboratively specifying, developing, and implementing concrete changes to policy and practice

Taken together, these components represent a powerful foundation on which reconciliation can be built. Owning and condemning past harms aligns the values of police with community; listening and narrative sharing offers the opportunity for groups to better understand one another's lived experience; fact finding establishes a shared understanding of past events and current conditions; and policy and practice change uses this new trust to build mutually beneficial conditions for all parties. The following sections describe the scope of each component and present what each component looks like in practice.



Photo: Stockton Police Department

Stockton (California) Police Chief Eric Jones at a community event, March 2017.

Acknowledgment of Harm

Members of marginalized communities have faced official persecution and neglect from the United States' founding through the end of segregation and continue to be disproportionate recipients of adversarial law enforcement since. In African-American communities, in particular, police enforced laws to maintain the institution of slavery, intimidate Black voters, and segregate schools. Police pursued narcotics and low-level crime enforcement in Black neighborhoods—many of which were created by discriminatory housing practices—leading to African Americans' unequal rates of arrest and incarceration.¹⁰ Above all, this adversarial relationship with law enforcement is expressed in violence, whether directly in acts of violence and abuse committed by or against police or indirectly through police inaction during violent race riots and neglect of festering violence in Black communities. Overlapping national narratives about the police as an institution and local narratives about the actions of particular departments inform how communities view and interact with law enforcement.

The first step toward ameliorating this generational distrust is a public acknowledgment of the harm caused by police. Even though a great many modern police leaders and officers privately or personally disapprove of the racist institutions and practices of the past and are dismayed by the role that law enforcement has played in them, it is rare for professional

public servants to acknowledge these facts. Nonetheless, acknowledging that the police have done harm as well as good is a crucial validation of the community's experience and promotes a longer-term perspective for officers who feel personally attacked. In these fraught contexts, harm may go both ways, but these harms are not equal: Government institutions have a larger and longer reach than non-state actors. Police have the responsibility to go first and open the reconciliation process with a sincere recognition of the past and a commitment to a different future. This recognition, as this paper will illustrate, can range from a simple acknowledgment that harms occurred to a more robust apology on behalf of the department for past failures and abuses, whether or not such failures and abuses were intentional.

Police leadership has made great strides and shown considerable courage in this project—shifting the language around these events from “That was a long time ago and we weren't part of it” to “The police were involved and we have to acknowledge and address that.” Statements made by local chiefs and national figures in policing model a wide range of approaches to creating the space for further collaboration. In many cases, these statements were crucial in demonstrating a readiness and desire to reset relationships between policing and civilians and between departments and specific communities they serve.

10. Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness* (New York: The New Press, 2012).

Statements and Discussions

Remarks by national law enforcement leaders

Nationally, policing leaders have made important public statements acknowledging failures and harm in the history of American policing. In February 2015, then FBI Director James Comey delivered a speech at Georgetown University titled “Hard Truths: Law Enforcement and Race.” His statements on the history of policing are among the highest-level acknowledgments of police wrongdoing by any government official.

“All of us in law enforcement must be honest enough to acknowledge that much of our history is not pretty. At many points in American history, law enforcement enforced the status quo, a status quo that was often brutally unfair to disfavored groups. . . . That experience should be part of every American’s consciousness, and law enforcement’s role in that experience—including in recent times—must be remembered. It is our cultural inheritance. . . . One reason we cannot forget our law enforcement legacy is that the people we serve and protect cannot forget it, either. So we must talk about our history. It is a hard truth that lives on.”¹¹

Then New York City Police Commissioner William J. Bratton delivered similar remarks at a 2015 meeting of the National Order of Black Law Enforcement Executives. Referring to law enforcement’s role in “some of the worst parts of Black history” such as slavery, lynchings, and blockbusting, Bratton said, “[I]t doesn’t matter that these things happened before many of us were even born. What matters is that our history follows us like

a second shadow. We can never underestimate the impact these had. The hate, and the injustice, and the lost opportunities—for all of us. . . . As police, we must fix what we’ve done and what we continue to do wrong. It’s ours to set right. It’s the crisis, it’s the challenge, it’s the opportunity.”¹²

Former Director Comey and former Commissioner Bratton’s remarks were rare and high profile acknowledgments of wrongdoing by the institution of policing. In 2016, Terrence Cunningham, president of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), added an apology on behalf of his association of police leaders—a gesture that received a standing ovation from its members as well as approval from civil rights groups.

Referring to the “dark side of our shared history,” Cunningham sought to begin to address the “multigenerational—almost inherited—mistrust between many communities of color and their law enforcement agencies.”

“The first step,” he said, “is for law enforcement and the IACP to acknowledge and apologize for the actions of the past and the role that our profession has played in society’s historical mistreatment of communities of color.”¹³ President Cunningham explained in an interview following the remarks why he chose this topic for his address: “Communities and law enforcement need to begin a healing process and this is a bridge to begin that dialogue. If we are brave enough to collectively deliver this message, we will build a better and safer future for our communities and our law enforcement officers. . . . It is my hope that many other law enforcement executives will

11. James Comey, “Hard Truths: Law Enforcement and Race,” remarks delivered at Georgetown University, Washington, DC, February 12, 2015, <https://www.fbi.gov/news/speeches/hard-truths-law-enforcement-and-race>.

12. William J. Bratton, Remarks at NOBLE William R. Bracey CEO Symposium, Atlanta, Georgia, March 13, 2015, <http://trustandjustice.org/resources/article/william-bratton-remarks-at-noble-friday-march-13-atlanta-ga>.

