Social Movements Against Racist Police Brutality and Department of Justice Intervention in Prince George's County, Maryland

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ABSTRACT *Racist police brutality has been systemic in Prince George's County, Maryland. The victims include African Americans, the mentally challenged, and immigrant populations, creating a complex and uneven public health impact. Three threads characterize the social movements and intervention since 1970. First, a significant demographic shift occurred as African Americans became the majority population in the late 1980s when the first Black county executive was elected in 1994. Despite the change in political leadership, police brutality remained rampant. Lower-income households located close to the District of Columbia and "inside the beltway" experienced the most police brutality. In 2001, The Washington Post revealed that between 1990 and 2000, Prince George's police shot and killed more citizens per officer than any of the 50 largest city and county law enforcement agencies in the country, 84 % of whom were black. Of the 147 persons shot during the 1990s, 12 were mentally and/or emotionally disturbed; 6 of these shootings were fatal. Second, resistance to police brutality emerged in a variety of political formations throughout the period, especially in the late 1990s. Sustained community pressure prompted the Department of Justice (DOJ) to open a civil rights investigation of the police department in November 2000. To avoid a potential federal lawsuit, the county leadership negotiated a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the DOJ to enact policy reforms, part of which called for supplementing the departmental mobile crisis team, comprised of mental health care professionals, to respond to all cases involving mentally challenged citizens. Third, the incomplete process of change subsequent to the ending of DOJ oversight suggests a continued challenge to social movements opposing police brutality. This study focuses on the effectiveness of the MOA along with the activism of the People's Coalition for Police Accountability (PCPA) in reforming a culture of police brutality. The intensive oversight by the DOJ, combined with engaged resident activism, reduced the incidences of police brutality during the period 2004–2013. Since the termination of DOJ oversight, disturbing developments suggest the need for continued and sustained activism. Since 2010, county police officers have fatally shot 21 people, several in questionable circumstances. At the same time, the Prince George's Police Department has received more tactical military weaponry than any other jurisdiction in the state of Maryland under the 1033 program of the National Defense Authorization Act.*

KEYWORDS *Police brutality, Racism, Social activism, Mental health*

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INTRODUCTION

Prince George's County, Maryland, an inner suburb of Washington D.C., provides a compelling case study of both racist police violence and sustained opposition to it. The county's experience also suggests that racism is deeply entrenched in the structure of policing, and that it is highly resistant to change due to its functionality in the broader national socioeconomic system, while also containing a contingent aspect that reflects the particularities of the local history of the county. This study is the story of escalation in racist policing and the partial success of grassroots opposition in the county from 1970 to 2015. The county's experience, similar to that of Ferguson, Missouri,¹ is a touchstone for the general phenomenon of racist policing in the USA.

A THEORETICAL/HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

Brutality and killings have characterized state actions in the USA against social disruption since the colonial days. The roots of modern public police forces are in slave patrols used to capture or kill enslaved Africans attempting to escape from bondage or resist their owners and the Pinkerton private security firms used to quash early labor conflicts. Official police departments emerged as agencies to strengthen class rule by slave owners and capitalists.^{2,3}

Racist state violence can be explained most comprehensively through a classical Marxian analysis.⁴⁻⁹ In such a framework, the capitalist mode of production is characterized by two classes: a relatively small bourgeoisie (or capitalist class) that owns the means of production and a large proletariat, or working class, that has only its own labor-power to sell in order to make a living. As a result, labor is systematically exploited for the production of profit, which, along with concomitant oppression and suppression, engenders resistance by the working class. Resistance gives rise to counterattacks. Paramount in the counter-attack strategy of the bourgeoisie is a systematic effort to weaken the unity of the working class. Racist social structures, which include material inequalities by race, discriminatory institutions, and a white supremacist ideology that falsely justifies super-exploitation and oppression, are vital tools in the bourgeoisie's arsenal to undermine the proletarians. If successful, the bourgeoisie's inculcation of racist ideology and practice becomes embedded in the consciousness and actions of white people, reinforcing the oppression of the Black community through mass racist actions (e.g., mass lynchings¹⁰ genocide in Rosewood¹¹ and Tulsa¹², the race riots of 1919¹³, and modern-day extra-judicial killings¹⁴). This process of disunity weakens white workers in their struggle against the capitalists in addition to deepening the exploitation of Black workers, thereby intensifying the exploitation of the working class as a whole.¹⁵ Race is a social construct grounded entirely in unscientific notions of racial differences. Racist ideology persists despite its scientific refutation because of its enduring contribution to the maximization of profits by the capitalist class.

A divided and weak working class allows the capitalist class as a whole to escalate its exploitation of the entire working class. Racism in all of its forms, including racist police brutality, intimidation, and murder, serves this function for capitalism; that is the underlying reason for its extraordinary persistence and promulgation since the era of slavery.¹⁶ At the same time, by intensifying police terror against people of color—largely directed at working class Blacks¹⁷—the capitalist class is able to extract higher levels of profit from Black workers. Racist practices functional to capitalism are embedded in the state apparatus, prominently in the criminal justice

system and the policing process, but ramify throughout all aspects of the society. Such practices enforce racial disparities in access to employment, create fractured families and communities through mass incarceration, and are deployed to prevent rebellion and resistance from the most oppressed sections of the working class.

This theoretical framework would suggest that the USA will experience ongoing reproduction of racism writ large, including police brutality. Resistance and rebellion will continue with intermittent successes that ultimately fail to extirpate an ideology and practice endogenous to the prevailing political economy. Short of the abolition of capitalism, gains in eradicating racism will therefore most likely be temporary reforms, never a full resolution of injustice, and a never-ending battle.⁴

THE US HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE WITH RACISM

The historical experience of the USA is consistent with this theoretical framework. The USA was established with and built on a foundation of racism. During the colonial period, plantation owners and other elites used the combined enslavement of Africans and indentured servitude of European workers to fashion a powerful method of capital accumulation from oppressed labor. Many of these oppressed workers, black and white, united against Virginia Governor Berkeley and large landowners in the 1676 Bacon's Rebellion. The rebellion unfortunately focused its attack on Native American tribes, but its insurgency against the government created virtual anarchy in Virginia, terrifying the landowning class. England responded by passing systematic racist laws to divide black and white direct producers.¹⁸⁻²¹ Enslaved Africans, now separated from their exploited white fellow workers, were now subjected to more severe exploitation to create enormous wealth for plantation owners. The wealth extracted from slavery was the fundamental building block of world capitalism. Marx pithily observed that "the veiled slavery of the wage workers in Europe needed, for its pedestal, slavery pure and simple in the new world."⁴

The Civil War ended chattel slavery, and the early years of Reconstruction promised to bring Black workers into equal status with other workers, creating a potentially politically unified working class similar to the racially unified plantation workforce that carried out Bacon's Rebellion. The capitalist system shored up its social domination with the Compromise of 1877, orchestrated by a Democratic Party controlled by southern landowners, which fastened Jim Crow segregation tightly on the African-American population while enlisting marginalized southern white workers to serve as shock troops of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). As W. E. B. Du Bois noted in 1935, "The slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery."²²

Despite persistent resistance, Jim Crow remained the law of the land. Thousands of lynchings of Black people terrorized African Americans and those sympathetic to their cause but the struggle nevertheless moved forward in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.^{23,24} The rising Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and the urban rebellions of the 1960s and 1970s once again threatened to advance racial equality that is so dangerous to capitalism's profitability and survival. The capitalist state responded with the war on drugs and mass incarceration,^{25,26} which deepened the super-exploitation of African-Americans while keeping Black and white workers separated. Weakening families and communities while stigmatizing a major share of the African-American population, the New Jim Crow²⁶ served a function similar to that of slavery and the original Jim Crow by maintaining the African-American

community in a vulnerable, second-class position and reinforcing racist conceptions in the minds of other workers.

