

# INDYPENDENT READER

Baltimore

Fall 2007 Issue 6

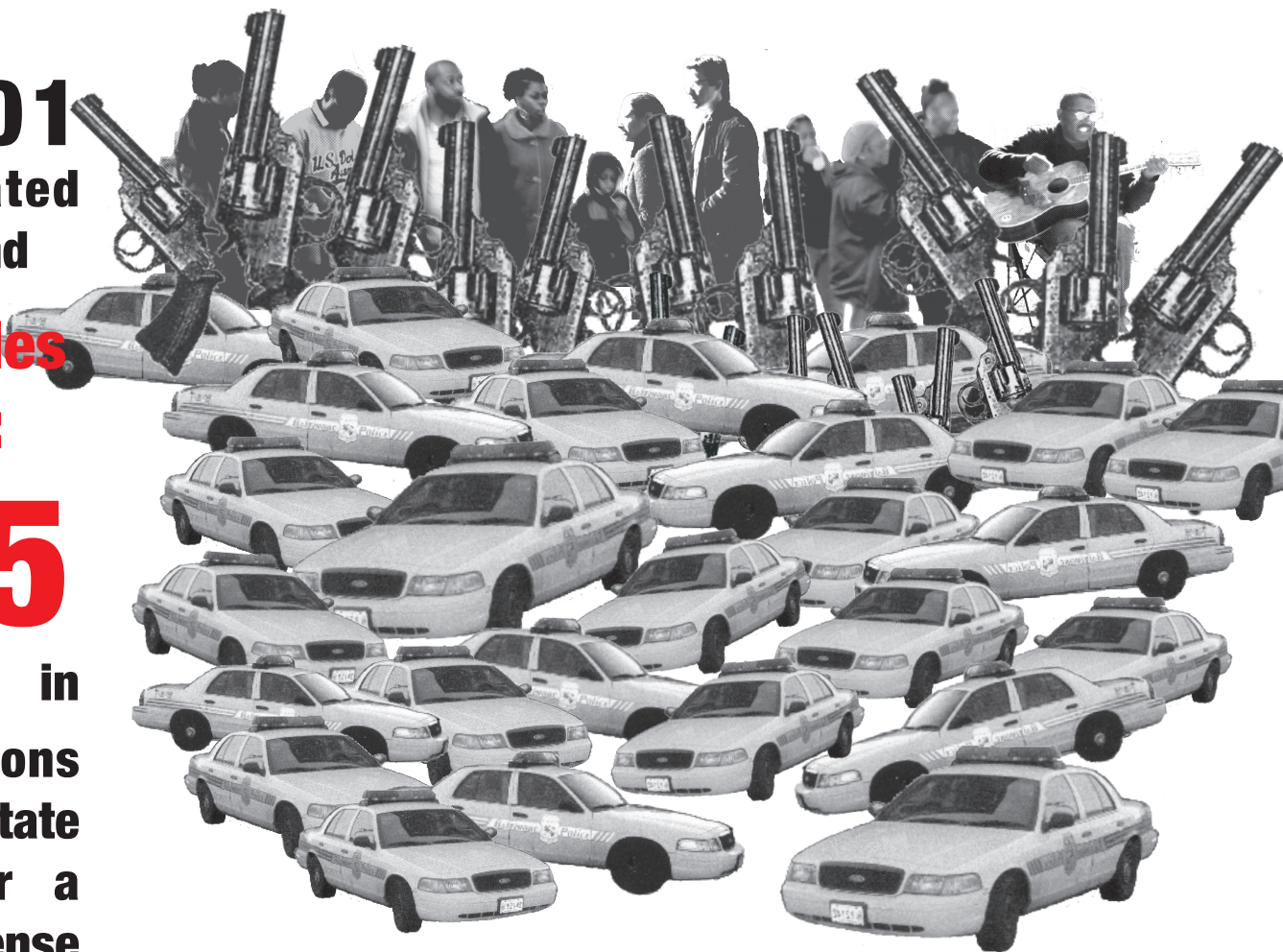
## Police, Crime, and Restorative Justice

**35,601**  
incarcerated  
in Maryland

**Homicides  
in 2006:**

**275**

Nearly 6 in  
10 persons  
(58%) in state  
prison for a  
drug offense



**Homicides  
in 2007 by  
Nov. 14:**

**260**  
and counting

**Fatal  
Shootings  
by police  
on the rise**

have no history of violence or large-scale marketing of drugs. **“People really do have the capacity to safely and effectively resolve many of their own crimes and conflicts themselves—provided they are given a good structure to do so,”** ... the ISD mounted an enormous surveillance project directed at the American Friends Service Committee, American Civil Liberties Union, the Black Panther Party and more than 100 other groups. **“... when my community has been saturated with drugs ... without the jobs, education, resources I need—and you’re going to just leave me to my own devices.”** “... a man named Pomerleau, had been called to Washington D.C. to meet with then U.S. Attorney General John Mitchell, who according to reports was under orders to make the charges against the Panthers stick, whatever the cost.”

## Indydependent Reader

building a new society on the vacant lots  
of the old ...



**BALTIMORE INDYMEDIA**

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The **Indydependent Reader** is a quarterly newspaper that aims to serve marginalized communities in Baltimore through research, communication, and organizing. We encourage people to “become the media” by providing democratic access to available technologies and information. We seek to bring to light Baltimore’s rich tradition of social and political activism. The primary goal of the project is not merely to produce a newspaper, but to start a collaborative project in which people dedicated to social justice in Baltimore can speak for themselves and continue to organize forums, workshops, and other events. These events disseminate ideas, build solidarity, and help promote and increase the reach of the paper itself.

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The Baltimore IMC is a program of Research Associates—a non-profit educational foundation that supports political education and social activism. The Baltimore IMC is part of a broader network of IMCs providing media resources to communities and social activists. There are over 170 IMCs around the world today ([www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org)).

The Campbaltimore Project is an informal group of people interested in working together to understand and change how power is exercised upon individuals. It employs research, communication, and organizing to build solidarity and working relationships with others.

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## This Issue:

In this issue we look at crime and the role of the police in Baltimore. In many ways this was a response to the recent elections and the various candidates’ use of the threat of crime and offers of safety to appeal to voters. Much like the War on Terror, the charge of being “soft on crime” is used to contain the debate. It becomes a perpetual battle over police tactics with each politician outlying their particular brand, whether it is “zero tolerance” or a “community policing model”. This containment of the debate has an uncanny ability to redirect our focus from the root causes of most crime—severe economic and social injustice in the United States.

Last fall, we covered a similar issue, the criminal justice system. We go beyond defining a model of restorative justice towards a transformative justice model, finding examples in Baltimore. We look at the Community Conferencing Center, which facilitates resolutions between parties involved in crime outside of the court system. We visit the Rose St. Community Center to see how one strong community organization works with youth to create spaces and opportunities that counter a system that channels poor youth into prison or low-wage jobs or both. As usual, we seek to

include a historical perspective by providing a timeline of the Baltimore Police Department and recalling a forgotten event in Baltimore’s labor history—the Police strike of 1974. Another look at the “Stop snitching” debate sees communities torn between two different understandings of law and justice. In contrast to the many Baltimoreans who find themselves the target of arrest by merely standing on the corner, a veteran activist shares his stories of confrontation with the police through civil resistance.

As in last fall’s issue, we consider the campaign to free political prisoner, Eddie Conway. As a former Black Panther, Eddie Conway continues to experience the lengths to which our government has gone and will go to stamp out a political movement. Not only is his continuing incarceration a blatant and well documented example of injustice, but judicial and political authorities use it as a threat to anyone fighting for justice. We are not swayed by this threat, and like Eddie Conway, we encourage people to become more active in confronting oppression and exploitation. We hope that this issue redirects the focus of the debate on crime to ending economic injustice.