13. Tom Jackman, “U.S. Police Chiefs Group Apologizes for Historical Mistreatment of Minorities,” *Washington Post*, October 17, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/true-crime/wp/2016/10/17/head-of-u-s-police-chiefs-apologizes-for-historic-mistreatment-of-minorities/?utm_term=.f001c423abcd.

deliver this same message to their local communities, particularly those segments of their communities that lack trust and feel disenfranchised.”¹⁴

Former Director Comey, former Commissioner Bratton, and President Cunningham’s statements are all examples of prepared remarks delivered to police professionals, academics, and the media. As other police leaders and officers look to formulate their own statements, these examples offer language about the general history of policing and race to help reset society’s understanding.

Local acknowledgment

Local police leaders have also acknowledged this broad history as well as the specific times and ways their departments have harmed or failed to protect their communities. These statements have been specifically important to advancing public safety goals.

Small operational meetings have been one major setting for these statements and conversations. The implementation of the DMI in High Point, North Carolina, relied on repeated presentations from Chief Jim Fealy on how previous attempts at stopping the drug trade and violence had failed or had even caused harm. After speaking to his department, Fealy held small meetings with community representatives to express regret about past aggressive tactics and ask for the community’s help in the new strategy. In community meetings that followed, Fealy would begin his remarks with a simple statement: “I’m sorry.”¹⁵ Fealy believes the frank discussion and taking of responsibility that followed was one of the most important aspects of forging a new relationship with the community.¹⁶ In Rockford, Illinois, Chief Chet Epperson used meetings with religious leaders from the Black community to articulate his

frustration at the department’s previous responses to drug crime, which he saw as ineffective, racially inequitable, and overly punitive. These meetings introduced their implementation of the DMI and helped earn buy-in from respected community representatives.

Leaders of Las Vegas’ Safe Village Initiative (SVI) also integrated acknowledgment in setting up and sustaining their policing strategy. The captain who initially led the initiative apologized for the “big lie” of earlier policing efforts in West Las Vegas that tried to operate without the community’s help. Later leadership institutionalized this understanding by organizing departmental discussions about the historical roots and contemporary drivers of mistrust in the area.

Finally, in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles, regular community meetings of the Watts Gang Task Force and later the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) served as a platform to express a shared understanding about loss, failure, and tragedies. Part of establishing a working relationship in a traditionally distrustful environment, as noted by Sergeant Emada Tingirides, who leads the CSP, is being able to acknowledge mistakes, to see an incident, such as a shooting, and say “It’s tragic, and it’s okay to say I’m sorry that that happened.”¹⁷ In each case, acknowledgment and apology has opened the space for police to authentically connect with community partners through a shared understanding of past events and a common direction for the future.

Public events, whether impromptu or carefully choreographed, have been another avenue for police leaders to begin reconciliation efforts through acknowledgment and apology. Some of these statements have addressed historical injustices that have continued to be symbols of division generations later. In 2013 in Montgomery, Alabama, Chief Kevin Murphy took a golden

14. Ibid.

15. Trevor Stutz, “Five Police Departments Building Trust and Collaboration: Innovations in Policing Clinic, Yale Law School, High Point, North Carolina, Full Case,” BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2015), <http://bjalexecutivesessiononpoliceleadership.org/pdfs/006.2cFivePDCaseStudiesHPNCFull.pdf>.

16. Jim Fealy, chief, High Point (North Carolina) Police Department, interview with Stephen Lurie, research and policy associate, National Network for Safe Communities, January 2016.

17. Emada Tingirides, sergeant, Los Angeles Police Department, interview with Sam Kuhn, field advisor, National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice, November 25, 2015.

opportunity to make a gesture to the visiting civil rights hero U.S. Representative John Lewis. Lewis, who had been attacked and injured in Montgomery when he was a Freedom Rider in the 1960s, had never received an apology from the police who had decided not to provide protection to the traveling activists. During Lewis's visit to Montgomery's First Baptist Church, Murphy offered an unscripted apology for the Montgomery Police Department's (MPD) failure and gave Lewis his badge. The remarks, though candid, were recorded by an audience member and became a national news story and local symbol of turning to a new era of policing.¹⁸

While Chief Murphy had taken a chance because it had presented itself, others have sought out fitting moments for public acknowledgements. Chuck Jordan, chief of the Tulsa (Oklahoma) Police Department, recognized the police role in the Tulsa Race Riots as a lingering source of pain in his city. In 1921, mob violence claimed 300 lives, destroyed 35 city blocks of the city's Black neighborhood, and left thousands of Black families without homes. Police failed to stop the escalation of the conflict and aided, armed, or deputized White vigilantes¹⁹ in their rioting and attacks on Black people and Black-owned property.²⁰ The impunity that followed these attacks, scholars believe, led to a regional resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan.²¹ In 2013, Jordan contacted the mayor's office to help coordinate an opportunity to address the riots and took a speaking slot during a Literacy, Legacy, and Movement Day event hosted in the same Black neighborhood that had been destroyed by the mob. In his speech, he spoke to the historical nature of policing and his ongoing commitment to public safety for all Tulsans:

“I can't apologize for the actions, inactions, or derelictions of those individual officers or their chief, but as your chief today, I can apologize for our police department. I am sorry and distressed that the Tulsa Police

Department did not protect its citizens during the tragic days of 1921. I've heard things said like 'Well that was a different time.' That excuse doesn't hold water with me. I've been a Tulsa police officer since 1969, and I've witnessed scores of different times, and not once did I ever consider these changing times somehow relieve me of my obligations of my oath of office and to protect the lives of my fellow Tulsans.”²²

Chief Jordan also took the opportunity to point to the department's actions to respond to recent hate-related violence as evidence of the department's changes.