A culture of racist brutality and impunity is continually reinforced in police officers by executive, legislative, and judicial actions at the highest level of government. This culture can be, and often is, turned on other workers as well. A tally maintained by *The Guardian* notes that, over the first 9 months of 2015, police in the USA killed 398 whites, 209 Blacks, 117 Latinos, 15 Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 9 Native Americans.²⁷ The absolute toll is significant, and the disproportionate share of people of color in these figures also shows large racial disparities. The ratio of police killings of Blacks compared to police killings of whites is 2.83 on a per capita basis.²⁸ In Maryland, the state in which Prince George's County is located, the ACLU determined that from 2010 to 2014, the ratio of police killings of Blacks to white was over 5 to 1.²⁹

Such a brutal authoritarian culture also translates into abuse of the mentally ill, who may not respond rationally to police commands due to their disabilities. The police may perceive an insufficiently compliant or speedy response to be threatening, and respond with deadly force. When they confront a person of color in similar circumstances, their judgment may be further distorted by a presumption of threat based on race, resulting in a greater readiness to use lethal force.³⁰

THE FOUNDATION OF RACISM IN PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

The historical depth and functionality of racism to the capitalist system writ large has been evidenced in myriad ways in the evolution of Prince George's County. As Prince George's transformed from a white blue-collar community to a largely African-American community, county developers and other elites have benefited from institutional racism in the county, while African-American, Latino, and white workers have suffered. This process undergirded the intensely racist police brutality that became endemic in the county.

Regionally, the county became home to a disproportionate share of the region's low-income working class people. In 2003, County Councilman Thomas Dernoga decried the lack of balanced economic growth in the County, noting that "[m]ost of our growth has been in residential housing" and noted that the county had most of the low- and moderate-income housing in the Washington D.C. region.³¹

As housing desegregation became the law, African-Americans in Washington D.C. migrated into the county in large numbers. Many white households responded by moving still further away from Washington D.C. to more distant parts of the county and to a ring of exurbs, including Howard, Anne Arundel, Charles, and Calvert Counties. Often hostage to their own racist mentality, many white families sold their homes below market value under pressure from the "blockbusting" tactics of realtors, left areas of employment concentrations, and lost the advantages of a short commute to job centers in the District. African-American home buyers in turn often paid full price and more for these homes, providing profits based on racism to certain realtors.³²

As the in-migration of African-American families swelled, racist elements in the county mobilized to establish Tax Reform Initiated by Marylanders (TRIM) in 1978, the east coast counterpart of Proposition 13 in California. TRIM severely constrained the public facilities budget of the county by capping property taxes and imposing barriers to future increases, thereby reducing the county's ability and willingness to build quality schools and other public facilities for the new African-American population.³¹ Joanne C. Benson, a county delegate, noted that when

TRIM was being formulated in 1978, “[r]esearch showed us that if we put this initiative in place, in 25 years we were going to see a devastating impact on public education and public safety, and that is exactly what has happened.” She stated that longtime residents were intentionally trying to limit funding for the arriving African-American students enrolling in county schools.³¹ TRIM helped ensure that Prince George’s would not be able to provide the rising African-American population with the educational and other amenities at a level comparable with the rest of the region.

The county had substantial tracts of undeveloped land on which developers were able to build new, low-end rental housing developments aimed at the incoming black population.^{31,33–36} The developments and their surrounding locations typically lacked amenities and good schools.^{34,37} Other counties in Maryland with much smaller black populations passed “Adequate Public Facilities” ordinances³⁸ to require the provision of sound public facilities and amenities³⁴ which typically increased costs to developers. In Prince George’s County, developers were able to profit handily by playing on existing prejudices and avoiding high costs associated with better developments through their entrenched position in the local political structure.^{34,35} Former Congressman Albert R. Wynn, who represented Prince George’s County, argued that frequent, improper zoning decisions allowed and encouraged low-end residential development to the detriment of the well-being of county residents. He said, “If you allow people to build the cheapest possible town houses and apartments and then you wonder why you don’t have Nordstrom, it doesn’t make sense.”³⁶

Even as the county experienced a substantial increase of affluent black families who settled in such expensive neighborhoods as Lake Arbor and Mitchellville, the lack of amenities in the county as a whole continued to elicit widespread laments.³⁷ In 2015, the schools remain underperforming. The limited amenities of note in 2015 include the Prince George’s Sports and Learning Complex, the National Harbor development, the Washington football team’s stadium, and a Wegman’s grocery store.³⁵ While some predominantly white households retain sound educational amenities, as typified by Eleanor Roosevelt High School,³⁴ most white working class families in the county also suffer from inadequate schools and deficient commercial amenities.^{34,36,37,39}

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE OVER 50 YEARS

Racist policing and brutality toward the population, including the mentally challenged, have been a pattern and practice in Prince George’s County at least since the middle of the twentieth century. Steady opposition to these practices, peaking in the early years of the twenty-first century, forced an otherwise intransigent police force to temporarily retreat.

Historically a white, blue-collar suburb of Washington D.C., Prince George’s County began to experience significant in-migration of African-Americans after World War II.⁴⁰ The pace of in-migration quickened in the 1960s, and after the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, accelerated so that by 1970, 14 % of the county residents were black. Blacks in the county typically lived close to the District of Columbia, with 40 % living inside the beltway in 53 of the 143 census tracts in the county as a whole; 36,729 lived inside the beltway and 55,079 outside the beltway (see Figs. 1, 2, and 3).⁴¹

Continued migration led to larger numbers and denser concentrations of African-Americans in the inner suburban areas so that by 1980, over 50 % of the county’s black population, or 124,736 individuals, lived inside the beltway. African-Americans

accounted for a growing share of a growing population in the county throughout the next 30 years, reaching over a half million residents (556,620, or about 65 % of the county’s population) with a quarter million (249,885) living in relatively dense communities inside the beltway by 2010 (see Figs. 2, 4, and 5). At the same time, the number of whites declined both in absolute and relative terms, falling to 166,059 or 19 % of the county’s population by 2010, of whom 59 % lived outside the beltway.⁴¹

FIG. 1 Number of African-Americans in census tracts in Prince George’s County—1970.

FIG. 2 Number of African-Americans in census tracts in Prince George's County—2010.

The black population in Prince George's also experienced a substantial socioeconomic divide. Many relatively affluent African-Americans moved beyond the beltway into somewhat more heterogeneous communities as measured by black/white population ratios in census tracts outside the beltway⁴¹ while still often living in homogeneous clusters within these tracts. Their arrival contributed to the county's deserved reputation as the highest

FIG. 3 Percent of African-Americans in census tracts in Prince George’s County—1970.

income black majority county in the USA. At the same time, African-Americans populating the communities inside the beltway remained in relatively racially homogeneous communities with low to moderate income levels, reinforcing a substantial class division within the county. In 2010, the county’s mean black household income reached US\$85,275, but the difference between households inside the beltway versus those living outside the beltway demonstrates a substantial class divide: the mean household income for black households living

FIG. 4 Percent of African-Americans in census tracts in Prince George's County—1990.

inside the beltway was US\$67,171; it was US\$100,693, 50 % higher, for black households outside the beltway (see Fig. 6).^{41, *}

The economic class divide within the African-American population was reflected in debates over burning social issues of the day, especially the complex and constantly evolving battle over school desegregation. Substantial black opposition to

^{*}It would be preferable to use medians instead of means as the measure of central tendency but the available data do not allow such a calculation for the two regions of the county.

FIG. 5 Percent of African-Americans in census tracts in Prince George’s County—2010.

busing emerged especially (but not only) among the more affluent African-Americans outside the beltway.^{40,42,43} The latter, which generally supported the county’s emerging black leadership and were crucial to the election of its first black county executive in 1994, showed less concern about police brutality than residents living inside the beltway where it was especially severe.⁴⁴ The most egregious police behavior was concentrated in the older areas inside the beltway including Capitol Heights, Fairmont Heights, Forestville, Suitland, Langley Park, and Hyattsville. Most of the killings by police, including those described in the following section, occurred in such neighborhoods.

FIG. 6 Median household income in census tracts in Prince George's County—2010.