—AH

## Contents:

### How Do We Restore or Transform Justice?

Polly Riddims page 3

### Eddie Conway

Eddie Conway and D. Robinson page 4

### To The Best of Our Ability

Nicholas Petr page 5

### The 1974 Police Officers’ Strike

Charles D’Adamo page 7

### From Revolving Door to Open Road

Eric Imhoff page 9

### Stop Snitching!

CP page 11

### ... and then I was arrested again: one activist’s struggle for the 1st Amendment

Max Obuszewski page 12

### Know Your Rights

page 13

### Community Bulletin Board

page 14



# How Do We Restore or Transform Justice?

Polly Riddims, Critical Resistance, Baltimore

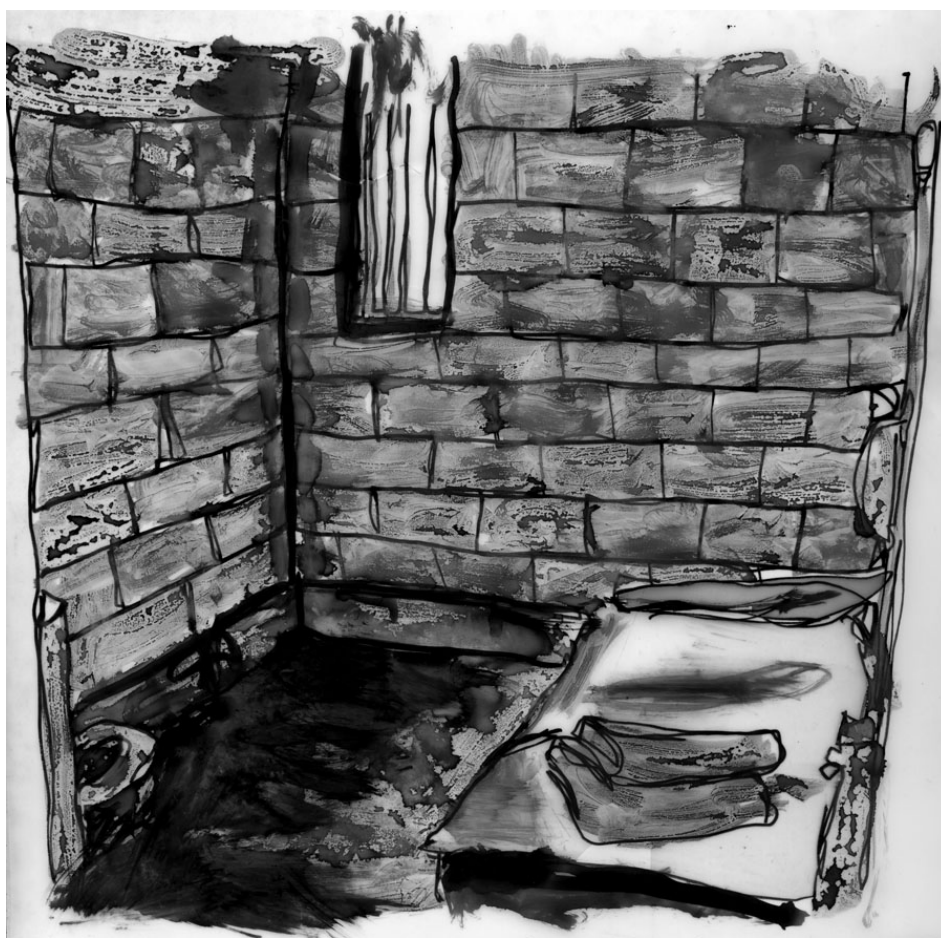
Those who are working to dismantle the prison industrial complex must have alternative ways to deal with issues of crime, public safety, conflict, injury, and victimization. Prison abolition is a long-term goal, or part of a vision of a better world. If we human beings can live with such compassion as not to cage and punish other human beings, and create systems of equity and sustainability that will abolish the “need” for prisons, then we will have reached our goal. We know this is not possible in any immediate future, and may take generations to achieve. Yet if we believe in this possibility, our work will guide us to that goal. We can work for the justice in allocation of economic resources. We can work toward new ways of organizing ourselves without hierarchy and without divisions between differences.

Before talking about restorative justice, it’s important to talk about what the “criminal justice” system is. It is not monolithic, but rather a network of various agencies that are worried about their budgets, and which are focused on punishment, not justice. These agencies include lawyers and judges, and police, parole, and probation officers. Restorative justice is a term that is used to describe alternative ways to deal with conflict and other issues arising from injury and victimization. It engenders remediation as well as accountability. Practices and programs of restorative justice respond to crime by identifying and taking steps to repair harm. They bring together all persons involved, including offenders and victims, and they transform the established relationship between communities and governments in responding to crime. Restorative justice involves indigenous practices, and models of it already exist around the world, particularly in Northern Ireland, Eastern Europe, western and southern Africa, and New Zealand. (See more on the Web at <http://www.restorativejustice.org>.—Ed.)

There are several principles of restorative justice, including expecting offenders to take steps to repair the harm they have caused, seeking to restore victims and offenders to a place where they are contributing members of society, and providing opportunities for all parties involved to participate in its resolution.

Some restorative justice models and programs are:

- Victim and offender mediation (VOM)—facilitated mediation between victim and offender, in order to determine the just result; it is often used as an alternative to harsher punishment.
- Conferencing—similar to VOM but expanding the conversation by including families, support groups, social services, police, and other groups that have a stake in the resolution. This helps instill a sense of accountability and support for the victim and offender that is based on specific relationships. It was mainly started to work with juveniles. (See “From revolving door to open road” in this issue; <http://www.communityconferencing.org> on line.—Ed.)
- Circles—indigenous populations in the United States and Canada provide models for these; they involve not only the victim and offender coming together but also allow the community to be involved in the healing and restoration of justice.
- Victim assistance and ex-offender assistance programs—these provide support to both victims and offenders for healing and restoration of harm; they may



Gabriella Szpant

also include community service or restitution programs or both.

From a prison abolitionist point of view, restorative justice does not go far enough. Prison abolitionists want to arrive at transformative justice—where they transform the very system that continues to use punishment as a means of control and criminalizes those who are actually victims of unjust social and economic systems. Justice, as security and public safety, is defined for us as locking more and more people up, instead of what it should mean—providing affordable housing, jobs, healthcare, education, youth programs, and drug addiction treatment. We need to look at transformative justice models and programs as alternatives, so that we can begin to reduce our reliance on prisons and punishment to solve problems.

Transformative justice is really about creating not only alternatives to policing, surveillance, and incarceration, but also advocating for reparations and restitution to communities that have been denied access to economic resources. It is truly about economic justice. Therefore, programs that are dedicated to providing resources to communities, through direct services, advocacy, and organizing are all ways to attain transformative justice.

Take for example the “War on Drugs.” The Sentencing Project in Washington DC recently released a report that examines the burden the “War on Drugs” has placed on the criminal justice system, *A 25-Year Quagmire: The War on Drugs and Its Impact on American Society*. The report studies present strategies in the US to combat drug abuse with punishment, implemented at the expense of investing in prevention and treatment. Here are some of the facts highlighted in the report:

- Drug arrests have more than tripled since 1980; there were 581,000 in 1980 and over 1.8 million in 2005 (pp. 2, 3)
- In 2005, approximately 4 of 5 of drug arrests (81.7%) were for possession and about 1 in 5 for sales (18.3%), while overall 42.6% of drug arrests were on marijuana charges (p. 3)
- Nearly 6 in 10 persons (58%) in state prison for a drug offense have no history of violence or large-scale marketing of drugs (p. 2, 12–13).

By implementing treatment, drug decriminalization

policies, and other diversion programs, the prison population could easily be halved in the near term. The report also makes relevant recommendations (pp. 27–29), such as

- shifting funding priorities, since currently two thirds of federal anti-drug funds are devoted to law enforcement
- approaching drug abuse as a community and health problem, not a criminal issue
- repealing mandatory sentencing laws
- increasing treatment options within the criminal justice system, especially for those on probation and parole or under other community supervision, since parole violations make up a large number of prison admissions
- increasing funding for defense intervention services, because public defenders lack resources to assess their clients’ requirements and make appropriate plans for them, and interaction with public defenders is often the first place defendants meet the criminal justice system.

It is also evident that the prison system is racist and classist, with, for example, people of color being arrested and incarcerated more often than whites for similar offenses in all jurisdictions of the United States (Sentencing Project 2007, pp. 19–24). Discussion of reparations needs to be instigated in order for justice to flourish. Reparations are meant to undo the damage done by racism and supply the economic resources and opportunities denied by it. Many of the recommendations outlined above provide opportunities to reallocate and restore these.

Those who advocate restorative justice must look at every issue in terms of its goals. Are we living up to the goals? Are we willing to make a sacrifice for the common good? If we want world peace, how are we living it? If we want environmental sustainability, how are we living that? If we want a safe neighborhood, do we know our neighbors? Are we willing to speak out for justice, because it might mean giving up some privilege? It’s all about what we personally are able to contribute. Some can have a bigger impact than others, but all impact is important. It’s the tipping point that counts: we need to be allies and raise the voices of those incarcerated and those indirectly affected, until true social transformation and justice can take place. This means working to educate others about how the prison industrial complex affects us all.

## Resources

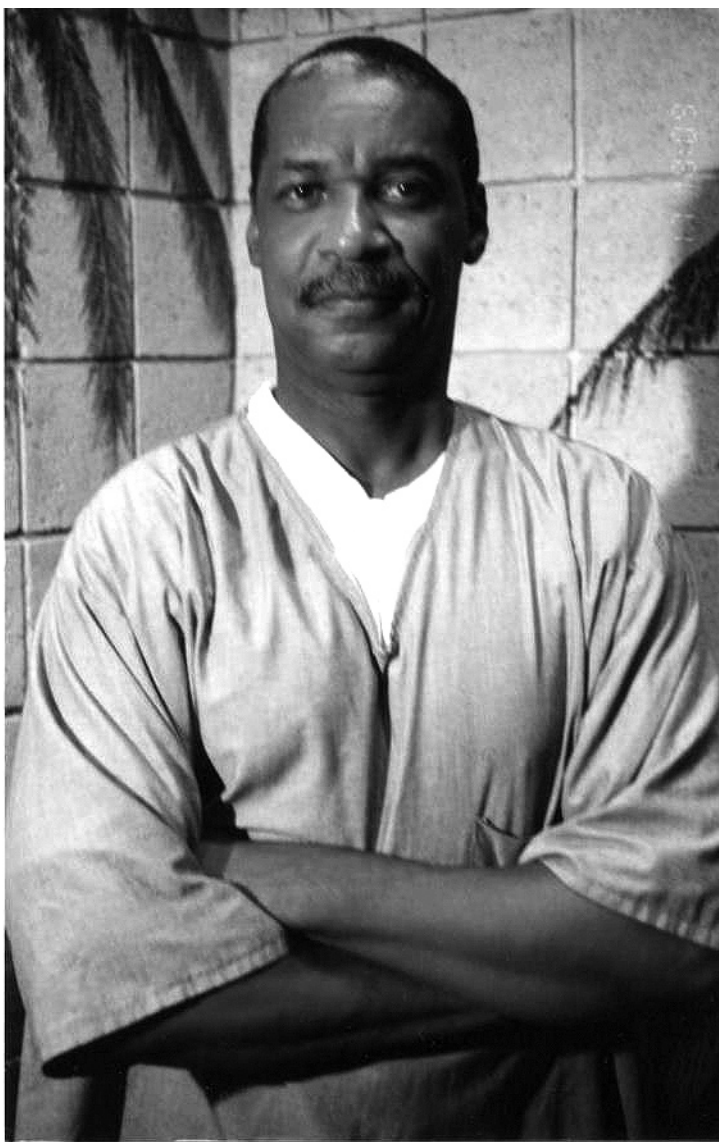
“What is restorative justice?” on the Web at <http://www.restorativejustice.org>.