Police departments participating in the National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice, a U.S. Department of Justice- and COPS Office-funded project administered by a partnership of action research institutions including the NNSC, have initiated reconciliation processes based largely on the framework described in this document. Each of these processes of reconciliation has begun with an acknowledgment of harm by the police chief on behalf of his or her department. In the cities where the process is underway at the time of this writing—Minneapolis, Minnesota; Birmingham, Alabama; and Stockton, California—the chief made a statement to acknowledge harms both historical and contemporary and those perpetrated intentionally and those that were the unintended consequences of good faith efforts. In each case, the audience was a small group of community leaders carefully selected for their local influence and potential buy-in, including some who had been explicitly and directly critical of the police; and in each case, the acknowledgment has effectively grounded the larger reconciliation process initiated by these acknowledgments of harm in this unusual commitment to addressing the fundamental drivers of distrust both past and present—which has placed the subsequent steps described here on relatively

18. Traci G. Lee, “Civil Rights Leader Rep. John Lewis Accepts Long-Awaited Police Apology,” NBC Universal, last modified September 12, 2013, <http://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow-show/civil-rights-leader-rep>.

19. *Tulsa Race Riot: A Report by the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921, 2001), 11–12, <http://www.okhistory.org/research/forms/freport.pdf>

20. “1921 Tulsa Race Riot,” Tulsa Historical Society & Museum, accessed July 7, 2016, <http://tulsaohistory.org/learn/online-exhibits/the-tulsa-race-riot/>.

21. Ibid.

22. “Police Chief Chuck Jordan's Speech and Greenwood Walk,” Tulsa World, accessed February 23, 2017, <https://vimeo.com/75105920>.

firm footing, as demonstrated by the continued participation of the community leaders in the listening sessions, strategic planning, and early implementation of the other aspects of the process described here.

When police leaders discuss not only the history of policing but also the record of their own department, they are “owning their institution.” They are accepting responsibility for their current work, acknowledging the history of their department, and recognizing the tangible effects both have had on people’s lives. Moreover, these acknowledgments become particularly powerful when they are coupled with tangible evidence that the department has changed or specific plans for how it will change in the future. These are all crucial components of being seen as a trustworthy partner. At the same time, it is important that police distinguish their department from other municipal failures—in other words, that they *not own* other institutions. Police can bear the brunt of distrust for the perception that government has failed or persecuted a community on many fronts (housing, education, healthcare, infrastructure), even though police are obviously not accountable for all of these shortcomings. Recognizing this basic fact helps police share some of the burden of public distrust. In fact, that recognition can lead police to become allies with the community in advocating for improvements. In both Los Angeles’s CSP and Las Vegas’s SVI, police acknowledged the failure of the city to provide adequately for certain neighborhoods and helped organize or lobby for service, infrastructure, or economic development. At the core, however, police agencies should focus on understanding what their institution represents and how its history and actions may still be alienating to their community and take the first step towards publicly acknowledging and addressing this history and present day reality.

Lessons

Key insights for the acknowledgment component of reconciliation are as follows:

- **Remember to “own your institution” but consider not owning others.** Differentiate the role police have played and can play versus the role of other municipal institutions.
- In considering and practicing acknowledgment, cases from the field help provide useful examples and themes to draw upon:
- Apology and acknowledgment do not require the original wrongdoers or victims.
 - Wrongdoing and injustice can become attached to a group, organization, or institution.
 - Victimization can be shared by direct victims, their families, and their communities and across generations.
 - Apology and acknowledgment mean more than saying sorry. They include
 - taking responsibility for an action;
 - recognizing the reality of harm done;
 - expressing respect for the position (fear, anger, etc.) of victims.
 - Credibility of an acknowledgment or apology can be bolstered by
 - some form of reparation (rhetorical, symbolic, or socioemotional);
 - some form of practical measures to prevent future wrongdoings (policies, trainings, etc.).
 - Acknowledgment and apology establish common understanding between communities and police. These gestures
 - confirm a common history;
 - legitimize previously ignored grievances;
 - establish a united front against future injustice.
- **Take the lead.** The police department has to make the initial outreach to the community to begin reconciliation.
 - **Acknowledge or apologize.** Acknowledgments or apologies are an important first step for reconciliation. Identify and recognize the specific harms the department has caused the community or public safety failures it has allowed to occur.

Listening and Narrative Sharing

Police speak and act first to kick off a reconciliation process, but the process relies on hearing, exchanging, and capturing the grievances, aspirations, and narratives of the full range of voices in a community. The perspectives and experiences of civilians and police officers make up the basis for their approach and trust of one another—but each side’s background is rarely understood by the other. Through a process of executive-level listening sessions, expansion through the department, and public narrative sharing, police and their communities can come to better understand what causes distrust and begin to address its sources.

Executive-level listening sessions

Small group listening sessions with senior police leadership and community representatives offer a manageable way to begin to build understanding and trust. Identifying natural and authentic community representatives is crucial: There is no single “community” voice. Any city has multiple groups that have substantively different experiences with the police whether by race, neighborhood, LGBTQ+ status, age, or some other factor. Identifying and connecting to individuals with credibility and influence in these groups allows police to engage in small settings but distribute a message among the wider population. During these meetings, a primary trust-building act is simply to listen to grievances: to take special care to allow community members to air their grievances, consider those grievances, clarify misconceptions, and eventually work collaboratively to overcome the issues they identify for which there is no immediate solution in place. When following up on an issue presented by a community member who feels alienated or unheard by the police department, engaging that individual or someone they trust in the process of solving the issue powerfully conveys the department’s commitment to changing narratives. It is important that community members not fear the possibility of punitive measures for sharing their experiences and concerns. Police leadership should listen calmly and carefully and should

be careful not to respond until the community members have shared their experiences and concerns to the extent they desire. In responding, officers should express thanks for the community members’ willingness to share what may have been a difficult experience with an authority figure as an accurate understanding of community concerns is necessary for improving police service and developing further trust. Where language barriers exist, law enforcement should provide interpreters.