The white county leadership in the latter part of the twentieth century maintained an overtly racist mentality, typified by the long-serving States Attorney Arthur “Bud” Marshall.³⁴ Similar attitudes were reflected in systematic opposition by many whites to desegregation of the schools throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. When the U.S. District Court of Maryland ordered busing to ensure desegregation of the schools starting in January 1973, white opposition became more intense and overt. The anti-busing, anti-desegregation movement in Prince George’s took up the slogan “neighborhood schools” and claimed judicial and bureaucratic excess by the federal government. The US Civil Rights Commission condemned this complaint as hypocrisy, a version of similar racist code words invoked “from Boston to Bakersfield.”⁴⁵ White opponents of busing were inspired in part by the racist anti-busing movement in Boston, and attempted to block school buses bringing black children into predominately white schools. In the tradition of Louise Day Hicks and Pixie Palladino in Boston, Sue V. Mills, a member of the Prince George’s County Council, encouraged these racist actions.^{46,47}

Such racism did not go unchallenged during the rising tide of black migration into the county. Early opponents of the county’s racist structures included Cora Rice,

Steve Brown, Perry Smith, and Sylvester Vaughans, who worked through and led local chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). They also formed a variety of other organizations to advance black interests, and focused their attention on attaining political office and positions within the county bureaucracy to develop an institutional resistance to racist practices in the county. The outcome of much of this work was significant black representation in the county government, culminating in the election of Alexander Williams Jr. as states' attorney in 1987 and Wayne K. Curry as county executive in 1994. The success of this black empowerment strategy did not mean that rampant police brutality in the county or the myriad other racist conditions in the county would be adequately addressed.

RACIST POLICING IN THE COUNTY: A PERMANENT PHENOMENON?

Policing in Prince George's mirrored the racism embedded in all county practices, institutions, and structures. The trend in police brutality in Prince George's County from the 1970s to the 1990s demonstrates that racist practices were endemic and not readily susceptible to reform. A review of egregious incidents of police killings over this time period that gained both substantial publicity and provoked resistance by residents bears witness to the apparent intractability of racist policing in the county despite black political leadership and the growth in the proportion of African-Americans on the police force. This outcome is consistent with the theoretical model of the utility of racism in all forms to the capitalist system and its reflection in the racist structures in the County itself.

By the turn of the twenty-first century, heightened resistance to police brutality appeared to have reduced the frequency of police misconduct, but recent events suggest that such a reduction may be only temporary.

Racist Police Misconduct, 1960s–2000s

The police in Prince George's County brought a tradition of brutality to the immigration of African-Americans. For example, the police department created an undercover "Death Squad" in the 1960s that lured young black men to commit robberies and then arrested them.⁴⁸ In the process of this scheme, the police killed two and wounded one of their "criminal recruits" as a result. The Death Squad was exposed and demobilized in 1967, but in 1969, the Prince George's police killed an unarmed black man, and over 300 protesters marched on the county courthouse in response. On Christmas Eve in 1977, a white officer shot and killed an unarmed black man after he allegedly shoplifted two US\$7 hams for his holiday dinner. Shortly thereafter, another white police officer killed a black burglary suspect who was trying to escape through a window by shooting him from behind.^{49,50}

Between 1972 and 1977, police shot 56 county residents. In 1978, Prince George's police sergeant Ralph Ross declared to *The Washington Post*, "You have to understand one thing about this department; up until the mid-'70s, it was a known fact that if you came into P.G. County and made trouble the police would kick your head in. Simple as that. The county had that image and wanted it that way. The police were encouraged to be that way."⁵¹ Nathaniel Austin, another police officer in the county, said that same year that "P.G. County still has one of the most racist police departments around, and their reputation is well-earned; they deal with blacks and low-income people ruthlessly and brutally. I certainly wouldn't rule out police membership in the Klan."⁵¹

Reflecting historic racial segregation, the police force in 1968 included only five African-American officers out of a force of approximately 500. Ten years later, the force had grown to 850 officers of which 65 were African-Americans.⁵¹ Yet brutality did not change. The growing in-migration of working class black families continued to meet an oppressive police structure.

The Terrence Johnson Case The case of Terrence Johnson in June 1978 captured the high level of tension evident in the county in the 1970s. Johnson, 15 years old, was detained with his older brother Melvin, who was suspected of tampering with vending machines. He was taken to the Hyattsville police station, handcuffed to a chair and beaten. Johnson reacted by grabbing the gun of the officer who was beating him and shot and killed him and a second officer in the Hyattsville police station.⁵²

Vigorous community mobilization occurred on both sides. The International Committee Against Racism (InCAR), a national, radical political organization launched by the Progressive Labor Party in 1973, held marches with Johnson's brother Melvin in several communities near where the arrests and shootings occurred. Its flyer asserted that "[g]iven the racist history of these P.G. cops, it's not Terrence who should be on trial; these cops should be on trial for racist murders. Indeed, the P.G. cops have such a long racist history of murder and terror against workers in P.G. that, besides the County government, the only organized support they have is from the Ku Klux Klan."⁵¹⁻⁵³ At the same time (and intentionally separate from the activist mobilizations),⁵³ Rev. Perry Smith of North Brentwood, leader of the Concerned Clergy of Prince George's County, established a Terrence Johnson Defense Fund with support from the NAACP and SCLC.⁵⁴ The National Jury Project provided legal assistance to the defense team during the trial.⁵⁰

State's Attorney (chief county prosecutor) Arthur A. Marshall, notorious for his uncritical support of police actions³⁴, personally prosecuted Johnson. The families of police officers and local KKK members organized rallies in support of police actions⁵⁵ and held counter-protests at the Hyattsville police station and at the Upper Marlboro courthouse when InCAR demonstrated in support of Johnson at those places. Ultimately, Johnson was cleared of murder but was convicted of lesser charges and sentenced to 25 years in prison. Johnson was released in 1995, and allegedly committed suicide in 1997 rather than surrender to the police after robbing a bank.⁵⁶

The Gregory Habib Case On May 20, 1989, Gregory Habib and his brother Martin, Ghanaian immigrants, were accosted by police corporal Steven Kerpelman in a routine traffic stop and ordered out of their vehicle. When Gregory reached into his pocket for his identification, Kerpelman beat both Habibs with his nightstick. As he attempted to ward off blows, Gregory was tackled by three officers who fell on him, crushing him. The state prosecutor's report found that "... Gregory weighed approximately 130 pounds [Police Cpl. Robert] Edwards weighed approximately 240 pounds and [police officer Richard] Hart approximately 260 pounds. It is reasonable to believe that the combined weight of the three men coupled with Edwards' fist holding a nightstick against Gregory Habib's chest caused the critical injuries, described in the autopsy, as the men hit the ground."⁵⁷ Cpl. Kerpelman also broke Martin Habib's jaw in this incident.

The community was again enflamed. The state's attorney for Prince George's County at the time was Alexander Williams, whose recent election meant for some

the successful advance of black representation at the highest levels of county government. Yet his role in this case was, at best, deceptive.⁴⁰ He urged the NAACP's leadership of Steve Brown and Cora Rice to refrain from mobilizing protests, despite Rice's declaration that "10 percent of the police department is brutal and must go."⁵⁸ InCAR nevertheless organized demonstrations in Langley Park, a densely populated and predominantly Latino neighborhood where scores if not hundreds of residents had witnessed the mid-afternoon police killing.^{57,59} The protests culminated in a tense meeting at the state's attorney office demanded by Habib family members and InCAR. They wanted to know directly from Williams why the officers had not been indicted and why, in fact, they were still carrying their weapons on patrol. Williams was visible in the office at the time but sent his assistant to meet with the group. Williams' representative spoke in an outwardly earnest and sympathetic manner, saying that while the office was concerned, they were having difficulty collecting evidence because the witnesses spoke only Spanish. InCAR offered to assist with translation since the organization included Spanish speakers, but the offer was rejected. Williams' representative also said he would investigate a threatening call made to an InCAR leader by a police officer that had been recorded and shared with Williams' office.⁶⁰

Williams convened a grand jury on the Habib matter which found no basis to prosecute the officers for killing Gregory Habib. It did indict Kerpelman for assault and battery of Martin Habib, malfeasance in office, and assault and battery of Gregory and Martin Habib at the initial confrontation during the traffic stop.⁵⁷