El-Amine, Zein, “Abu Ghraib in our Backyard,” *Left Turn Magazine* 14 (Oct. 2004)

Mauer, Marc and Ryan S. King, *A 25-Year Quagmire: The War on Drugs and Its Impact on American Society*, The Sentencing Project (<http://www.sentencingproject.org>), Washington, DC, Sept. 2007.

“What is abolition?” Critical Resistance, Brooklyn, NY (no date), [http://criticalresist.live.radicaldesigns.org/downloads/What\\_is\\_Abolition.pdf](http://criticalresist.live.radicaldesigns.org/downloads/What_is_Abolition.pdf).





# Eddie Conway: 37 years and still innocent

Eddie Conway and D. Robinson

So began what would become an odyssey for Marshall Conway, lasting nearly 40 years already, a man known to many as political prisoner, Eddie Conway. He was arrested in April of 1970 at his job at the United States Post Office on Fayette Street in Baltimore. Eddie was charged as a conspirator in the disappearance of an informant who had infiltrated the Black Panther Party chapter in Baltimore; he would later be charged with the murder of a Baltimore city police officer and the wounding of another. Throughout, Eddie has maintained his innocence and garnered the support of community members and people around the world who also believe that he is innocent.

During the course of his incarceration he has mentored hundreds of young men of African descent who have been incarcerated, as well as created several programs to address issues such as literacy and violence. In the last several years Eddie has worked to educate people about the FBI's Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) and the impact that it had upon the popular movements of the 1960s and 1970s. This program targeted the American Indian Movement, the Black Panther Party and anti-war activists, using a variety of dirty tricks such as

infiltration to disrupt the progress of these organizations. In the following passage from Eddie's unpublished memoir, *Marshall Law*, he speaks about his initial arrest and trial:

*"I was well aware that they were trying to build a case against me on the police shootings, and I wasn't all that concerned at that time because I was innocent. However, when the word came up the tier at the City Jail that a police informant was being specifically assigned to my cell, I knew I had a problem. I thought maybe the government was trying to provoke me, perhaps hoping that I would attack him or have someone attack him so that they could continue holding me as a dangerous threat to the community. Regardless, I also realized that this informant was being placed there to build a case against me in the police shootings, and so I protested his placement in my cell. The guards refused to place him in another cell stating that they had their orders."*

*"I would later learn that the Baltimore City Police Commissioner at the time, a man named Pomerleau, had been called to Washington D.C. to meet with then U.S. Attorney General John Mitchell, who according to reports was under orders to make the charges against the Panthers stick, whatever the cost. With that in mind, a number of things happened around the same time. [First,] the police informant who had actually been moved from a prison in Jessup to the City Jail was eventually removed from my cell and shipped to Michigan to serve out a sentence there. These were highly unusual circumstances because he had been moved from a maximum security prison to a jail which is essentially a lower level of security to be shipped to another prison. This man Charles Reynolds, would later provide a statement implicating me in the police shootings in exchange for favorable recommendations from the State's Attorney's office concerning his sentence in Michigan."*

*"[Second,] Jackie Johnson, one of the two Panthers who had been arrested almost immediately following the shootings provided a statement implicating me with the provision that he be granted immunity from prosecution. This would not be used in court, because once Jack took*

*the stand he refused to testify against me, and later it would be revealed that Jack had been subjected to abuse and intimidation by the police before giving the statement. Jack would eventually be convicted on the same charges and is currently serving life plus 15 years in a Maryland prison."*

*"When I finally went to court on these charges, the trial lasted all of seven days. To this day I recall very little of it since I spent the entire time in the bull pen (the lock up section for the courthouse). I had been fighting a losing battle with the judge and [district attorney] to get a lawyer from the Panther Party to represent me in this case. William Kunstler had appeared before the court on my behalf and agreed to consult with Charles Garry the Panther attorney, to find adequate counsel for me since I refused to allow the court appointed lawyer, McAllister to represent me. [William Kunstler was a radical lawyer and civil rights activist who defended Martin Luther King, Jr., in the 1960s and squatters in New York City in the 1980s, among other causes.—Ed.] Charles Garry was at the time engaged in the trial of Bobby Seale and Erika Huggins in New Haven, Connecticut."*

*"All of the resources of the Black Panther Party were being stretched to the limit to cover bail and legal fees for members around the country. [After I was] locked up, some twenty or more attacks [took] place in different cities, each one resulting in arrests that required bail and eventually more trials. Part of the government's strategy to dismantle the Party had been to lock up as many members as possible to keep the Party's funds depleted and our legal counsel tied up. Despite Kunstler's offer, the judge and the State proceeded with the trial."*

*"In short, I was forced to continue with inadequate legal representation. McAllister's incompetence as a counsel would later be demonstrated when he represented Michael Austin, a man who served over twenty years in Maryland prisons before he was released on the grounds of a wrongful conviction. I was convicted and sentenced to life plus thirty years in prison. I served the first decade and a half at the Maryland Penitentiary, and some twenty more years at the Maryland House of Corrections in Jessup before being moved to the Maryland Correctional Training Center at Hagerstown a year ago when the House was closed."*

Conway adds, as an update, *"I am currently waiting to hear the court's decision on a case, State of Maryland v. Raymond Leon Adams which should occur in November of this year. The case, if decided in favor of Adams will positively impact my case as well as a few hundred others. It concerns jury instruction from the judge. Should the state win that case, my attorney, Bob Boyle is preparing to take my case back before the court on [new] grounds. In closing, I want to say that it is essential that people who are politically active and conscious get more involved in justice issues. Whether it be my case or other instances of injustice, the system has always been biased where people of African descent are concerned, and this has lead to genocidal conditions in communities where women and men are being sent to prison by the thousands."*

Anyone interested in getting involved or obtaining more information on my case should contact Dominique Stevenson on 301-919-6846 or at [drobinson@afsc.org](mailto:drobinson@afsc.org).

**[R.B Jones wrote "Eddie Conway: political prisoner" for the Independent Reader, issue 2 (Fall 2006). Below is more of Eddie Conway's story, as he awaits the outcome of a court case that could renew his chances for release from prison.—Ed.]**

*The Court: Mr. Conway, I'm going to warn you right now on the record that unless you behave yourself...*

*(The remainder of the Court's remarks inaudible, because of the defendant's interruption.)*

*The Defendant: Behave myself? I want an attorney of my choice. What you mean, why don't you behave yourself? You said I could have an attorney of my choice. I give you a name and you're going to tell me behave myself and give me somebody who you hope to participate in the railroad job.*

*The Court: Mr. Conway, would you allow me to make one statement? That is this—I'm formally advising you and warning you that if you persist in this conduct, the trial will go forward without you. You will remain outside of the courtroom.*

*The Defendant: The trial will go forward without me if you don't let me have an attorney of my choice. If you're going to give me an attorney that I don't desire to have on a homicide charge, then the trial will go forward without me, because I'm not going to participate in it, because I have an attorney of my choice, and you will not allow him to be here. So it's your trial.*

*The Court: All right. Now would you care to be seated, or do you wish to leave the courtroom?*

*The Defendant: Right. I wish to leave the courtroom. (Holding hands up to be cuffed) Look, the man asked me did I want to go. I want to go.*

*The Court: All right.*

*The Defendant: Look. I'm not going to be taking part in this madness.*



# To the Best of Our Ability: The Rose St. Community

Nicholas Petr



Members of the Rose St. Youth Committee (in back, from left) Antonio, Cheryl, Paul, Tony (Black), Walker, (in front, from left) Quinten, Maurice, Twidell (Animal)

East Baltimore's Rose Street community has been organizing, educating, and meeting the needs of its residents since its community center was founded in 1992. It has created some of the most ambitious youth intervention and opportunity programs in East Baltimore.

I met with youth coordinator Walker Gladden at the Rose Street Transitional House, which is connected with the Rose Street Community Center, and asked how things were going there. He replied, "The need to protect our young people is greater than ever, not only from the gangs and drugs, but now from the police. Police shootings are at an all time high. We're confronting the prejudices and injustices that created this situation for our youth to the best of our ability."