Part of engaging in honest conversations and hearing difficult criticism means understanding that community members’ positions and understandings may be historically and personally rational without being factually correct—and that officers’ narratives can be tightly held and just as inaccurate. American history has given members of marginalized communities substantial reason to believe that the government—and specifically the police—has conspired and continues to conspire against them. Of course, though significant disparities still exist, the United States and its public institutions have made great strides to ensure everyone equal protection under the law. This fact does not erase that past experience, its lasting impressions, or the perceptions that current incidents or harms stem from the same discriminatory outlook. It is important to understand the root of misperceptions and why beliefs that are factually incorrect (e.g., that the police have conspired with the Federal Government to distribute crack in minority neighborhoods) have such great salience among rational individuals. Understanding the sources of these divisive narratives removes the personal sting from allegations against law enforcement—or the community—that officers and community members might otherwise find unreasonable. Officers often see the community at its worst, providing a basis for officers to draw unfair conclusions about residents. Also troubling, officers consistently report feeling alienated by the disdain they feel from members of the communities that need their help most—and for whom they risk life and limb every day. Community

members, especially those from communities with poor relationships with the police, are not often exposed to police perspectives. Articulating the experiences informing distrust is humanizing, especially if it is done with an acknowledgment that, like the community's perceptions, distrust can be based on narratives that are arrived at but are ultimately unfounded. Open discussion of these experiences and contexts positions officers and community members to operate empathically without becoming entangled in arguments over specifics that can derail trust-building efforts. Through this type of experience, executives can come to understand the history and narratives underpinning distrust between the department and certain communities.

Small group executive-level discussions have been successfully conducted in a variety of contexts and designs. In Rockford as well as the National Initiative cities, chiefs have coordinated small group conversations as an intentional component of reconciliation. Through honest and direct meetings, Chief Epperson of Rockford gradually established connections and credibility with the city's Black clergy. He also set up time and resources dedicated to hear directly from the city's growing Latinx community. Fostering opportunities for community leaders to engage directly and honestly with the chief helped form partnerships necessary to address Rockford's drug market problem.

The National Initiative cities already in the midst of their reconciliation processes have begun to model small group listening sessions. In Minneapolis, a few times a month former Chief Janee Harteau met with representatives of local advocacy and service organizations usually for about two hours at a time. The meetings, which were private and kept small, generally included representatives of groups working on behalf of similar populations—LGBTQ+ or Hispanic people, for example—were mostly been populated by those chosen by the members of those groups who participated in the initial kickoff meeting. Community members were asked to describe their primary concerns and aspirations regarding the police department, policing in general, their communities' relationship with and trust of law enforcement, and their personal stories that animate their and their communities' perception of policing. A scribe would take notes to flag compelling narratives to be documented as well as opportunities for follow-up.

In Birmingham, the NNSC piloted a new model for mutual listening called the Safety and Equity Circles (SEC). Over a period of three weeks, a group of approximately 10 rank-and-file officers and line supervisors met regularly with an equal number of community representatives for facilitated conversations and exercises designed to build a local, trust-based partnership to address community and police concerns and enhance public safety. The group continues to meet and is formulating collaborative approaches to improving public safety. In an anonymous after-action survey, all participants agreed that the process "was a rewarding experience," citing the "new skills and knowledge to address challenges in my community," "an opportunity for personal reflection and insight so that my highest values can drive my outer work," an enhanced understanding of one another's motivations and experiences, and an enduring commitment to continuing to work together to improve trust and public safety in their communities. The NNSC team continues to work with those involved to determine how best to scale the process up. A guide produced in collaboration with Sustainable Equity, LLC is forthcoming. Anyone interested in learning more about the process should contact the NNSC.

In Stockton, Chief Eric Jones has developed a graphical representation of the various strands of listening sessions to share with community and city participants so they can better understand how they can be involved in the process. The model, which he calls "Listening in a New Way," creates opportunities for elite-level police and community listening sessions; rank-and-file and community listening sessions; "Safety and Equity Circles" in the Birmingham model; and opportunities for other representatives of the criminal justice system, including the district attorney and chief of probation, to conduct listening sessions of their own. He also fed preexisting listening efforts into the framework. A documentarian who will be assisting in recording narratives on film sits in on the sessions, noting when powerful anecdotes regarding police distrust—or trust—are shared, flagging them for follow-up.

Though not led by a chief, the Watts Gang Task Force presents a similar type of group engagement and airing of grievances. In that case, the task force constitutes both a forum for community crime problem solving and a forum for grievances. Captain Phil

Tingirides found the combination could be productive, rather than distracting, for public safety. When he began attending meetings of the Watts Gang Task Force, he was taken aback by the anger and despair he heard. Over time, he learned that listening to that anger and despair helped reduce it—especially when he acknowledged the pain he heard rather than getting defensive about specific allegations of police misconduct. When all concerns were out in the open, he could begin engaging them—by conveying a desire to do better and clarifying misconceptions about police practice where they existed. Tingirides and other officers also used the opportunity to share their narratives and press the community to do their part in crime reduction efforts. The openness of these meetings allowed the task force to defuse tense situations after incidents and act collaboratively to prevent crime. An important fact is that the task force also adapted to the needs of multiple populations in the community—to address the concerns of a newer Latinx population, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) set up parallel meetings with members of a Watts Latinx leadership group to facilitate the free flow of ideas and concerns specific to that group.