As protests continued, Williams referred the entire matter to the state prosecutor (a state-level prosecutor) to determine whether the grand jury investigation in the county had been tainted by perjured testimony, biased witnesses and/or illegal disclosures to the media; whether or not the investigation by the county police department was complete and free of police misconduct; and whether or not the death of Gregory Habib was caused by police misconduct.⁵⁸ Williams also asked the office to decide whether or not to prosecute Kerpelman.⁵⁷

Five months after the incident, the state prosecutor launched its own investigation of the incident and discovered several new Spanish-speaking witnesses in Langley Park who had observed much of the incident. Based on this investigation, the state prosecutor concluded that the police who had killed Gregory Habib when they crushed him had done nothing wrong. He also dismissed all charges against Kerpelman despite the grand jury indictment. Kerpelman had surrendered his badge and gun after having been indicted,⁶¹ but resumed his position in the police force after the state prosecutor dismissed charges.⁶²

The exoneration led the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) to demand a public apology from State's Attorney Williams for alleging perjury, grand jury tampering, and obstruction of the investigation by the police. No apology was forthcoming.⁶³

Three years later, in a civil suit, Martin Habib and the estate of his deceased brother received a US\$1.9 million award from the county due to the violation of the Habibs's civil rights by four police officers, three of whom were still on the force at that time.⁶² The verdict further called into question the willingness of the state's attorney and state prosecutor to go after police misconduct.

As a result of these and many other incidents, then-County Executive Parris N. Glendening created the Blue Ribbon Commission on Public Safety and Community Relations to recommend reforms. The Commission recommended the establishment of the Citizens Complaint and Oversight Panel (CCOP), which was created by statute in 1990.

The Archie Elliott III Case The 1990s saw an intensification of police brutality and misconduct against the now-majority black population in the county. The case of Archie Elliott III was emblematic, sparking sustained activism and advocacy for well over a decade. On the evening of Friday, June 18, 1993, in the town of District Heights, Elliott was pulled over by police for driving under the influence. He was wearing cutoff blue jean shorts and a pair of sneakers with no shirt. They searched Elliott for weapons, handcuffed him, and placed him in the front seat of a police cruiser. Elliott was still handcuffed in the front seat of the cruiser when the police opened fire on him; 14 of the 22 bullets fired by the police pierced his body, killing him instantly. The officers maintained that he pointed a handgun at them despite being handcuffed behind his back.⁶⁴

On January 19, 1994, a grand jury convened by State's Attorney Alex Williams failed to issue an indictment against Officer Jason Leavitt of District Heights and county patrolman Wayne Cheney. Elliott's parents pressed forward, seeking relief from the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals and finally, the US Supreme Court, but without success.⁶⁴

Five years later, Elliott's family launched the *Enough is Enough* campaign. It was led locally by former D.C. Delegate Walter Fauntroy and WOL radio host and former national NAACP Board member Joe Madison. For nearly 6 months, *Enough is Enough* held demonstrations outside the Upper Marlboro courthouse calling for State's Attorney Jack Johnson to meet with the Elliott family with a view to re-opening the case. In January 2000, *Enough is Enough* led a mass march on the Maryland State House during the opening of the legislative session in Annapolis. Along with Maryland State Senator Clarence Mitchell IV who was poised to introduce enabling legislation, *Enough is Enough* called for the creation of a special state prosecutor to reconsider cases, including that of Archie Elliott, in which local jurisdictions had failed to secure indictments due to prosecutorial misconduct and/or neglect. By this time, Parris Glendening had risen to governor, and Del. Fauntroy staged a sit-in outside his office to force a meeting on the issue. Glendening refused Del. Fauntroy an audience, sending his chief of staff Major Riddick instead. In the end, Sen. Mitchell's bill to establish a special prosecutor died in the Senate Judiciary Committee.⁶⁴

The Culture of Brutality and Mental Health

The culture of police brutality honed in the treatment of African-Americans carries over into the treatment of people with mental health illnesses.⁶⁵ People with these challenges are frequently its victims; an estimate of police killings during the first part of 2015 suggested that 25 % of the victims of police shootings were mentally ill.³⁰ Other estimates are much higher.⁶⁶ Among the 47 county residents killed by the police in the 1990s, 12 were mentally or emotionally challenged individuals. Of these, seven were shot after a call for help was made to the police. One victim was a 16-year-old high school student name Julie Marie Meade who suffered from disabling panic attacks. She had repeatedly told schoolmates and family members that she wanted to die. When she called 911 in November 1996, she informed the dispatcher that she intended to point a gun at the police when they arrived. The five officers who responded at the scene surrounded the building with weapons drawn and demanded that Meade come out of the house and drop her gun. Meade came outside with a black pellet gun raised and shouted for the officers to shoot her. The officers ordered her not to approach any further. When she defied them and took a step forward, they shot her to death in a hail of 15 bullets.⁶⁷

In a 2001 fatal incident, police responded to a call from a building manager who had evicted Caesar Nathaniel Allen, a diagnosed paranoid schizophrenic, for threatening him. When the police arrived, they found Allen brandishing a knife on Route 301 in Bowie, Maryland. The police shot him with non-lethal pellets of oleoresin capsicum (O.C.) powder—pepper spray—but these were not successful in making Allen drop the knife. Eyewitnesses stated that Allen, although agitated, was not lunging toward or threatening the officers, but was simply standing in the middle of the road holding a knife. Police later stated that it was because Allen refused to drop his knife that they finally gunned him down.^{68,69}

RESISTANCE TO POLICE BRUTALITY: THE PEOPLE'S COALITION FOR POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

In almost all of the incidents described earlier, excessive and deadly force was used against black residents of the county in communities inside the beltway. All of these incidents drew significant community protest. The police took no responsibility for their actions and, in fact, argued that they were justified. County and state officials concurred with the police. The failure of repeated reactive demonstrations to obtain any changes in policy made clear the limitations of this type of protest in terms of solving immediate problems and bringing about structural reform of the police. Such episodic reaction was about to change with the formation of the People's Coalition for Police Accountability (PCPA).

As part of the lead-up to the January 2000 March to Annapolis by *Enough is Enough*, the American Civil Liberties Union of the National Capital Area (ACLU-NCA) called for the establishment of a broad coalition of groups and activists within the county to advocate for reforms to the Citizen Complaint Oversight Panel (CCOP).

The initial meeting of the coalition took place at St. Paul Church in Capitol Heights in December 1999. The coalition soon garnered the support of County Councilmember Peter Shapiro to expand the investigatory power of the CCOP. Legislation passed in 2001 empowered the CCOP to conduct its own investigations and to issue subpoenas for officers through the County Council.⁷⁰ The mandate of the CCOP between 1991 and 2001 had been to review the internal investigations of allegations of excessive force, language, and harassment conducted by the police department's Internal Affairs Division (IAD) and evaluate whether the investigations were thorough and their conclusions accurate. The CCOP was also supposed to receive reports from the county's Human Rights Commission which also had a mandate to review IAD investigations. After 2001, the CCOP's legislated mandate expanded to cover additional forms of police misconduct. The CCOP was also empowered to initiate its own investigations and to subpoena testimony through the County Council. These latter powers have been used rarely. Throughout both periods, the recommendation of the CCOP was directed to the chief of police, who had final decision-making authority on possible disciplinary actions.

Following this initial success, the coalition in Prince George's County expanded its mandate. It named itself the People's Coalition for Police Accountability (PCPA) and established a mission of building grassroots support for police accountability and against police brutality. The PCPA included both individuals and community-based groups. It united family members of victims, church ministries, former members of InCAR, and local chapters of nationally recognized groups including the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Amnesty International USA, Communications Workers of

America (CWA), the National Black Police Association (NBPA) the Congress Against Racism and Corruption in Law Enforcement (CARCLE), and the National Lawyers Guild. It also encompassed local academics, lay people, and student groups from nearby campuses including the University of Maryland-College Park and Howard University. Saint Paul Church in Capitol Heights, Maryland, served as the meeting venue for the PCPA.

