

# The Next Steps on the Journey to Just and Equitable Public Safety

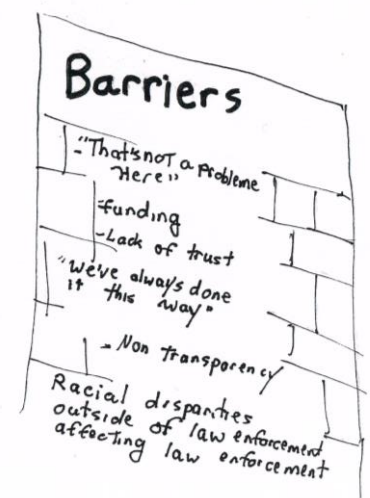
**The Goal:** The Black Lives Matter movement has awakened the nation's consciousness to the need to fundamentally change our approach to public safety (which is more than just policing) to make it just and equitable. This requires a transformation of law enforcement policies, procedures, and relationships with the community so that the color of your skin does not determine how you are treated or the level and type of force used on you in a police encounter.

**The Barriers:** While there is general agreement on this goal, at least in broad strokes, there are significant barriers to get there. They include:

- The mindset of, "that's not a problem here."
- The Real or perceived lack of adequate funding to implement the reforms, especially in financially challenged communities.
- A lack of trust in the process, both by community members who distrust law enforcement and law enforcement personnel who distrust reforms (for example, distrust that a civilian review board would provide appropriate due process and subject matter expertise to appropriately review complaints).
- The inertia of "we've always done it this way."
- A lack of transparency.
- Racial disparities outside of law enforcement that contribute to racial disparities in the criminal justice system. Inequities in poverty, housing, education, and health care affect what happens in law enforcement, but are beyond the control of police departments.

**Overcoming the Barriers:** These barriers can be overcome through a grassroots movement that is:

- **Diverse and Inclusive** to ensure that all voices are heard and to model the changes we hope to advocate for;
- **Informed** about the problems and the best actions to address them.
- **Active**--making change will require more than clicking "like" on Facebook posts.
- **Persistent**--these changes will take time, and we will need to be ready to defend them once in place. We don't want to win a change in police training only to lose it five years from now during budget cuts because nobody was paying attention.
- **Holistic** so that the movement can address the root causes of racial inequity both within and outside of law enforcement.



## Developing a Policy Agenda

To move from the big picture to concrete, immediate changes in police policy, procedures, and relationships requires a clear policy agenda.

If I go to my doctor and she says, “You need to improve your health,” that advice by itself is almost useless as it gives me no way to act on that advice.

If she gives me a ten-volume encyclopedia of changes I need to make to my behavior, that is likewise ineffective as it is too overwhelming to take on.

If she says, “You need to eliminate refined sugar from your diet and reduce your alcohol intake to 14 drinks per week or less,” that is much more useful. It gives me concrete, actionable steps toward the goal of improving my health. Better yet, if she goes one step farther to say, “The first step is to start a food journal. Your follow up appointment is in six weeks,” she has given me immediate steps that get me started on the path and has created an accountability system. After taking on that step and feeling the impact of its success, I will then be ready to take on the next concrete, discrete behavior change to improve my health.

To advance toward the goal of just and equitable policing, we need to develop concrete, actionable steps that we can hold local law enforcement accountable on. Over the fall of 2016, ICPJ will be working with other local activist groups to develop a series of concrete policy proposals around use of force, training, and accountability. We will then begin a phase of data gathering to see where each of the eleven local law enforcement agencies are performing well and where they could improve.

Having this data, we will be able to prioritize next steps and develop concrete campaign plans to implement those changes.

Throughout this process, the ongoing work of movement building through education, coalition building, training, and mobilizing is vital.

This process is very similar to the one used with labor organizing and negotiation. Workers develop a framework of specific changes they would like to see from management, build union strength and unity behind those goals, and then use a variety of tactics to achieve those goals--usually at the bargaining table.

## **Improving Coordination**

*Several local activists, organizations, and congregations have been working independently on many of these issues. This has helped move the conversation forward on issues such as body cams, anti-bias training, and civilian review, but the limited information sharing, lack of a common platform for action, and lack of coordination in addressing the eleven law enforcement agencies in the county has limited the impact of this work. Developing a policy agenda with broad support from the local racial justice community offers the potential to make this work more effective while preserving each group's autonomy.*

# What will be in the Policy Agenda?

In the public meetings, discussions with grassroots activists, and engagement with racial justice leaders that Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice and the Washtenaw County Faith Leaders Forum has had, three broad areas of concern have repeatedly arisen as the highest priorities for local law enforcement:

- **Use of Force** (which the Sheriff’s Department is calling “subject control”): This includes putting protecting the sanctity of human life as a primary goal of policing, adopting de-escalation as a department policy, and having robust systems for internally tracking and publicly reporting on use of force.
- **Training:** The goal is to ensure that law enforcement personnel are well trained to de-escalate conflicts, make sound decisions in high-stress time, address mental health crises, interact competently with people from a variety of backgrounds, and address their own biases.
- **Accountability and Relationships:** Processes such as civilian review, bodycams, and public reporting and review of police data help ensure that law enforcement agencies continue to make progress toward the goal of just and equitable policing. It also makes sure that law enforcement works to develop positive relationships of trust with vulnerable communities and use their input to shape law enforcement activity.