Expanding through the department

If executives can successfully engage with the history and narratives underpinning mistrust between the department and certain communities, it is both viable and important to push that understanding down through the department. The process of close engagement with the community—bringing to light and carefully considering the facts and narratives driving distrust, committing to a process of reconciliation, and beginning to chart that path—must be replicated in lower levels of the police department. Doing so also lets officers feel as though their own experiences are being validated and expressed and expands reconciliation thinking throughout the staff. This is especially crucial because these lower-level officers are the ones with the most direct contact with alienated communities and therefore the greatest opportunity to advance or undermine efforts at reconciliation. Bringing your rank and file along can take many forms: trainings, conversations, direct exposure to community narratives, even changing metrics for success so that they align with the goals of reconciliation. But it is crucial that

these officers be informed about why reconciliation is important and what makes it necessary, what it can do to help them do their jobs and be safer, what changes it will require from them, and how changes in practice emanate from the desire to reconcile. Certain things can be compelled—departments are discipline-based organizations—but a project as encompassing as seeking to reconcile with alienated communities requires top-to-bottom buy-in to comprehensively counter the divisive narratives at the heart of distrust. If officers do not believe in the rationale for reconciliation, it is extremely unlikely to have the deep or lasting impact envisioned here.

Although the SVI in Las Vegas did not start as a top-down reconciliation strategy, the spread of its principles demonstrates one way reconciliation listening and narrative sharing can spread through a department. The SVI began as an effort to remake the police department's approach to preventing violence and making the neighborhood safer by committing to a sustained collaborative effort with community residents. Police leadership laid out a strategy for violence prevention, response, and intervention that set out specific roles for interested community members and law enforcement. The initiative involved both acknowledging that past strategies had not worked and close coordination and conversations with local religious and civic leadership. Leaders of that initiative took lessons from these experiences with them as they were promoted in the department. There, Undersheriff Kevin McMahon and others oriented priorities to bring reconciliation thinking to the attention of command staff and line officers. Discussions of historical precedent and narratives were introduced for command staff; line officers' enforcement priorities were shifted to lead to fewer adversarial encounters; community tours offered formal opportunities for line officers to converse and meet community members; and other structured programming put officers and community members together—such as in a mentoring program for ex-inmates—specifically to engage and reduce distrust. Finally, the department decided to establish an entire Office of Community Engagement (OCE), which in part identifies leading critics of the department—particularly those who have built followings—and directly engages them in discussions about their concerns and department efforts to address them.

Share narrative at a general and public level

Beyond the direct engagement with community leaders and individuals that rank-and-file officers reach, there is a broader public need to collect and share narratives. On one hand, narrative collection can be important in empowering both police and community members to feel that their voices are heard and to use those voices to help inform changes. In Los Angeles, for example, the Blue Ribbon Rampart Review Panel's collection of LAPD officers' narratives was crucial in mapping for department leadership the conditions and perceptions that helped sustain the culture of "thin blue line" policing that drove a stake between officers and especially minority Angelenos. It laid the foundation for a comprehensive reassessment of LAPD culture that sought to address the drivers of officers' feelings of alienation both within the department and toward the community.

But there is little precedent for narrative collection and sharing particularly for reconciliation: gathering information that is meant to be commemorated and shared to inform the larger social understanding of police-community relationships. Collecting and sharing narratives helps bring reconciliation to individuals who are not directly involved in small group sessions. Some independent organizations have conducted research that might be seen as a model in form. Although there is relatively little precedent for larger-scale narrative sharing, particularly in the cities reviewed here, some initiatives along these lines do exist. The Invisible Institute's Youth/Police Project works with teenagers on the south side of Chicago to collect and disseminate via YouTube video their experiences of everyday encounters (not perceived abuse) with police.²³ The *New York Times* has developed a video series of interviews with current and former police officers as they describe their perspectives on policing and race in the United States.²⁴ Pursuing similar efforts as part of a local reconciliation process has the potential to add great nuance to police and community understandings of one another.

Lessons

Key insights for the listening and narrative sharing component of reconciliation are as follows:

- **Start small and high-level.** Police leaders should meet in small group listening sessions with community representatives to air grievances and understand narratives.
- **Seek rank and file buy-in.** When ready, create opportunities and direct staff in ways that bring similar conversations and narratives to officers on the ground.
- **Collect and share narratives with the public.** Expand the reach of the reconciliation process by establishing a way to collect and share police and community perspectives with those not directly involved in conversations and group sessions.

In considering and practicing listening and narrative sharing, cases from the field help provide useful examples and themes to draw upon:

- Small discussion groups are more effective than large events for listening; large events can be hard to manage and can get out of hand.
- There is no one "community."
 - There are many populations in a given community that may have different concerns.
 - Set up opportunities to hear from and speak to each important group.
- Narratives can be powerful and important even if they are not necessarily fact; recognize that beliefs matter and often arise from real and painful experience.
- Give officers a chance to share their stories as well; understanding department narratives helps to work through perceptions that may be problematic for trust building.

23. "Youth/Police Project," Invisible Institute, accessed July 7, 2016, <http://invisible.institute/yppl/>.

24. Geeta Gandbhir and Perri Peltz, "A Conversation With Police on Race," *New York Times*, November 11, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/10/opinion/a-conversation-with-police-on-race.html>.