The PCPA Strategy

The PCPA used a three-pronged approach to engage the community, build a broad-based movement, and expose the culture of brutality within the police department. The first strategy involved educating the community about the persistent human rights violators within the department and mobilizing protests against gross violations (see Fig. 7).⁷¹ The PCPA's list of offenders was drawn from a July 2001 expose that *The Washington Post* conducted which documented Prince George's police as having shot and killed more people per officer than any of the 50 largest law enforcement agencies in the country between 1990 and 2001. During that period, 122 residents of the county were shot, 47 fatally. Blacks comprised 84 % of those killed where race was identified.⁷² The PCPA engaged the community with its "Dirty Dozen" campaign highlighting repeat offenders such as Cpl. Charles Ramseur who shot four unarmed persons between 1992 and 2002. A Latino victim of Ramseur, Jose Buruca-Melgar, endured injuries to his abdomen, and a black victim, Desmond Ray, suffered a severe spinal cord injury that placed him in a wheelchair for life.

In the aftermath of the Ray shooting, PCPA members went door to door in the neighborhood where Ray was shot, educating community members on Cpl. Charles Ramseur's horrendous record and encouraging residents to take action. The decision by the coalition to create the Dirty Dozen campaign took place after several intense debates in which some members expressed concerns about the potential repercussions from focusing on specific officers. Nevertheless, due to *The Washington Post* having already exposed these officers, the PCPA believed it had sufficient justification to move forward.⁷³

The second strategy of the PCPA involved pushing for progressive legislation to reform Maryland's Law Enforcement Officers Bill of Rights (LEOBOR).⁷³ Enacted in 1974, LEOBOR granted officers special rights when they faced internal investigations and/or disciplinary action for alleged misconduct. Officers are granted 10 days during which they can decline to be questioned by superiors. It limits the ability of police chiefs to levy discipline by subordinating their discretion to the recommendation of a trial board that may tend toward leniency for fellow officers. It restricts the potential efficacy of civilian review by permitting only officers to question other officers. Moreover, those abused and victimized by the police have only 90 days from the time of the incident to file an excessive force complaint. Due to the extensive protections given to officers, the PCPA referred to LEOBOR as the codification of the *Blue Wall of Silence*.⁷³

In 2001, the PCPA was successful in lobbying then-House Delegate Rushern Baker (who became county executive in 2010 and was re-elected in 2014) to introduce a LEOBOR reform bill in the General Assembly that would abolish the 10-day waiting period, add citizen participants to police trial boards, and create a county-level investigator's position to review police misconduct cases. At a press conference announcing the legislation, however, Del. Baker referred to the effort to pass the bill as an "up-hill climb" due to staunch opposition from the Fraternal

Prince George's County People's Coalition for Police Accountability (PCPA) Says:

Hold the Dirty Dozen Accountable!

The PCPA has been fighting for many months to make the police department accountable for their brutality, killings, and racism. We have received occasional verbal commitments for change from the County's leadership in response to our lobbying, legislative, and legal efforts, but nothing has changed. While we will continue a multifaceted strategy to bring about change, we want to raise the call for action against the most egregious offending police officers – *the Dirty Dozen*. There are actually many more than a dozen officers who have shot, killed, maimed, and/or brutalized community members, in many cases more than once, and unjustifiably. Why are they still in uniform, with police powers, able to carry out such acts again? The community no longer can trust these officers, and they do not belong on the force.

Here is the list of a dozen officers we wish to spotlight. There are at least 30 more we know of, and others beyond that number. By calling attention to these officers, we hope to counteract the culture of brutality which pervades the Prince George's County police force. We call on all community members to join this effort.

1. **Stephanie Mohr:** Set her K-9 on two homeless men who had surrendered. Convicted of civil rights violations.
2. **Anthony Delosier:** Stephanie Mohr's fellow officer who okayed the attack. Acquitted of conspiracy.
3. **Carlton Jones:** Killed Howard University student Prince Jones, shooting him multiple times in the back in his car after having followed him from Prince George's County through D.C. into Virginia.
4. **Brian Catlett:** Killed Gary Hopkins Jr. (unarmed). Found not guilty by a judge and given an award by the Prince George's County Police Dept.
5. **Devin White:** Admitted lying in the Hopkins case, fractured a man's ankle at a traffic stop, and is under indictment for assault.
6. **Wayne Cheney:** Killed two men and shot a third, including killing Archie Elliott III after handcuffing him and placing him in a squad car.
7. **Edward S. Finn:** Killed Elmer Newton. Autopsy showed two fractured ribs, two fractured neck bones, multiple hemorrhaging muscles and a blinding with pepper spray. All of this occurred in a police precinct station. Finn was cleared with the explanation that Newton had hurt himself by 'banging his head against the bars and floor'.
8. **Joseph Palmieri:** Shot Gary Sanford Sr. while he urinated outside his car. Sanford bled to death. This was the 2nd time in 5 years that Palmieri shot at an unarmed man.
9. **Cpl. Howard M. Thompson:** Shot and killed Burl Courtney after they said he lunged out of a dark corner. Autopsy showed that 22 of the 24 bullets shot at Courtney entered from the back.
10. **Cpl. Alita V. Robinson:** After harassing Daniel Torres in a restaurant, she sprayed him with pepper spray.
11. **Charles K. Ramseur:** Shot Jose Buruca-Melgar. Ramseur said that he was fleeing, but witnesses said otherwise.
12. **Francis A. Masino:** In 15 months he shot an unarmed man, broke a paraplegic's leg, smashed a driver in the eye with a blackjack, and brutally attacked a pregnant woman after her dog went to the bathroom on his lawn. A family member wrote to the police saying that Masino was a 'madman'

FIG. 7 Flyer announcing PCPA's Dirty Dozen campaign.

Order of Police (FOP, the police union). In fact, despite a strong push from the PCPA, the bill was never voted out of committee.⁷⁴

The third strategy of the PCPA was to engage with the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) in the pattern and practice probe it had initiated in the aftermath of the Prince Jones murder. Adopting a model used by the NAACP Task Force in D.C., the PCPA secured the agreement of the DOJ's Civil Rights Division to involve the survivors of brutality in their investigation.

Amnesty International USA took the lead in organizing three intake sessions throughout the county, two in predominantly African-American neighborhoods inside the beltway and one in a predominantly Latina/o community. Over 100 residents stepped forward to testify on the record in the official investigation.⁷⁵ There was a significant difference between the sessions that took place in the majority black communities of Suitland and Forestville and the one that took place in the Latina/o community of Langley Park. The Suitland and Forestville communities fully supported the DOJ investigation and condemned police practices. In Langley Park, several Latina/o residents expressed support for the police. The consensus of advocates at the time was that Latina/os with police issues were afraid to step forward for fear of being deported or suffering reprisals on the job.

The Dirty Dozen Campaigns

Stephanie Mohr and the K-9 Unit The county's K-9 unit registered over 100 dog bites a year during the 1990s, primarily against unarmed black and brown men. In the spring of 1999, the DOJ launched an investigation that resulted in the police chief ordering a retraining of the dogs to "bark and hold" rather than "bite and hold" potential suspects.⁷⁶ Unwilling to change their ways, almost all officers of the K-9 unit transferred or were replaced.⁷⁷

The newly created PCPA took up the case of K-9 Officer Stephanie Mohr, who had released her canine to maul two Latinos—Ricardo Mendez and Herrera Cruz—in Langley Park in 1995. The state's attorney declined to prosecute Mohr, but the DOJ intervened and issued a federal indictment for civil rights violations. Partnering with CASA de Maryland, an immigration support group, the PCPA rallied outside the federal courthouse during Mohr's trial. The demonstration reflected a growing spirit of resistance to police brutality.⁷⁸ Mohr was found guilty of federal civil rights violations in 2001 and sentenced to 10 years in prison. She was released after 8½ years⁷⁹, the only police officer convicted of brutal actions while on the job in the county between 1970 and 2015 and sentenced to prison.