Four days later, the *Baltimore Sun* published an article titled "Shootings by police climb":

*"Three shootings last week brought the number of people shot by officers this year to 24, including nine fatally, higher than in each of the four previous years. In 2006, city officers shot 15 people, five of them fatally. In 2005, officers shot 14, including four fatally, and in 2004, police shot eight people, killing one of them" (Baltimore Sun 9/16/07).*

At the Rose Street Community Center, a youth committee was recently formed to increase the participation of young people in the neighborhood. Walker suggested that I spend some time with the committee to learn more about how it works. He says that the goal of the youth committee is to get these young people off the streets and into programs

that, with financial assistance from the Abell Foundation, help them get General Educational Development (GED) diplomas, jobs, and even start their own businesses. How do these programs work? Intervention into gangs, business skills training, apprenticeship programs, record labels, and open lines of communication.

## History

The Rose Street Community Center was born in 1992 from conversations that took place between two East Baltimore Residents, Clayton Guyton and Elroy Christopher. The two were long time friends fed up with the changes taking place in their community. As economic resources disappeared, violence and crime rose, and those affected most were the community's young people, who had fewer and fewer safe places to turn to for help.

Guyton and Christopher opened the community center on Rose Street, one of the area's hottest drug trafficking spots. Participation and support for the Center was overwhelming, but drug dealers increased their threats until eventually they firebombed the Community Center. The community response was to break the boards off the empty house next door and reopen there the next day. The gangs reacted by increasing the pressure to pack the center up and shut it down. An interview by Arun Sripati of the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health in September 2004 recounts the culmination of the threats:

*"After the fire, things got a bit more tense. The drug dealers began issuing threats. At one point, in response to 'things*

*said to them,' Mr. Guyton and his friends began sleeping on the corner of Rose and Ashland Streets, to stop the drug peddling. They camped out there throughout the day for six months. That further agitated the situation, but they knew it. But they were serious about the safe place they wanted to create for the children and for the community. Finally one day, the drug dealers put out a bulletin saying that they weren't going to make it through the night. So that night, Mr. Guyton, Mr. Christopher, a Mr. Richard Benson and Ms. Caroline Brown who lived in the area, together with a friend from the Baltimore Sun—all of them camped outside the center. In the middle of the night, the drug dealers started shooting in the air—they shot off about a hundred rounds. Mr. Guyton had notified the police and the district attorney, who had told them that they 'had the right to defend themselves if they wanted.'*

*"But it was only them and us," Mr. Guyton explained, 'After that night, it was the turning point. After that we could talk more.' I couldn't understand how this happened. 'There's a saying in the 'hood,' Mr. Guyton explains: 'You're the man. At that point, everybody looked at each other like they were men. You're a man. You're a man. I'm a man. So they're men. So we're gonna treat them differently. That was the beginning of the respect we started getting from these guys'." (See more on the Web at <http://www.cnbc.cmu.edu/~sparun/writing/rocestreet>.)*

## Monday morning, 4 a.m.

At 4 a.m. every Monday, the Rose Street Transitional



House, a formstone rowhouse on the 2700 block of Madison Street, is packed with 25 to 30 young people. They range in age from 14 to 20 and show up here at this time every week, where other community members join them for street clean up. Everyone gets \$20 for showing up. This morning, the older community members put on orange vests and leave with trashcans, shovels, and brooms, while Walker Gladden, the youth coordinator, keeps the young adults behind to speak with them about the youth committee and the resources the committee

*about saving lives. In the last two days we've had seven homicides. That's seven within 48 hours." He pauses dramatically. "Something's got to be done. Something's got to be done.... I remember what it's like. I remember the mindset—looking around me and thinking this is the way it's supposed to be.... It's all I knew. But this ain't right ... when my community has been saturated with drugs ... without the jobs, education, resources I need—and you're going to just leave me to my own devices.*

After the meeting a few of those in attendance talked about why they come out and participate every Monday. Some are interested in going back to school, some already have, and others are trying to get a personal or commercial driver's license. Jamal, 19 years old, says, "They really do help people. I started coming out here when I was twelve, and I've seen a lot a progress. A lot of young people come here and listen and get help with whatever they're trying to do. You listen enough and it sticks eventually—it just makes sense. Then [young people] go on to do good things."

#### The Committee

On Fridays at noon the youth committee leadership meets in the Transitional House living room. The meeting is very casual, but extremely efficient. Clayton Guyton facilitates, and Walker begins by leading a prayer. He then goes around the room and gets a detailed progress

**"If they can keep you on parole or probation, if they can keep you coming through that courtroom for as long as possible ... they can keep making a multibillion-dollar industry out of you and your crimes and your incarceration."**

makes available to every young person.

He begins by acknowledging those who have taken steps toward going back to school and getting their GEDs. Providing information about local colleges that the community will help them get into, Walker reassures them that if they have concerns about the cost of education, it's something that he and the other leaders will help them work out. "Don't be discouraged", he says. "If this is something you're ready to do now, then that's what we're going to do."

He goes on to talk about the need for young people to have business and job opportunities in their neighborhood, and the youth committee's commitment to making this a reality amidst the economic challenges that this community faces. Walker and the youth committee leadership are no strangers to the situation these kids are in. They were fortunate enough to have someone like Clayton Guyton to get them off the streets, and they intend to return the favor and keep building this organization and the movement it is a part of.

Walker (addressing the group at the 4 a.m. meeting) says, *"There was a time when we had businesses right here where we live. There was a time when we were patrons in our own community and we appreciated ourselves and each other. Somehow that got lost. But today we are sittin' here in a room full of geniuses. Whatever you put your mind to, whatever you put you heart into, you can do. Right now, I can't sit still. I cannot sit back and just watch as our young people are constantly being shot down.*

*"We understand the pressure you are under. We're trying to create a sanctuary, a place where we can come together and work on our differences, and we can become business-minded together, and we can say 'Look! This is my vision, this is my life, and this is the direction that I'm trying to move my life in.' That's what's important, and right now we are doing everything we can, to the best of our ability, to help all of you move your life—in a positive direction."*

#### Consciousness Raising

For Walker and the rest of the leadership at Rose St., this is not just about business or money, it's about giving young adults the opportunities they are entitled to—the kinds of opportunities that provide the necessary breathing room and space to evaluate their situation and the condition of their community.

Walker continues:

*"This is about all of us becoming more conscious—more aware of what's goin' on right now, right here, where we are. And you all, the youth, are going to spearhead this. Together we'll put the message out there that this is*

*"So what do I do? I bring pain, because I'm goin' through pain, I bring pain to my own people—without any clear understanding of what I'm doin' and why I'm doin' it. Mothers and fathers in jail—caught up in drugs. Me, I'm not in school. Other people in the family are tryin' to raise me. Children raisin' children—babies raisin' babies—foster homes—youth homes—training schools, and then you graduate to Central Booking.... And here I am thinking this is normal. Nobody ever showed me that this isn't normal. Who do I go to when my parents aren't around and I got no one else to turn to? I go to the strongest person I see—the drug dealer. I think this person understands my situation because they've been in my situation.... Oh, how they have set me up for so long.*

*"Now they got me believing that this corner is mine.... I'm willing to put my life on the line for it. I think no one better touch this, don't you come around here to my corner. That is until I hear that chopper ..." (he makes helicopter sounds) "... and sirens and then you know exactly whose corner that really is. It's the Man's corner. But when they leave, we come right back out on that corner and claim it again. They set me up for like 16 years, not even knowing what it's like to leave the community ... the same corner practically all of my young life, and they hope that we won't outthink our situation and our environment. They want us to remain in that lifestyle so that we can become primitive and hunt each other.*

*"As long as we continue to think in that way and eliminate one another, they say, 'Hey good job, continue to do what you're doin', and thank you!' signed 'the KKK.' They say, 'You're doing such a wonderful job. Keep up the good work. In fact you're killing more of yourselves than we ever thought we could! So thumbs up, white power!'"*

*"You may not like to hear it that way, but guess what? It's true. It's time for a new era in our communities. It's time to become more conscious, so that we can evaluate exactly what's going on here.... We will no longer be raised like animals and thrown into a cage. If they can keep you on parole or probation, if they can keep you coming through that courtroom for as long as possible ... they can keep making a multibillion-dollar industry out of you and your crimes and your incarceration. They say to you [in the courtroom] 'Do you have anything to say for yourself?' and you think, 'Of course not. I don't know what to say because I've been trapped so long'."*

The talk lasts over an hour, and afterward those attending approach Walker individually. As they emerge from the rowhouse these young people seem much more awake than when they arrived. The sun is barely up, and Monday morning traffic still hasn't started, but these kids are alert and ready to start the week.

report from each person present. Most of the discussion is about the research and planning going into the flea market project. The group plans to open a neighborhood store where young people can sell goods: airbrushed T-shirts, body oils, artwork, and music have been suggested so far. They've done most of the research necessary to move forward, and will begin by getting experience in sales at a local flea market before opening a store in their neighborhood.

Tony Wilson is on the committee. He says, "If we live in the neighborhood, we feel that we should have businesses here. Money should be circulated amongst ourselves. We also have a situation where a lot of people out here are on probation, parole—and they really aren't given jobs other places. We want to give people jobs and help them create businesses for themselves."

Next they hear from Paul Stevens about progress he's made on the "in-house senior haircuts" project. He's heading up an effort to start a business that visits the elderly in their homes to give haircuts. The idea is so clever that the whole room can't help but have a smile on their face as they talk about it.