Fact Finding

Listening and narrative sharing offer space for reconciliation participants to understand and process the narratives and personal experience that shape relationships; a formal fact-finding process helps to build an objective account of the local history and harms that produced the distrust behind those relationships. In the police-community context, this process might include a thorough accounting of the prejudicial laws police were compelled to enforce, major instances of police-community tension, data on disparities in treatment by the criminal justice system (and conceivably other public institutions), and other research that gives important context to the claims made by both groups. Public records, interviews with experts, and use of secondary sources and news reports are useful for establishing a clear and unbiased history that all parties can endorse. The fact-finding process often culminates in an official report or other product that is widely disseminated and used to bolster the case for reconciliation. Even if it does not, however, the process of fact finding itself leads participants to focus on and discover information they might otherwise not have found and to mainstream information that may be common to some populations but brand new to the broader public. The effort also demonstrates to the community that the department takes the history and status of the community seriously and is willing to face what may be ugly truths.

Types of fact finding

Although fact finding is common to reconciliation processes in other countries, there is not an extensive record of the process for police-community reconciliation in the United States.²⁵ That said, fact-finding reports on policing that were not explicitly geared toward reconciliation still offer useful examples.

In Los Angeles in particular, a number of reports were instrumental in redirecting the course of the department. The Blue Ribbon Rampart Review Panel—appointed by then Chief William J. Bratton but led by outside expert and activist Connie Rice, the police commission, and the inspector general—worked to get to the bottom of the underlying causes of the Rampart scandal of the late 1990s and point a way forward. The reports that followed were able to fully and officially establish, for the first time, the extent of the harm done to public trust and police morale and own the institutional culpability for Rampart.²⁶ The report catalogued the organizational failures of the LAPD and the prosecutorial agencies to monitor conduct and rein in misconduct.²⁷ The document also identified the post-scandal reform of the Rampart division as a case study for possible reform—a positive vision for policing—describing the new emphases on community engagement, collaboration with the private sector, proactive supervision, integration of data and technology, and improved coordination with gang intervention workers.²⁸

25. Martina Fischer, “Transitional Justice and Reconciliation: Theory and Practice,” in B. Austin, M. Fischer, and H.J. Glessmann, eds., *Advancing Conflict Transformation: The Berghof Handbook II* (Opladen, Germany: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2011), http://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/edaktion/Publications/Handbook/Articles/fischer_tj_and_rec_handbook.pdf.

26. Blue Ribbon Rampart Review Panel, *Rampart Reconsidered: The Search for Real Reform Seven Years Later* (Los Angeles: Blue Ribbon Rampart Review Panel, 2006), <http://assets.lapdonline.org/assets/pdf/Rampart%20Reconsidered-Full%20Report.pdf>.

27. *Ibid.*, 46–80.

28. *Ibid.*, 12–15.

Photo: Sam Cullman



A community circle with police officers and residents in Birmingham, Alabama, October 2016.

The process of interviewing, fact finding, and airing of grievances demonstrated that Chief Bratton’s LAPD could be receptive to meaningful engagement with outside partners—even civil rights activists. Bratton embraced the findings of the Rampart report and lauded the work of the panel.²⁹ That report also set the stage for other high profile outside reports that would echo the blue ribbon panel’s emphasis on “decentralized community police and crime reduction strategy” and drill down on a new vision for gang violence reduction. In fact, just six months later, Rice’s Advancement Project presented a report commissioned by the Los Angeles City Council laying out the failure of past gang suppression strategies and the dysfunctional relationship between criminal justice agencies and offering a comprehensive, integrated, and neighborhood-sensitive approach to gang violence.³⁰ City Controller Laura Chick followed in 2008 with her own report, which added criticism to existing gang efforts, singled out the failure of approaches to youth, and requested an office be created in the mayor’s office

to centralize new work.³¹ Bratton’s endorsement of concepts from these reports helped establish a common understanding of existing challenges and made solutions politically and practically viable.³²

In Stockton, the NNSC team is working with Dr. Elizabeth Hinton, Assistant Professor of History at Harvard University, to develop a factual record of police-community trust in the city. This effort—which is in its early stages—will likely include a combination of reviewing archives held by the department and city, newspaper archives, interviews with longtime residents and retired and current police officers, community policing and violence prevention strategies, and more. The medium in which this information will be preserved and presented is yet to be determined by a combination of Hinton, a documentarian, the police department, and members of the department’s Community Advisory Board.

Lessons

Key insights for the fact finding component of reconciliation are as follows:

- **Establish a shared record.** Fact finding creates an authoritative account of events that all parties can endorse.
- **Process matters.** The process of fact finding can uncover and publicize important but sidelined histories and circumstances.
- **Identify problems.** Fact-finding reports identify and highlight areas for improvement; this identification can also spur action and collaboration
- **Demonstrate willingness to face facts.** Committing to fact finding proves that the department is willing to face what may be uncomfortable truths.

29. “Chief Bratton Reacts to Blue Ribbon Report,” news release, Los Angeles Police Department, last updated July 13, 2006, http://www.lapdonline.org/july_2006/news_view/32893.

30. *A Call to Action: The Case for Comprehensive Solutions to L.A.’s Gang Epidemic* (Los Angeles: Advancement Project, 2007), <http://advancementprojectca.org/ap-publications/a-call-to-action-the-case-for-comprehensive-solutions-to-l-a-s-gang-epidemic/>.

31. Los Angeles City Controller, *Blueprint for a Comprehensive Citywide Anti-Gang Strategy* (Sacramento, CA: Sjoberg Evashenk Consulting, Inc., 2008), https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/controllersgalperin/pages/106/attachments/original/1453848157/08-17b_lacityp_008236.pdf?1453848157.

32. Joe Domanick, *Blue: The LAPD and the Battle to Redeem American Policing* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 315.