The Gary Hopkins Case Mohr's brutal actions were followed a few years later by the killing of Gary Hopkins Jr. by Officer Brian Catlett on November 27, 1999. Hopkins, an unarmed college student, was killed outside a party when Catlett shot him once in the chest. The PCPA, with his mother, Marion Gray-Hopkins, again rallied vigorously on behalf of the slain youth. State's Attorney Jack Johnson did indict Officer Catlett for manslaughter. Nevertheless, actions by the state's attorney and Officer Catlett gave the appearance of collusion against the interest of the Hopkins family and their supporters. State's Attorney Johnson assigned a prosecutor who specialized in white-collar crime and had never tried a murder case, virtually guaranteeing a loss. Officer Catlett then opted for a non-jury trial. The judge found Catlett not guilty on all counts.⁸⁰

The Prince Jones Case The police killing of Howard University student Prince Carmen Jones on September 1, 2000 focused national attention on the county's brutal police. In this case, undercover narcotics officer Carlton Jones (no relation to his victim) trailed Prince Jones in an unmarked vehicle from Hyattsville, Maryland, through D.C. into Fairfax County, Virginia. There, he

fired 16 bullets at Prince Jones's back as he sat in his vehicle. Eight bullets found their mark, killing the unarmed college student. Officer Jones claimed that he was conducting surveillance in a gun theft case involving a black jeep Cherokee, the model vehicle driven by the victim. But the only person with a gun that night was the officer. Officer Jones alleged that Prince Jones attempted to ram him with his vehicle, prompting him to shoot, but eyewitness testimony contradicted the officer's account.⁸¹⁻⁸³

This case garnered the attention of then-Vice President Al Gore, who called for a moment of silence at the funeral services for Prince Jones on the campus of Howard University. Howard University students marched on the office of the Fairfax County Prosecutor, Robert Horan, demanding an indictment of Carlton Jones. Horan, however, had never indicted a police officer during his 30 years in office. Remaining consistent, he ignored the student demands and found no wrongdoing by Officer Jones. He did not present the case to a grand jury.⁷⁷

The PCPA and Howard University students and faculty turned to Prince George's County, calling for full accountability from the Prince George's County Police Department. They demanded and secured a meeting with County Executive Wayne Curry to insist on action against Officer Jones. But Prince George's County Police Chief Gerald Wilson, with Curry's approval, did not seek any internal discipline against Officer Jones. (Several years later in 2003, before departing his post, Gerald Wilson's last action as Chief was to fully exonerate Carlton Jones of any wrong doing in the shooting death of Prince Jones.) Howard University Student Association (HUSA) President Sellano Simmons, having found no redress in Fairfax or Prince George's, led hundreds of students on a march from Howard University's campus to the DOJ in the aftermath of Jones's murder calling for federal intervention in this case. While unsuccessful in securing DOJ intervention in the Jones case, the students' activism led the DOJ to expand its investigation of the Prince George's K-9 unit to a full pattern and practice investigation of the entire Prince George's County Police Department.⁸⁴

The US Department of Justice, the Pattern and Practice Investigation, and the Memorandum of Agreement

The PCPA's community-based organizing, the widespread protests, and the public awareness created by *The Washington Post* exposé appeared to have a strong effect on the DOJ investigation. Once elected to the post of county executive in November 2002, Jack Johnson met with DOJ officials to avert potential litigation against the county. By January 2004, the county entered into a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the DOJ promising to bring the department into full alignment with civil rights standards in order to avoid a federal lawsuit. The MOA went into effect in the summer of 2004 and an external monitor was hired by the DOJ in collaboration with the county government. The MOA was to remain in effect for 5 years, until the DOJ was certain the county had showed good faith in enacting mandated reforms which included:

- The creation of a Critical Firearm Discharges Review Board
- The expanded use of video cameras in patrol cars
- The creation of an Early Identification System to track all uses of force in order to identify officers that may need intervention from police supervisors
- The expansion of the Citizen Complaint Review process to include independent investigation and subpoena power
- Supplementing the mobile crisis team with police officers that have received training from mental health professionals to improve their conflict resolution and

situational de-escalation techniques in dealing with citizens with mental and/or emotional challenges.⁸⁵

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY AFTER THE MOA WITH THE US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Ruben Castaneda, a reporter for *The Washington Post* who wrote extensively on police issues in Prince George's County during the 1990s, asserted in 2014 that

[t]here is little doubt that the Justice Department reforms, the Mohr conviction, and greater public scrutiny have led to positive changes. Today, more than 40 percent of the department's 1800 sworn officers are black, an increase from the 1970s and much of the 1980s, when the department was majority white—meaning the makeup of the police force now closely mirrors that of the community it polices. The number of fatal officer shootings of unarmed people has been reduced significantly compared to the 10-year period the *Post* examined, from 1990 to mid-2001, when the police department registered perhaps the highest rate of officer shootings of any big police force in the country. Since 2010, county officers have fatally shot 14 people, and during three of those years, only one person was shot.⁷⁷

It is not clear, however, whether the police culture of brutality and the associated *Blue Wall of Silence* have changed significantly, or if they have simply been in a temporary retreat in 2015. The sustained struggle against police brutality seems to have forced some level of change from the record highs of the 1990s period, but whether this change is permanent is unclear. The theoretical model presented in this paper—namely that the bourgeoisie requires ongoing racist oppression to divide the working class and weaken its ability to resist exploitation—would lead to the expectation that racist police brutality would continue and possibly resurge in the future, requiring at the very least ongoing vigilance and resistance from the community.

The period during and after the DOJ oversight includes several troubling well-documented phenomena. These include numerous police killings reported in a recent study conducted by the ACLU²⁹, thousands of allegations of police misconduct contained in CCOP reports from 1991 to 2013⁸⁶, and the militarization of the police in the county marked by its acquisition of over US\$2 million of combat equipment from the Department of Defense.⁸⁷ At the same time, continuing mobilizations by the PCPA (now the People's Coalition or PC) are encouraging indicators of sustained organized opposition to police misconduct and racism in the county.

African-Americans Still Disproportionately Killed by Police Action

The Maryland ACLU recently reported that at least 109 persons died in police encounters in Maryland from 2010 to 2014, and that 21 of these deaths took place in Prince George's County, 50 % more than Castaneda estimated.^{29,77} The ACLU study noted that, statewide, the rate at which Blacks died by a police encounter (deaths per population size) was five times that of whites and that this rate was also obtained in Prince George's County. While Blacks make up 29 % of the population in Maryland, 69 % of those killed by police (75 persons) were black. Most disturbing, the number of unarmed blacks who died (36 people) exceeded the total number of whites who died (30 people), armed or not.

Several statewide statistics also indicate a reason for continuing concern about the situation in the county. The rate at which unarmed blacks died in a police encounter (deaths per population size) was ten times that of unarmed whites in the state as a whole; 41 % of those killed were not armed with a weapon of any kind and 38 % of those killed most likely had a medical or mental health issue, disability, substance use, or similar issue. Police officers were criminally charged in less than 2 % (two cases) of the 109 incidents.²⁹

CCOP Reports Show Continued Challenges

The data in CCOP annual reports also reveals some disturbing trends.⁸⁶ CCOP data on police misconduct must be used with caution. They are derived solely from those complaints that were formally filed with the police. Some complaints may have been frivolous, and still more likely, many possibly legitimate complaints by county residents may not have been filed due to fear of retaliation from the police, the short filing period, or other factors. The hearings held by Amnesty International in 2001 with the support of the DOJ brought forth many new complaints that had previously been unreported. The implementation of the MOA and the Consent Decree may have freed residents of some of their fears. The enormous amount of public attention to police brutality in this period may well have encouraged more victims of police brutality to file complaints. For these reasons, trends in the data are at best only indicative. Nevertheless, the number of cases and their disposition suggest continuing challenges in the area of police misconduct.