Antonio Henry Jr. reports on studio sessions. The youth committee pays for time at a local recording studio where young people from the neighborhood can go to record. Antonio reminds the group that they're doing another session this afternoon and would like to have more people come along. He's working on a track that addresses the issue of murder in Baltimore. A brief discussion takes place about the negative impact of so much rap today and about "real hip hop," and how much they can do with music and lyrics that address real problems and communicate a positive message.

At one point, someone suggests starting a mentorship program for kids in the area ages 12 and under. Within 10 minutes time, the idea is approved, and a start date is set. Each person will bring two young people to a meeting on the following Saturday.

At Rose Street, community is a 24-hour-a-day concept, and organizing is an around the clock job. There's no room for wasting time.

When asked about the success that Rose Street has had with youth showing up and participating in these programs, Walker says it's all about opening up lines of communication, "A lot of times these people don't even want to hurt each other. When you create an environment where people can communicate, they can actually come out of all this without bloodshed."



# The 1974 Police Officers' Strike

Charles D'Adamo

A dramatic moment in the history of public sector unionism was the Boston Police Strike of 1919. One thousand and seventeen of 1,544 police officers struck in response to the disciplining of nineteen labor leaders and the police commissioner's act forbidding union affiliation. The striking police lost the ideological battle after a night of rioting and looting turned public opinion against them. Governor Calvin Coolidge's statement that "there is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, at any time" became an ideological weapon against public sector organizing generally [1].

This article reviews a time in Baltimore's history when the Fraternal Order of Police did not represent most police officers; rather, the progressive union American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) represented them. Today, AFSCME may be remembered for its role in the living wage campaign in mid-1990s, which achieved the first relevant city ordinance in the country, and in the campaign to restructure Baltimore City Council representation in 2002. In the 1960s and 1970s, AFSCME was the vanguard in organizing public sector workers, including police officers. In 1974, the issues raised in the 1919 Boston Police Strike were raised again in Baltimore City: the right to union representation, the right to decent wages, and the right to strike.

## Baltimore Police Officers Organize

Baltimore City police union Local 1195 organized secretly in 1960. Several hundred officers signed cards during the first five years, but dues collection was difficult. In 1965, the *Baltimore Sun* criticized the Police Department for mismanagement and fraudulent crime reporting. The police commissioner resigned and was replaced within the year by Donald Pomerleau, the former chief of the Miami Police Department. Pomerleau would not tolerate a union of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) in the Department and engaged in a variety of union-busting tactics.

Police officers were technically state workers. Yet they were paid according to Baltimore City's budget. The police commissioner was an appointee of the governor. Organized labor had friendly relations with Governor Spiro T. Agnew. Agnew met with Pomerleau in April 1967. In May, Pomerleau authorized the dues check-off for AFSCME (i.e. having union membership fees deducted automatically from paychecks). However, informal pressures against AFSCME members continued.

Local 1195 president Eugene Brukiewa publicly criticized Pomerleau's management on a television program. Brukiewa and the union secretary, Woodcock, were disciplined. The Maryland Court of Appeals eventually supported Brukiewa's right to free speech and assembly in a ruling on February 13, 1970.

Local 1195 made significant membership gains from 1964 through 1969 when it claimed 1,585 members and included those up to the rank of sergeant. Another AFSCME union, Local 44, organized workers in Public Works, the City Hospitals, the City Jail, Parks and Recreation, the Department of Education, and the Community Action Agency. Members of Local 44 working in the Bureau of Sanitation struck in September 1968 for three days. A 15-cent wage increase resulted. But more importantly, the strike was a catalyst for the struggle for collective bargaining rights in the City. The Collective Bargaining Ordinance was introduced on September 8, 1968, and became law. On September 29, 1969, an amendment was passed which eliminated dues for those organizations that did the City, placing constraints on the AFSCME's competitors. Local 44 was selected bargaining agent for the public workers with a vote of 1,157 to 509 [2].

In response to threats against the police union, Local 1195 and Local 44 threatened a large militant action. This forced Pomerleau to give informal union recognition to AFSCME. During the 1969 Maryland Legislative session, AFSCME got bills passed which reformed the holiday and vacation schedules for police officers. This made Pomerleau aware of AFSCME's and the AFL-CIO's political power. In 1972, when Pomerleau's term was up for renewal, the relations between the union and the commissioner became more cooperative. Pomerleau even allowed union organization of police supervisory personnel. Local 1549 was organized to represent such officers [3].

## Hospital Workers Strike

Meanwhile, important state-level organizing was in the works at the state hospitals. Four hospitals struck on March 31, 1973: University of Maryland Hospital, Montebello State Hospital, Rosewood hospital, and Spring Grove hospital. Nursing assistants, and clerical, dietary, and housekeeping workers walked out. Their issues were pay increases, medical insurance, and, most importantly, collective bargaining law for state workers. AFSCME Council 67 staff reported that 2,500 to 3,000 workers struck. Local 1694, representing the University of Maryland Hospital workers, was the backbone of the strike. Three union activists were arrested at the University Hospital.

Labor support came from the Teamsters union, which refused to deliver to the hospitals. The court issued an injunction that ended the strike [4]. Collective bargaining law for state workers remained a dream.

Bill Lucy, then AFSCME's international secretary, noted that negotiations with Baltimore City government were historically stormy and could be expected to lead to "the annual Baltimore strike" [5]. The hospital strikes, noted above, were strikes for collective bargaining law. These locals had already obtained union recognition. The public sector was the site of increasing strike militancy in the 1960s and 1970s. The major issue in most public sector strikes was union recognition. Research indicated that once collective bargaining law was achieved, strike frequency radically declined. After New York State enacted the Taylor Law in 1967, 99 percent of contracts were negotiated without a strike. (The Taylor Law was passed in the wake of a massive New York City transit workers' strike, and it made it a crime for public employees and their unions to "cause, instigate, encourage or condone a strike.") In five states with 15,700 local contracts, the percentage settled without a strike was 98.7 percent [6].



## Chronology of the Baltimore City Police Department

**1845** the state legislature founds the current Baltimore Police Department "to provide for a better security for life and property in the City of Baltimore." Three hundred and fifty patrolmen are distributed among the four police districts. The patrolmen wear uniforms and carried batons.

**1861** At the beginning of the US Civil War, the federal government takes over the police department, and the US Army runs it until it is turned back over to the legislature in 1862.

**1885** A callbox system is established to provide a means of communications between officers on the street and the station house. The first patrol wagon goes into service in this year too.

**1896** Introduction of the "Bertillon" system of anthropometry, which uses skull, height, limb length, scar, tattoo, and "personality" data to identify criminals, especially repeat offenders. (It is eventually supplanted by fingerprinting.)

**1908** The Traffic Division is established.

**1913** The Police Academy opens.

**1933** Police radio communications are introduced.

**1937** Violet Hill Whyte becomes the BPD's first African American officer, a policewoman on a "beat."



The 1974 Strike of Sanitation Workers and Police Officers

On October 10, 1973, Pomerleau recognized Local 1195 as the exclusive bargaining agent for police officers. The commissioner’s agreement prohibited strikes, slowdowns, “blue flues” (coordinated sick days), and secondary boycotts. By 1974, Local 1195 had organized 1,900 of the 3,000 Baltimore City police officers. Combined with the membership of Local 44, AFSCME represented 10,000 of the City’s 42,000 workers.

On July 1, 1974, the sanitation workers of Local 44 walked out beginning a 15-day strike. On July 11, the members of Local 1195 joined the other municipal workers with a five-day walkout. This five-day strike in July 1974 was the first police strike in a major city in the United States since the Boston strike of 1919. Nine hundred and one members of Local 1195 actively participated in the strike [7].

The strikes in the summer of 1974 in Baltimore were strikes over rejected contracts. The situation got stormy and took an explicitly political turn. Local 1195, the AFSCME local representing Baltimore City police officers, along with Local 44, brought Baltimore’s public worker movement into national attention. Sympathetic citizens demonstrated solidarity with the striking workers by depositing bags of garbage on the steps of City Hall. On July 12, Governor Mandel sent in 115 state troopers to police the streets of Baltimore.

Local 44’s strike ended with a negotiated settlement for 3,000 city workers. Mayor William Donald Shaefer refused to respond with reprisals against the leaders of the illegal public workers’ strike. However, Commissioner Pomerleau did [8].

On July 15, Local 1195 was offered a 21 percent wage increase over two years. However, hundreds of officers held out demanding unconditional amnesty. City and state authorities refused this demand. Eighty-two probationary officers were fired. Fifty-five union members made appeals in court and lost. There were 673 letters of reprimand, 130 disciplinary hearings, and 90 forced resignations. AFSCME lost right to automatically deduct union dues from paychecks and to be exclusive bargaining agent. The courts imposed a fine of \$25,000 a day on AFSCME Local 1195 and \$10,000 a day on Metropolitan Police Council 27 Executive Director Thomas Rapanotti. Council 67 Director Ernie Crofoot was found in contempt of court. Police local president George Hoyt was also fined \$10,000 a day.

AFSCME took Pomerleau and Governor Marvin Mandel to court in the name of 55 officers. Judge Basil Thomas rejected all charges of constitutional violations with respect to the overlap of investigatory, judicial, and prosecutorial functions, Pomerleau’s biased perception of union members, and disparities in punishment. Additionally, Judge Thomas ruled that since the strikes were illegal, Pomerleau was within his authority to punish the strikers, and that “substantial evidence” supported the Commissioner’s actions [9].