Policy and Practice Changes

Acknowledgment, listening and narrative sharing, and fact finding establish the reasons and context for distrust—and these reasons are without fail based in past or continuing policies or practices. Reconciliation requires committing to substantive changes in the behaviors and policies that brought about and continue to drive distrust. These changes can range from revisions to police protocols (e.g., deciding to issue citations rather than tickets for low-level crimes or altering internal review policies and repercussions for use of deadly force cases) to less formal measures (e.g., changing cultural norms by setting expectations of a certain degree of courtesy for stops). Only once police demonstrate a good faith effort to carry their stated commitment to trust building into their actions will the door open for communities to take on their own role in sustaining distrust. The burden is on police departments to create space for that conversation.

To pursue the most impactful policy and practice changes for reconciliation, departments should make sure to collaboratively develop and then communicate a commitment to better policing, to actually implement changes, and to explicitly connect these changes to the larger process of reconciliation. First, communicating a willingness to improve is a counterpart to the acknowledgment of harm: This statement confirms that the department is invested in building a fundamentally different relationship with the community. These commitments serve as driving principles for change and should be derived from close consultation with the community—whether formal mission statements or a concept that underlies behavior. The OCE, in Las Vegas, has a goal “to have the most progressive, engaged, and enlightened partnerships between law

enforcement and the community in America”³³—which sets an ambitious agenda for the department as it seeks to develop interventions premised on the SVI framework. Connect Rockford, one product of the reconciliation process there, is organizing around the mission of “driving public safety strategy and community alignment through collective impact principles.”³⁴ In Watts, the CSP organizes its work around a relationship-based policing model. These are general commitments, rather than specific plans, but they help set expectations for the direction of the agencies.

Second, following through on changes—even if the changes are initially minimal—demonstrates that the agency is serious about its commitment to the reconciliation process. In fact, promising and then following through on actions is exactly how trust is built and how communities become more open partners for longer-term collaboration. Changes can be operational tweaks, shifts in priority, or overhauls of practice, but they should always address needs and wishes expressed by the community.

Finally, as these changes are announced and implemented, departments should clearly tie all new initiatives back to the original goal of rooting new practice in an acknowledgment of historical harm and an effort to improve on the dynamics that exacerbate the legacies of that harm in the present. Though police leaders may conceive and implement a number of diverse efforts in the same spirit of reconciliation, those efforts may not necessarily be understood as such by members of the community. This step provides a proof of concept for the process and helps promote further collaboration with community partners.

33. Draft strategic plan, supplied by Sasha Larkin, lieutenant, Las Vegas Metro Police Department, to Sam Kuhn, field advisor, National Initiative for Building Trust and Justice, January 6, 2016.

34. Draft strategic plan, supplied by Amanda Payton Hamaker, project manager at Connect Rockford, to Sam Kuhn, field advisor, National Initiative for Building Trust and Justice, November 10, 2015.

Examples of Changing Policy and Practice

Police leaders can start effective policy and practice change by understanding the major sources of discontent in the community. The process of listening and fact finding should provide ample opportunity to identify areas of focus. Beyond grounding change in need, the world of possible changes is broad. It may be helpful to think about changes within the department and changes to how the department interacts with the community. Establishing and providing resources for a new, community-oriented unit—such as the SVI or CSP—is one type of comprehensive internal change. In Rockford, the establishment of a new protocol for reviewing officer-involved shootings is an example of an incident-specific internal policy change. New types of training, like the one designed by the Advancement Project in Los Angeles, can also fulfill a commitment to new internal practice. Externally, agencies can adopt a new formal strategy—such as DMI—or emphasize new priorities that change the way they practice policing in the community.

Lessons

Key insights for the policy and practice component of reconciliation are as follows:

- **Communicate the commitment to change.** Publicly express a vision and intent for how policing should happen.
- **Consult with community.** Collaborate with community and review findings of fact finding and listening to identify priority areas for change.
- **Follow through.** Change policies and practices in ways that will improve the way police and community members interact.
- **Tie changes to the reconciliation process.** Explain how changes are fulfilling commitments set out in the reconciliation process to help establish trust and promote further collaboration.