The number of cases reviewed each year by the CCOP in the period 1991–2001 averaged 74, for a total workload of 814 investigations, with many cases involving multiple allegations of excessive force, language, and harassment (see Table 1).⁸⁶

The number of cases reviewed by the CCOP jumped significantly beginning in 2002 since many more forms of police misconduct were added to the CCOP's mandate. For the period 2002–2013, there were 7082 allegations of police misconduct contained in the 2221 investigations of complaints conducted by the CCOP (Each investigation typically included multiple allegations; see Table 1). The largest number of investigations occurred in 2006 at 258, and half of the years had over 200 investigations.⁸⁶

The data for virtually all years show significantly more allegations made by residents in Police Districts 1, 3, and 4 (Police District 4 straddles the beltway), the relatively poorer Prince George's communities with the highest percentages of African-Americans located inside the beltway (see Fig. 8). For fiscal year (FY) 2013, 67 % of the 745 total allegations were made by residents living inside the beltway, who only accounted for 46 % of the population in the county. Moreover, 83 % of harassment/profiling allegations and 76 % of use of force allegations (133 allegations) were made by residents living inside the beltway (see Table 2).⁸⁶

The CCOP reported on the disposition of these allegations in the four IAD categories: Exonerated, Sustained, Non-sustained, and Unfounded. These meant, respectively, that the officer's action did in fact occur and was appropriate within police guidelines, that the evidence supported the allegation, that the evidence was insufficient to sustain the allegation, and that the allegation was factually incorrect (see Tables 3 and 4).

The most striking finding from a review of these outcomes contained in the FY 2013 report is that only one allegation of excessive force was sustained, less than 1 % of all excessive force allegations.⁸⁶ The allegations most commonly sustained were procedural violations. A review of selected cases indicated that often, multiple serious allegations were made against an officer, including force and language,

FIG. 8 Police districts in Prince George's County, Maryland.

which were not sustained. The minor charge of procedural violation against the officer was then sustained.⁸⁶

The CCOP disagreed with IAD conclusions 19 % of the time in the FY 2013 report, which was about average for the period 2001–2013, when disagreement rates ranged from 10 % to 33 % annually. The CCOP provided written reports to the chief of police explaining and justifying disagreements. The chief of police accepted the CCOP's alternative findings infrequently, usually between 10 % and 25 % of the time.⁸⁶

**Militarization of the Prince George's Police Department:
New Technology Increases the Impact of Racist Policing**

The Prince George's County Police Department, like that in Ferguson, Missouri, has assembled a large arsenal of military equipment since 1995 through the US

TABLE 1 Annual workload, new complaints, and cases completed

Early period (1991–2001)			Later period (2002–2013)			
Year	Workload	Complaints received	Year	Workload	Complaints received	Cases completed
1991	29	80	2002	376	152	49
1992	64	75	2003	611	307	105
1993	91	90	2004	820	487	182
1994	96	104	2005	726	708	224
1995	102	83	2006	804	617	258
1996	63	84	2007	706	741	225
1997	54	71	2008	806	650	224
1998	75	59	2009	843	745	214
1999	110	90	2010	769	897	197
2000	79	67	2011	627	588	177
2001	51	45	2012	529	445	145
			2013	735	745	221
Totals	814	848		8352	7082	2221

During the early period, the CCOP only reviewed IAD investigations for Excessive Force, Harassment, and Language; in 2001, its mandate was extended to all allegations of police misconduct

Source: CCOP Annual Reports, 1991–2013

Department of Defense's 1033 Program. The use of military style weaponry and SWAT teams was highlighted during the rebellion in Ferguson in the aftermath of Michael Brown's murder.

SWAT teams were once used for interventions in violent situations such as bank robberies and hostage standoffs (or to suppress political organizations such as the Black Panther Party). SWAT use expanded during the Reagan years with its intensification of the "War on Drugs." SWAT teams began targeting non-violent drug dealers and other presumed offenders. The use of military weaponry against protesters in Ferguson revealed the extent to which such an extraordinary

TABLE 2 Allegations of police misconduct by type, district, and totals

	District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	District 5	District 6	Other	Total
Attention to duty	3	3	5	18	7	3	2	41
Conduct	19	26	38	48	9	15	24	179
Criminal misconduct	15	7	6	8	0	2	9	47
Ethics violation/credibility	16	6	0	18	10	4	6	60
Firearms	1	1	9	3	0	7	4	25
Force	26	16	70	37	11	11	5	176
Harassment/profiling	0	0	2	3	0	0	1	6
Language	10	13	34	17	6	4	5	89
Procedure violation	5	9	20	70	14	2	2	122
Total	95	81	184	222	57	48	58	745

Source: CCOP FY 2013 Annual Report, Table 2

TABLE 3 IAD recommendations on allegations by category (absolute numbers)

	Exonerated	Non-sustained	Unfounded	Sustained	Total
Attention to duty	7	24	2	12	45
Conduct	2	35	8	26	71
Criminal misconduct	3	7	4	8	22
Ethics violation/credibility	2	3	2	9	16
Firearms	1	0	0	11	12
Force	69	33	12	1	115
Harassment/profiling	0	1	2	0	3
Language	2	31	13	9	55
Procedure violation	13	15	6	72	106
Total	99	149	49	148	445

Source: CCOP FY 2013 Annual Report, Table 3b

emergency program had become routine. Outcry against such militarization of domestic law enforcement was significant, leading President Obama to place restrictions on new allocations from the 1033 program.⁸⁸

Since 1995, Prince George's police have received more military equipment and weapons from the 1033 program than any other police force in the state. These include three armored trucks and a combat assault tactical wheeled vehicle as well as 673 rifles, 39 shotguns, and 73 Glock .40 caliber pistols. Overall, Prince George's police received 1096 pieces of military equipment valued at US\$2.1 million dollars.⁸⁷

SWAT use has become very frequent in the county. During the first 6 months of 2009, the Prince George's SWAT team was used more than 100 times. The vast majority of SWAT deployments throughout the USA have been to serve warrants related to non-violent drug cases.⁹⁰ Frequent SWAT deployments with military weapons are likely to encourage more brutal actions by the police.⁹⁰

ONGOING RESISTANCE TO RACISM AND RACIST POLICE BRUTALITY IN PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

Efforts to rein in racist police brutality in the county continued in 2015. These have taken the form of legislative reform and electoral engagement at the state level, as well as continued popular mobilizations.

TABLE 4 IAD recommendations on allegations by category (percentages)

	Exonerated	Non-sustained	Unfounded	Sustained
Attention to duty	15.6	53.3	4.4	26.7
Conduct	2.8	49.3	11.3	36.6
Criminal misconduct	13.6	31.8	18.2	36.4
Ethics violation/credibility	12.5	18.8	12.5	56.3
Firearms	8.3	0.0	0.0	91.7
Force	60.0	28.7	10.4	0.9
Harassment/profiling	0.0	33.3	66.7	0.0
Language	3.6	56.4	23.6	16.4
Procedure violation	12.3	14.2	5.7	67.9
Total	22.2	33.5	11.0	33.3

Source: Table 3

Legislative Reform Efforts, 2015

Continuing to act on one of the key elements of its strategy, the People's Coalition joined in an even broader coalition for the 2015 legislative session of the Maryland General Assembly to press for laws to check brutal police conduct. In particular, the coalition sought again to reform LEOBOR, a struggle in which it has engaged since its founding. The Maryland ACLU felt that, in light of the upheaval associated with police killings in 2014 and 2015, legislators would feel compelled to finally act in a way to hold police accountable, especially by reforming LEOBOR.⁹¹ However, as in the past, no significant police accountability bills were passed in the 2015 legislative session.⁹² In fact, a *Washington Post* reporter noted that "[c]riminal justice advocates have criticized the General Assembly for watering down or killing legislation dealing with police conduct, including a measure that would have required the state prosecutor to investigate all police-involved deaths."⁹²

The People's Coalition: Broadening Engagement

Coalition members continued in 2012–2015 to be sensitive to the challenges of policing in the county. They also broadened their approach based on a fuller understanding of the systemic character of police brutality and racism. The coalition responded immediately to the vigilante murder of Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida. Veteran members of the coalition launched a county-wide Trayvon Martin Support Committee in the spring of 2012. The coalition held a "Revival for Black Youth Survival" at St. Paul Church on April 4, 2012, the anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in Capitol Heights, an inside-the-beltway town where numerous police brutality cases had originated. More than 150 county residents attended. The event was keynoted by Sirius radio host Joe Madison. Members and leaders from the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Criminal Injustice Committee of the Occupy Movement (CIC), the New Black Panther Party, the Unitarian Universalist Association, and the Congress Against Racism and Corruption in Law Enforcement (CARCLE) joined local members of Amnesty International USA (AIUSA), youth from St. Paul Church, students from Howard University, and the "Mother of the Police Accountability Movement" in Prince Georges County, Ms. Dorothy Elliot, whose son had been slain by police in 1993. For the first time, the local NAACP chapter, under the leadership of Bob Ross, joined a coalition event. The NAACP brought a renewed and energized focus on recruiting and training young people as leaders within the broadening anti-racist movement.⁹¹