Jerry Wurf Defends Baltimore’s Striking Public Sector Workers

AFSCME’s International President Jerry Wurf defended the action of the strikers in an editorial in the

*Sun* [10]. Wurf argued that without the strikes of the city’s blue-collar workers for 15 days and of the police for 5 days, there would not have been the negotiated pay increases. These were fair, not generous increases. The strike was the only available course of action available to these workers at the time. The real issue was not whether city workers have a right to strike, or whether police

Eighty-two probationary officers were fired. Fifty-five union members made appeals in court and lost. There were 673 letters of reprimand, 130 disciplinary hearings, and 90 forced resignations.

officers have a have a right to abandon a city to crime. The real issue was “whether men and women who work for government should have to accept low wages, unilateral decision-making and poor working conditions, in 1974, with no legal alternative but resignation.” The answer, Wurf argued, was compulsory collective bargaining law which provided for binding arbitration and third party alternatives to the strike.

AFSCME and the AFL–CIO responded to the retaliations by political and legal means. AFSCME used its increasing influence within the state AFL–CIO to persuade delegates to the Committee on Political Education Convention not to endorse Marvin Mandel for re-election. In 1974, AFSCME members numbered over 30,000, a significant proportion of the 230,000 workers represented by the AFL–CIO in Maryland. Dominic Fornaro, president of the state AFL–CIO, noted that this was the first time he had seen the AFL–CIO not endorse a gubernatorial candidate. In the past, the AFL–CIO hierarchy had perceived Mandel as a “friend of labor” [11].

How effective was AFSCME’s political action against Mandel? Mandel was re-elected, only later to encounter political corruption charges. The *Sun* had editorialized that given Mandel’s past record as a friend of labor (Mandel having already received substantial contributions from the AFL–CIO for his campaign), and that Mandel’s opponents were no friends of labor, AFSCME’s action was a “futile attempt to punish the Governor” [12].

AFSCME’s political action against Mandel had mainly symbolic value. However, elected officials do experience the effect of union political action. Hollands’s 1970 survey of the attitudes of public officials toward public sector unions indicated that 25 percent of officials in Baltimore City thought the unions affected their election [13].

Another consequence of the July 1974 strikes concerned relations with Classified Municipal Employees Association (CMEA). AFSCME’s growth nationally and locally was dramatic in the 1960s and 1970s. This growth was achieved through militant organizing, organizing that followed the institution of collective bargaining laws, and affiliations with independent associations. In May 1974, the CMEA, which represented about 5,000 white-collar workers in Baltimore City, and Local 44 discussed merging together. However, CMEA delegates rejected the affiliation in August in a 593–108 vote. CMEA leadership had initially favored the merger, but the July strikes of AFSCME workers swayed the opinion of many in opposition. CMEA had historically opposed any strike tactics for public workers [14].

Baltimore’s police officers were once in the vanguard

of public sector unionism. The defeat of the 1974 strike and the busting of the union may be seen as prefiguring the “neo-liberal” attack on public workers’ rights, which was most dramatically demonstrated when President Ronald Reagan crushed the air traffic controllers union in 1981, giving a green light to corporations to attack US unions. However, AFSCME International President

Wurf’s advocacy of compulsory collective bargaining with binding arbitration, as an alternative to public sector strikes, may also be criticized as a move away from the union’s history of militancy. Nonetheless, the public sector strikes of 1974 in Baltimore should be remembered for their significant labor solidarity.

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[10] *Baltimore Sun*, July 20, 1974.

[11] *Baltimore Sun*, August 3, 1974.

[12] *Baltimore Sun*, August 4, 1974.

[13] Hollands (above), p. 207.

[14] *Baltimore Sun*, August 17, 1974.

(Charles D’Adamo was a rank-and-file activist in AFSCME Local 1694 for 12 years.)

**1950** The Police Laboratory Division opens.

**1956** The deployment of the first “K9” (canine) unit.

**1961** The merger of the Park Police with the regular force.

**1966** The BPD is integrated. Prior to 1966, African American officers were limited to foot patrols, as they were barred from the use of squad cars and often assigned to undercover positions in predominantly African American police districts.

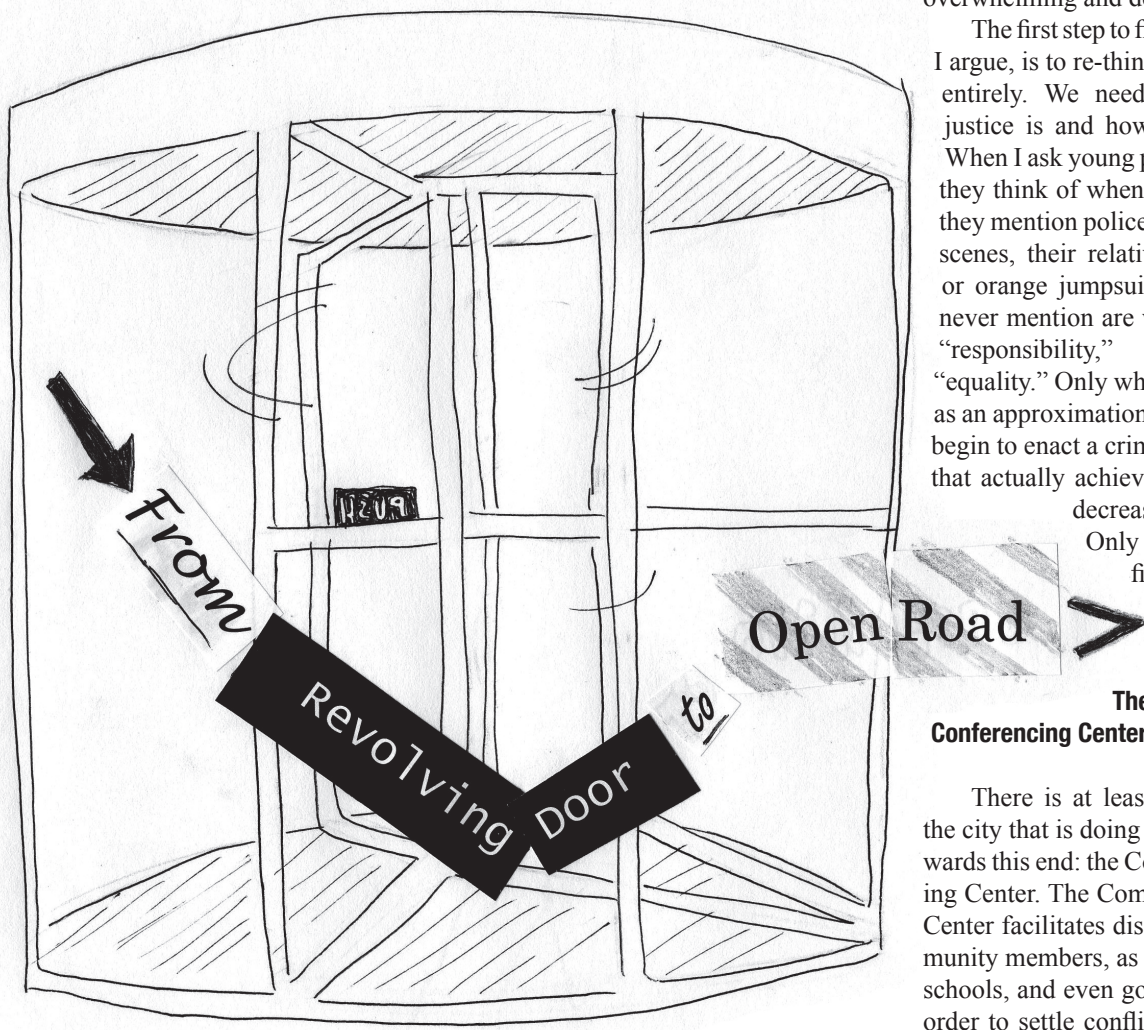
**1970** The formation of the Helicopter Unit, also known as “foxtrot.”

**1974** 1,300 unionized Baltimore police officers go on a five-day strike along with other public sector workers organized by the Association of Federal, State, Community, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) union. This is the first police strike in a major city in the United States since that in Boston strike in 1919. (See “The 1974 sanitation workers’ and police officers’ strike” in this issue.)

**1984** Bishop L. Robinson is named as Baltimore’s first African American Police Commissioner.

**1985** Computerized booking procedures and 911 emergency systems are introduced.





Eric Imhoff

#### The Steel Door With Bars

Citing the court's inability to translate arrests into the necessary jail time, the then-Baltimore City Police Commissioner Kevin Clark declared in 2004, in the midst of an increase in the trend of violent crime in the city, that the "revolving door needs to be replaced with a steel door with bars." The problem, he insisted, was that over-burdened courts were demanding too much evidence to ensure conviction of arrested criminals. Instead of remaining behind bars, their cases were dismissed, and offenders were released again only to return to the street, where they inevitably committed future crimes. His sentiments convey what has become the conventional "wisdom" of crime-solving strategy, at least among our city leaders. That is, the solution to crime is more police, more arrests, and more convictions—more people in jail serving longer sentences.