These systems are inter-related. For example, if we want to have de-escalation as a core principle of use of force, we also have to ensure that there is adequate training for it, and a civilian review committee that can be a mechanism to ensure that de-escalation remains a key part of training.

This is not an exhaustive list of all the changes needed to ensure just and equitable public safety, and when we achieve them all our work will not be done. Rather, it is a starting point to move us forward on a long journey to justice.



## Next Steps

### 1. Refine and Prioritize the Policy Agenda:

Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice has summarized key recommendations from reports such as Campaign Zero ([www.joincampaignzero.org](http://www.joincampaignzero.org)), the Police Executive Research Forum's work on Re-Engineering Use of Force ([policeforum.org](http://policeforum.org)), and the President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing ([www.cops.usdoj.gov/policingtaskforce](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/policingtaskforce)). Now through October 28 we are now seeking input from local racial justice organizations and activists to refine and prioritize the recommendations. This will help ensure that the policy agenda is analytically sound and is grounded in community concerns and priorities. **Provide your feedback at <http://bit.ly/WashtenawPolicePolicySurvey>.**

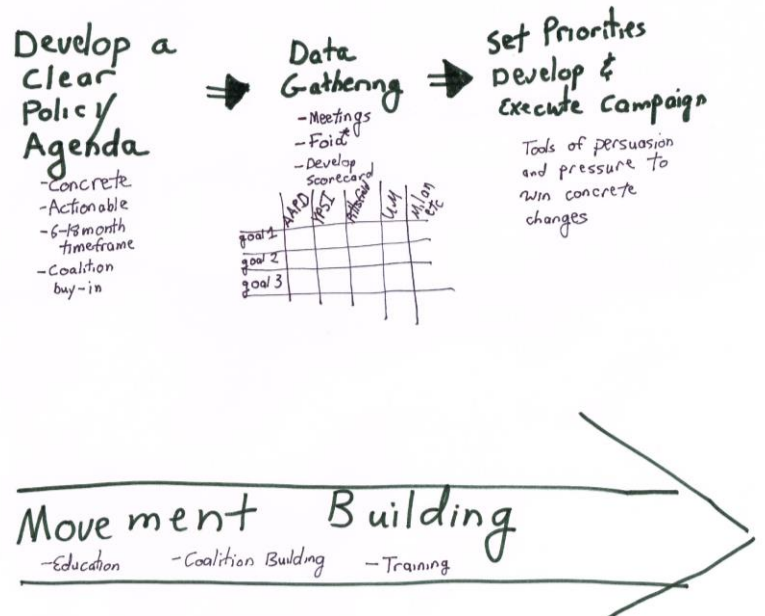
**2. Build Community Support for the Policy Agenda:** After the policy agenda has been finalized in November, we will be seeking the endorsement of local racial justice activists, social change organizations, community groups, and individual community leaders. Please visit [www.icpj.org](http://www.icpj.org) to follow updates in the process.

**3. Data Gathering.** With community support for the agenda, we will begin to gather information about current policies and practices by the eleven state and local law enforcement agencies active in Washtenaw County. To support this effort we will be recruiting teams to reach out to each agency that are diverse, informed, and represented by the agencies we are reaching out to. To sign up to be part of this process please contact ICJP at [info@icpj.org](mailto:info@icpj.org) or 734-663-1870.

## How You Can Help

Contact [info@icpj.org](mailto:info@icpj.org) or 734-663-1870 for details.

- **Help Refine and Prioritize the Policy Agenda:** Taking the survey at [bit.ly/WashtenawPolicePolicySurvey](http://bit.ly/WashtenawPolicePolicySurvey)
- **Outreach and Data Gathering:** Help reach out to local racial justice groups and activists to get feedback on the draft agenda, or join a team to gather data from local law enforcement.
- **Educate on the agenda:** Schedule a briefing on the agenda for your congregations, community organization, or class.
- **Endorse the agenda:** Individuals, congregation, or a community organizations can sign on to support the agenda.
- **Donate:** The work of research, outreach, and movement building can only move forward with the support of people like you. Donate online at [www.icpj.org/donate](http://www.icpj.org/donate).



### *Just One Piece*

The Policy Agenda is just one part of the work to address racial injustice in the United States. In addition to helping law enforcement adopt policies and practices to address racial disparities, we encourage you to look within your own profession, congregation, and neighborhood to identify other opportunities to promote equity. Visit [www.icpj.org](http://www.icpj.org) to find out about resources to help you do that.