The CIC urged participants to take on issues related to mass incarceration as a logical extension of the fight against police brutality in the county. CIC members urged the coalition to take up the campaign demanding that Wells Fargo divest its substantial interest in and connection to the private prison industry. They also urged the coalition to support the struggle of the Washington area Metro transit workers against background checks. In this case, Metro management had begun conducting retroactive background checks of veteran employees and firing those found to have a criminal record, even when Metro management had been apprised of such convictions when the worker was hired. Similarly, Metro management also had recently changed its background check policy to block virtually anyone with a record from getting employment. The coalition agreed to take on these issues while continuing its vigilance around the question of racist police brutality. It frequently passed out informational flyers to Wells Fargo customers informing them of their bank's deep connection to GEO Corporation and the Correction Corporation of

America (CCA), two of the leading private prison companies in the USA, to the consternation of Wells Fargo management.⁹¹

Similarly, the coalition took up the effort to free jailed Black Panther Eddie Conway and to abolish the death penalty in response to the advocacy of Mr. Thomas Ruffin, Esq., a coalition activist. Conway was finally freed March 4, 2014. Due to the expansion of the coalition's work beyond the police accountability movement, the PCPA became known simply as the "People's Coalition (PC)" in the summer of 2012.

The emergence of a broadened coalition in the spring of 2012 built the capacity necessary for the group to respond to the exoneration of George Zimmerman for slaying Trayvon Martin in July 2013. Forty-eight hours after the verdict, 33 PC members and friends joined a conference call to launch an action the following week in solidarity with the call to action of the National Action Network (NAN). The PC remained independent and autonomous from NAN and its leader, Rev. Al Sharpton. The group held a rally beginning inside the beltway and then marched 10 miles through working class communities to the federal courthouse in downtown Washington D.C. calling for justice for Trayvon Martin. The PC simultaneously launched a petition campaign through the activist site Moveon.org to put pressure on the new State's Attorney, Angela Alsobrooks, to meet with Dorothy Elliott and re-open the Archie Elliott case from 1993.⁹¹

The rally and caravan in support of Trayvon Martin's family and to re-open the Elliott case demonstrated the determination of county residents to resist police brutality. Participants included the Concerned Black Men of Prince George's and Men Aiming Higher, led by 25th District House Delegate Darryl Barnes. CASA de Maryland also played a supportive role. Coalition members conducted mass leafleting, issued press releases to local and national media organizations, organized march marshals, assembled volunteer photographers and videographers, and obtained permits from each of the five police agencies that had jurisdiction over different stretches of the march.⁹¹

The local campaign to re-open the Elliott case was energized by this action. Petition signatures jumped from 83 to over 200 on the day of the march; within a week, more than 1000 Prince George's residents had signed. Public pressure forced State's Attorney Alsobrooks to agree to a meeting.⁹¹

Before entering the courthouse, Ms. Elliott and her supporters conducted a press conference alerting the local community to her demands which included re-opening the homicide investigation of the death of Archie Elliott and initiating a grand jury probe into the suspected cover-up by the officers who had killed him. Alsobrooks, like her predecessors, was adamant in her decision not to re-open the investigation or seek a grand jury probe, despite the legal analysis of internal county documents by PC member and attorney Thomas Ruffin, which demonstrated that a cover-up had occurred and that the earlier investigation had disregarded eyewitness testimony.⁹³

Despite Alsobrooks's decision not to re-open the Archie Elliott case, the PC continued to carry out its mission by linking up with Metro transit workers and high school students in a massive national response on December 13, 2014 to the murder of Eric Garner and the exoneration of the New York City police officers who killed him. Garner's cry—"I Can't Breathe"—became the anthem of the movement against police brutality in Prince George's County and throughout the country.

In the state of Maryland, 25 reform measures related to law enforcement were introduced in the 2015 legislative session reflecting the local and national outcry against racist police murders. In January 2015, the PC, in partnership with Mount

Ennon Baptist Church under the leadership of Rev. Delman Coates, organized a statewide call to action on King Day. More than 500 people gathered in Annapolis on the opening day pressing for a progressive agenda which included reforming LEOBOR. Dorothy Elliott and Marion Hopkins both spoke on behalf of the PC and their sons. They noted that police brutality was systemic, not simply the result of a few rogue officers, as the politicians claimed.⁸⁰

Mt. Ennon Church organized a dial-in for justice for citizens to call legislators lobbying for police reform in preparation for a Senate Judiciary Hearing that took place in late February 2015. Under the banner of the Maryland Coalition for Justice and Equality (MCJE), the PC in partnership with civil and human rights groups across the state lobbied and advocated for reform measures dealing with a range of issues including police body cameras, data collection on race-based stops by police, SWAT usage, and reform of the LEOBOR. To counter the outpouring of support from the PC and MCJE, the FOP mobilized its members, attorneys, lobbyists, and police chiefs to argue that reform was not needed, especially with regard to LEOBOR. The hearings lasted for 9 hours with the LEOBOR reform legislation being the last measure debated. It failed. At the end of the legislative session, only two of the law enforcement reform measures passed both houses, including a senate bill requiring the recording of race-based traffic stops and a house bill requiring statewide recording of deaths involving law enforcement officers.⁹² The state leadership continues to provide carte blanche for the FOP and their members in 2015 while providing the smallest of crumbs to civil and human rights groups throughout the state.

In the aftermath of a recent citizen's rebellion sparked by the police murder of Freddie Gray in nearby Baltimore, however, a bipartisan working group of Maryland lawmakers came together to debate potential police reform measures to be introduced in the 2016 legislative session.⁹³ The plans by these legislators suggest that the people's movement coupled with bold resistance in Baltimore could lead to modest legislative reform in the years ahead.

CONCLUSION

The evidence presented in this article is broadly consistent with its theoretical model. The model suggests that racist police brutality is functional to the profitability of capitalism and that therefore it is unlikely to be defeated as long as capitalism remains in place. Capitalism cannot countenance a united working class capable of effective resistance to its profit maximization process. The police are agents of capital in this general struggle, and they will continue to demonize, criminalize, and disproportionately punish and oppress African-Americans and other people of color. This framework of analysis would suggest that ongoing resistance to police brutality may partly and temporarily reduce racist police brutality, but it will continually re-appear, making stronger and ongoing resistance an important agenda item for the community.

The story of police brutality in Prince George's County and resistance to it has taken many twists and turns over the past 45 years. The Death Squad in the 1960s, the Terrence Johnson case in the 1970s, the Gregory Habib case in the 1980s, and the Elliott case in the 1990s (along with dozens more that decade) demonstrate a consistently racist pattern and practice of police brutality in the county. County residents did resist through many organizations and mobilizations, culminating in the intervention of the federal government in county police affairs through its multi-

year supervision of the department. The modest victories of resistance to police brutality in the county—the MOA and the jailing of Officer Stephanie Mohr—have come from federal interventions stimulated by mass protest. The county and state leaderships at every level, on the other hand, have failed to respond positively to community advocacy. Government officials did react to the militant rebellion in Baltimore by indicting several police officers and forming a working group on policing, suggesting that more intense struggle that transcends advocacy may be needed to affect ongoing state support of racist police brutality.

Since the end of federal oversight in 2009, many troubling phenomena have continued to appear. These include thousands of allegations of police misconduct with little accountability, additional killings by the police, the militarization of the police through the 1033 program, and the rejection by the state legislature of any significant proposals for legislative relief.

As the PCPA evolved into the People's Coalition, its presence in the struggle for police accountability remains critical in light of these developments. There is likely to be a continuing need for all three elements of the People's Coalition strategy to resist racist police brutality. Even broader structural change may be needed to end police abuses.

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