Police Commissioner Clark made his statement in 2004. Since then, the homicide rate and the rate of overall violent crime in Baltimore have grown. Despite various city administrations' and agencies' numerous attempts to "get tough on crime," the alarming homicide rate continues to inspire headlines in all of the city's major publications. Meanwhile, the prison population not just of Baltimore but

also of the entire country continues to rise. Already holding the worldwide distinction as the industrialized nation with the highest percentage of its population in prison, the United States justice system continues to incarcerate people at a steadily growing rate. About 1.5 million people nation-wide were serving time in prison at the end of 2006. That number is predicted to reach 1.72 million (up 13 percent) by 2011 (Pew Research Report).

The contradiction above should serve to highlight the ineptitude of the crime-prevention strategy endorsed by Clark in 2004 and also currently adhered-to by the majority of our city's leaders. In short, more police presence and more people in prison do not necessarily translate into less crime. As our jails struggle to hold their over-spilling populations and courts are bogged down in a virtual gridlock of paperwork (and meanwhile we are monitored by cameras on increasingly infringing levels), crime continues to remain prevalent in all of Baltimore's communities. And after years of failed strategy, communities all over the city continue to wrestle with the question of what is to be done. With nothing seeming to work, many activists, organizers, and other neighborhood leaders are searching frantically for alternative solutions to this

**"People really do have the capacity to safely and effectively resolve many of their own crimes and conflicts themselves—provided they are given a good structure to do so,"**

overwhelming and deeply rooted problem.

The first step to finding such a solution, I argue, is to re-think the notion of justice entirely. We need to reevaluate what justice is and how it can be achieved. When I ask young people in the city what they think of when they imagine justice, they mention police sirens and courtroom scenes, their relatives being locked up, or orange jumpsuits. What they almost never mention are words like "fairness," "responsibility," "accountability," or "equality." Only when we redefine justice as an approximation of these ideas can we begin to enact a crime prevention strategy that actually achieves its stated goals: to decrease and prevent crime.

Only then can we start to find alternatives to our failing justice system.

#### The Community Conferencing Center

There is at least one organization in the city that is doing encouraging work towards this end: the Community Conferencing Center. The Community Conferencing Center facilitates discussions among community members, as well as organizations, schools, and even government agencies in order to settle conflicts through a process of emotional honesty and collaborative decision-making. Their specifically trained staff members help conduct safe and structured meetings with people involved in a conflict or crime to discuss what happened, express how all of the parties have been affected, and collectively create a resolution to the situation. The Community Conferencing Center has worked with cases involving second-degree assault, breaking and entering, larceny, destruction of property, auto theft, and crimes as serious as murder. Though their brochure states more modest goals than transforming the entire

that issue (e.g. victims, offenders, their respective supporters, and anyone else affected by the situation)," because, "When people make their own decisions about how to resolve their own conflicts, those solutions will be effective, creative, and long-lasting."

#### How It Works

When I attended a Community Conferencing training workshop last April, I was able to witness these principles in action. In role-playing sessions, we acted out conflicts using methods based on an underlying notion that justice, instead of being defined in strictly punitive terms, was best achieved when everyone involved consented to the fairness of the resolution—including the "offenders" of the crime. Sitting in a circle, each person involved in the conflict is able to speak about what happened and how he or she was affected by it. Each participant is also given the opportunity to be accompanied by a supporter: a family member or mentor or counselor. (Note that a lawyer doesn't necessarily satisfy this role; in fact, lawyers are discouraged from attending the conferences.) After each person gets to speak about what happened and how she or he was affected, the group creates a solution that they feel adequately resolves the conflict and leads to a constructive outcome. An agreement is drafted and signed by all of the participants.

Now, if you are saying to yourself that this process sounds too good to be true, and that it is redolent of over-idealized notions of handholding, group hugs, or miraculous altruistic reconciliations, you're probably not alone. Most people, even those who have agreed to participate in the conferences, are initially skeptical about the process. "How is just talking about what happened going to help anything?" is the most common critical question. In response to this question, and

justice system, and despite their insistence to me that they're not exactly prepared to define themselves as an alternative to prison in every situation, they are operating under a fairly revolutionary set of principles.

"People really do have the capacity to safely and effectively resolve many of their own crimes and conflicts themselves—provided they are given a good structure to do so," explains Dr. Lauren Abramson, Executive Director of the Community Conferencing Center, adding, "Community Conferencing provides such a space and structure." She continues, "It is important to include the entire community of people affected by a crime/conflict in resolving

to give more insight into why people agree to attend the conferences, it is important here to note two aspects in particular.

First, one must understand that the conferences are initiated solely by referral. If a conference seems to be apropos, those involved and affected by the incident are contacted and briefed. This period of discussion among the prospective participants, which the staff officially calls "preparation," is usually the most important and taxing part of the process. During the preparation, the methodology and goals of the meeting are explained to all those invited, and they are able to choose for themselves whether or not to convene. All of the participants of the conferences

**1996** The first closed-circuit television (CCTV) surveillance cameras are installed in the downtown business district as well as other high crime neighborhoods.

**1999** Mayor Martin O'Malley adopts the "zero tolerance" policing strategy developed by the Giuliani administration in New York. Zero tolerance is based on

aggressively enforcing "quality of life" offences such as loitering and public intoxication.

**2000** The BPD's introduces the CitiStat system. CitiStat is based on the CompStat program pioneered by the New York Police Department. It utilizes computer pin mapping and weekly accountability sessions to monitor problems in the city.

**2002** Baltimore launches the "BE-LIEVE" advertising campaign, as part of a series of efforts to reduce drug trafficking in the city.

**2004** Police Commissioner Ed Norris pleads guilty to making illegal personal expenditures from the BPD's supplemental account.

**2005** The FBI arrests of officers William A. King and Antonio L. Murray on federal drug conspiracy charges.

Community Safe Zones are implemented in the Western District, a strategy where external traffic in a 10-square-block area is directed away from the neighborhood. Through the use of checkpoints and barricades,



have to willingly consent to take part in the process.

Second, many of the referrals come from the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS), the Baltimore City Police Department (BCPD), and directly from school administrators. Most of these incidents involve youth at schools. Assault, theft, vandalism, and verbal abuse are common cases. In all of these cases referred from DJS, the case has been forwarded to them by the BCPD. The case is turned over from the police to Juvenile Services and then, in part as a way to soften their overburdening influx of cases, DJS refers it to the Community Conferencing Center in the hope that it can be resolved en lieu

compliance. The notion that these cases can be settled en lieu of conventional court proceedings suggests encouragingly that the conferences might be a viable alternative to the current methodology of the justice system in dealing with disputes, conflicts, or crimes—at least those involving young people.

### Why It Works

The fact that agreements are self-generated (and not, as it were, handed down from an external judge or jury) is what makes them effective. Over 98 percent of conferences result in an agreement, and over 95 percent of those agreements



(From left) Lauren Abramson, Cindy Lemons, and Nel Andrews—Community Conferencing Center

of the conventional legal recourse. If it can, the case is dismissed. If an agreement cannot be reached via conferencing, the case is sent directly back to its referral source and handled in its usual manner.

It becomes clear, in light of this fact, that a major incentive to participate in the conferences is the policy that if a collective solution can be reached, the case is dropped by DJS and the youth involved are able to avoid further legal entanglements such as sentencing, or simply time and money spent in courtroom proceedings. It is worthwhile to point out that for most the parents of the youth who are involved in the conferences, taking further days off work to settle legal disputes is something that they don't have the means to afford. It behooves everyone to generate a solution that is amenable to all parties for no other reason than, in a strictly monetary analysis, it is more cost-effective to do so.

However, this economic incentive should not detract from the powerful impact that this process has in resolving disagreements and violent (or potentially violent) situations. While the looming threat of litigation or sentencing still plays a part in driving people to attend the conferences, it is shown by experience that when people do attend the conferences, they usually create a collective agreement—and that agreement usually has complete

retain complete compliance by the participants. Moreover, young offenders who participate in the Community Conferences are 60 percent less likely to offend than those who go through the juvenile justice system. This success rate can be attributed to the methodology of the conferences: a methodology that allows everyone to express how s/he was affected emotionally in a safe environment and create a solution to their problem that is relevant, satisfying, and fair. In other words, the process allows people to solve their own problems collectively, without the necessity of litigation or exclusively punitive measures.

This seems to be a radical notion, counter to the conventional intuition that anti-social behavior and lawbreaking can only be punished by an external arbiter who is unbiased and divorced from the emotion of the situation—and that these punishments should be standardized and levied in a systematic fashion according to the decided severity of the crime. More importantly, it debunks the idea that the solution to such problems is more police and stricter sentencing.

Collectively decided solutions, by contrast, have been shown to be more constructive, appropriate, and meaningful than court-ordered sentences since, unlike such sentences, they are created by consent

with all of the affected parties. And, because the perpetrators of the crime have to face the people affected by their actions directly, there is a greater level of accountability and responsibility for those actions. This sometimes emotionally wrenching and exhausting process allows the “offenders” of the crime to learn from their mistakes and take steps to prevent similar incidents in the future.

In addition to the incentives for attending a conference mentioned in the previous section, it might seem that another is that it is “easier” to participate in a conference than go through the court system; conferencing may initially appear to be less harsh or severe. However, contrary to this perception, the conferences are not always polite and pleasant. In fact, because there is such an emotional tension (and then release), they are often chaotic, turbulent, and, for lack of a better term, nasty.