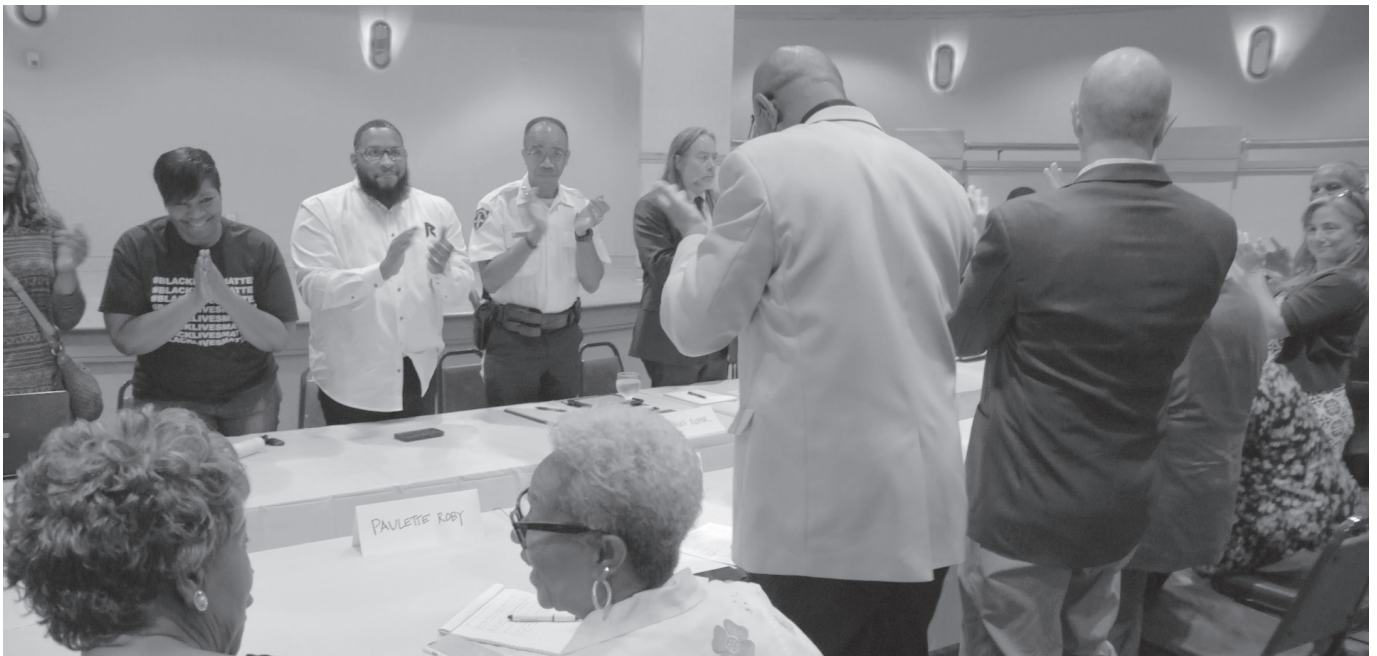


Photo: Sam Cullman

Police and residents conclude a community circle in Birmingham, Alabama, as part of the National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice, August 2016.

Conclusion

The present national moment of heightened awareness of racial tension, particularly in the criminal justice system and particularly with respect to police-community relations, presents a unique opportunity—and challenge—for brave police executives across the country. Though the discussion is national, the solutions will start locally. This document draws out some of the specific practices that have allowed a few innovative police leaders to address these issues as best they can and provides guidance for what a full reconciliation process might look like. By examining these practices across cases and considering them in the context of both decades of work to build trust between police and communities in the field and a more recent concerted effort to work with law enforcement and communities to design a reconciliation process, the NNSC has been able to identify a number of components that seem to be essential to implementation. These components and their key elements are as follows:

■ Acknowledgement

- *Take the lead.* The police department has to make the initial outreach to the community to begin reconciliation.
- *Explicitly acknowledge historical harms and apologize.*
- *Own your institution.* Recognize the role of policing and this particular agency in those harms (as opposed to “we didn’t do that”).
- *Consider not owning other institutions.* Recognize anger toward other parts of government and society, and differentiate between them and the police department.

■ Listening and narrative sharing

- Start with small, executive-level listening:
 - Identify natural, authentic community representatives (as opposed to those who have come to identify themselves to outsiders as owning the issue and the community). Work with them in small, safe ways and groups.

- Listen to their stories, experiences, and perspectives. People need you to hear them (which is different from simply making operational changes that address issues).
- Tell your own story: Make clear what it is you represent and where you want to go (rather than letting expectations or others define that for you).
- Recognize that positions and understandings may be historically and personally rational without being factually correct.
- Bring your rank and file along while understanding their anger and their own experiences; expose them to community experiences and narratives.
- Collect and share narratives at a general and public level.
- **Fact finding**
 - Pursue a formal fact-finding process.
- **Policy and practice change**
 - Make an explicit statement, informed by consultative process, of how you think policing should happen.
 - Commit to actual policy and practice changes including a process for consistent evaluation of practices in light of the reconciliation effort and a process for implementing those changes.
 - Connect changes to the reconciliation process.

These components are drawn from cases where cities used some form of reconciliation to achieve impressive and substantive public safety goals, the best practice literature around other reconciliation processes, and initial implementation of intentional reconciliation processes in a handful of sites. Nonetheless, it is up to those with local knowledge and relationships to adapt this guidance to local conditions and needs.



Photo: Stockton Police Department

A community event in Stockton, California, March 2017.

The United States has been at similar crossroads before: Mutual distrust between police and especially communities of color has simmered for generations and has boiled over to similarly explosive effect in at least two comparable waves since the 1960s. But precedent does not necessarily portend recurrence. This guide is presented with the firm conviction that history does not have to repeat itself and includes evidence to that effect in the form of the case studies presented here. Explicitly acknowledging the historical harms perpetrated by police and police departments

and committing to changing in order to improve trust can halt the cycle of echoing recriminations that have traditionally dogged any discussion of the police-community dynamic. Both police and communities have serious, rational, considered concerns about one another. Understanding the experiences underpinning those divisive conclusions and working conscientiously to carefully refute the narratives on which they are based is the central dynamic of reconciliation.

About the National Network for Safe Communities

The **National Network for Safe Communities (NNSC)**, a project of John Jay College of Criminal Justice, was launched under the direction of criminologist David M. Kennedy and John Jay College President Jeremy Travis. The NNSC focuses on supporting cities implementing proven strategic interventions to reduce violence and improve public safety, minimize arrest and incarceration, strengthen communities, and improve relationships between law enforcement and the communities it serves.

The NNSC supports cities actively implementing a range of interventions aimed at homicide, gun violence, drug markets, and intimate partner violence and at reforming a range of criminal justice practices and institutions. The NNSC also seeks to develop and enhance communities of practice through the Institute for Innovation in Prosecution and the National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice.

Please visit www.nnscommunities.org for detailed information on the NNSC's mission, strategies, research findings, media coverage, events, and membership.



Lack of trust between police and the communities they serve undermines the safety and well-being of all. To overcome distrust between police and the community, improve communication, and clear the way for collaboration, the John Jay College for Criminal Justice has developed this comprehensive collection of case studies and lessons learned in reconciliation efforts. It is composed of three parts, the first of which is a guide that provides practical steps for working toward reconciliation with consideration given to the needs and sensitivities of both the community and the police. The second part includes the key elements in practice of acknowledgment. The third part provides real-life examples of police departments and communities using reconciliation to rebuild relationships.



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