“Although Community Conferencing is completely voluntary, and everyone is prepared to come up with an agreement to make things better, you have to remember that people still come to the conferences with very raw emotions, such as anger, sadness, and fear,” explains Nel Andrews, the Program Director at the Center. She continues: “The first two stages of the conference require people to discuss what happened and how people were affected by it. So, sometimes these emotions take center stage. With that said, some conferences (in the beginning) can feel out of control.”

She recounts a particular example that comes to mind:

*“A high school counselor referred a group of four students (3 female and 1 male) and their families to CCC after it was discovered that there was a neighborhood brawl over the weekend—stemming from some altercations that happened in school. During school the next day many people were talking about the fight, and school staff realized that it was important to bring the families together so that they would have an opportunity to work it out together. A referral to Community Conferencing Center was made. The families of each student were contacted and due to the seriousness of the situation, everyone agreed to participate in a Community Conference the very next morning.*

*“I arrived and placed the chairs in a circle. I asked Rodney (one of the youth involved in the incident) to tell the group what had happened over the weekend. Within seconds there was some heated back-and-forth about the details of who said what, who did what, etc. When Jessica (another youth) saw that Rodney was ‘down-playing’ the past incidents with she and Denise—the catalysts for the Sunday brawl—she started to explode. Within 15 minutes of the start*

*of the conference I was having to dance that delicate balance between allowing the participants to express their feelings and at the same time keeping the space safe for everyone else—a space where people continue to be engaged in the process and the conversation.*

*“Jessica’s mom was trying to keep Jessica in check, but by that point she was cursing at Rodney quite loudly. Mr. and Mrs. Allen (Rodney’s parents) were checking out of the process. They were saying things like ‘I don’t have time for this.’ ‘I didn’t come here to be talked to like that.’ Mrs. Allen started to get up from her chair to leave and asked Rodney and her husband to join her. I quickly jumped in and asked them to please stay. Jessica, at this point, was seething, and without any notice at all she got up and tossed her chair in Rodney’s direction. Everything broke down from there.*

*“The Allen family was out the door yelling ‘I’ll see you in court!’ Jessica’s mom had Jessica against the wall pleading with her to get control of herself. I followed the Allen’s into the hallway. They were quickly met by the principal, Ms. White, and pulled into her office. As Ms. White calmed Rodney and his parents down, I returned to the room where we had started the conference. Jessica’s mother was crying hysterically and trying to leave the building. She was on the phone with her sister (Jessica’s aunt). Ms. Barker (the school counselor) had taken Jessica and Denise into another room. Ms. Sander (Denise’s mother) was trying to console Jessica’s mother.... It appeared as though she was having little impact.”*

Eventually, by working individually with the parents alone and then inviting the youth back into the group, Andrews, the principal, and the guidance counselor at the school were able to get everyone to come back into the circle and calm down. As the discussion continued, it was discovered that much of the conflict was due to emotional trauma that Jessica was feeling as a result of both losing touch with her friends and being sexually abused at an early age. After another half-hour of apologizing, explaining, and crying, the two youth who were directly involved in the conflict were able to reconcile, and the rest of the group followed suit. According to Andrews: “Jessica got up from her seat and walked towards Rodney. She held out her arms and as they hugged, she said ‘I miss you.’ Jessica held onto Rodney, still crying, she wouldn’t let go. Denise, also crying, joined the hug. Everyone was crying. Mr. Allen even excused himself from the room—perhaps a sign that he didn’t want all of the women to see him in such a vulnerable state. Once everyone was back in their chairs, they agreed that

individuals without lawful business in the neighborhood are prevented from entering.

The BPD releases a DVD called “Keep Talking” as part of a campaign to counter the infamous “Stop Snitching” DVD, which promoted witness intimidation. (See “Stop snitching” in this issue.)

**2006** Suspensions and arrests of Southwestern District flex squad officers for the alleged rape of a 22-year-old woman they had taken into custody for illegal possession of narcotics.

**2007** Mayor Sheila Dixon announces her intentions to move away from the zero tolerance policies of the O’Malley administration by implementing a “community policing” approach which would rely more heavily on foot patrols.

The handcuffing and arrest of 7-year-old Gerard Mungo Jr. for riding a dirt bike on the sidewalk captures national

headlines and prompts community outrage. Mayor Sheila Dixon apologizes for the arrest, while police Commissioner Leonard Hamm promises to have an internal investigation.

Police Commissioner Leonard Hamm resigns as his department fights an escalating homicide rate that threatens to top 300 murders for the first time in seven years.



the conflict was over.”

On this remarkable two-hour turnaround from violent feud to collective agreement, Andrews comments that, “I don’t believe that the type of resolution that the group came to that morning could have been achieved had the participants not had a safe place to express the intense anger, frustration, and hurt they were feeling at the start. Being able to express those feelings in the most authentic way possible gave rise to the remarkable emotional transformation experienced by everyone.”

The emotional transformation that participants undergo during the conferences is drastically different than that generated by the prison experience, which usually leaves people indifferent, detached, bitter, or even depressed and outraged—all of which fuels repeat offense and recidivism, thereby working against the justice system’s stated goals of reduction and prevention of crime.

This phenomenon of arrest and repeat-offense is precisely the revolving door mentioned by Commissioner Clark. I agree—the revolving door needs to be stopped.

But if we can learn anything from the work that the Community Conferencing Center is doing (and the success it has achieved so far), it is that there is an alternative to the “steel door with bars.” Instead of increased incarceration, longer sentences, and more punitive repression, we can replace the revolving door with an open road. This process allows people collectively to decide what is best for their own communities, working together to solve their own problems and, most importantly, help prevent those same problems from happening in the future.

# Stop Snitching!

—CP

A few years ago, the police stumbled across a homemade DVD, apparently made by drug dealers, which had circulated widely on the West Side. It made threats against “snitches,” that is, people suspected of cooperating with the police. Even though the police soon tracked down and busted the makers on other charges, and then put out their own counter DVD encouraging people to “keep talking,” the DVD set off a continuing debate about the causes and consequences of the “stop snitching” attitude deeply embedded in Baltimore now.

This has mushroomed into a huge problem for the state, a problem that not only refuses to go away, but worsens. When shootings occur, for instance, “no one” sees what happens—even if the shooting takes place in full view of dozens of spectators on crowded streets. Fearful witnesses don’t testify, and so cases collapse, frustrating the prosecution. Along with this widespread non-cooperation have been steady—but, fortunately, still infrequent—fire-bombings of the houses of people who are trying to do something about the drug traffic in their community. The most tragic case was the arson death of six members of the Dawson family on lower Greenmount Ave in 2002. Since then, there have been copycat fire-bombings in Harwood, Waverly, and elsewhere, which don’t seem so much designed to hurt as to send a message.

Some see this “stop snitching” attitude as nothing but a healthy distrust of the police. Haven’t working-class communities historically everywhere been usually wary of the police—and for good reason? The police are perceived in a gut-sense as defending laws stacked against the poor and struggling, and few people feel any compelling interest to cooperate. In many cases in the past, there was strong grassroots sympathy for the so called criminal. In an Irish Republican “no go” area not too long ago, for example, when certain well known slumlords used to go door to

door collecting rent, they were sometimes greeted at the end of the block by an Irish Republican with a gun, who would relieve the landlord of the rent and then go door to door giving the money back. The landlords got the message, and the police inquired, but again, no one knew anything.

But this attitude towards the police in strongly politicized working-class communities, whether nationalist or leftist, has always had another side that hasn’t been appreciated. If, for example, someone stole from the community, it was dealt with, sometimes harshly. Spanish peasants, who rarely cooperated with the state, readily turned over thieves who stole from within. If you were such a thief, it was understood by all concerned that the collective shield of protection would lift. In such situations, lines were sharply drawn against anti-social crime, and these lines were part of a tough-minded underlying solidarity. This isn’t to romanticize some mythical past and certainly doesn’t mean that poor areas were free of crime. Far from it. But it does mean that there were stronger informal sanctions against the type of relentless crime so corrosive now in poor and working-class areas.

Closer to home, one example of what these sanctions could mean comes out in Detroit in the early 1980s, when crack first hit the streets. Several crack houses, sources of violence in the neighborhood, were firebombed, as anonymous residents took matters in their own hands and didn’t wait for the authorities to react. The authorities, unsurprisingly, did react—by denouncing the “vigilantes” and spending more time unsuccessfully hunting down the perpetrators than they did in shutting down crack houses.

I’d argue there is a crucial difference between today’s “stop snitching” ethos and past distrust of the police. The situation in Baltimore today looks less like communities united to protect their own against the police than it looks like mafia strongholds in southern Italy, where people feel so powerless, silenced and caught between forces they can’t affect, that they just give up. This was perceptively captured in a recent *Baltimore Sun* article, “Violence and lack of a clear solution saps hope from the city” (September 2, 2007) where the same words crop up in interviews: “hopelessness,” “apathy,” and “cynicism.”

In such areas, people don’t want “racist killer cops out of the ghetto,” as some thoughtless leftists sloganeer; they want *more* police. What they want is for the police to act fairly and not to engage in racial profiling. In fact, in New York in the 1970s, along with arson, one of the most effective ways used to soften up areas for gentrification was to withdraw police services.

The double consciousness about the

police, to extend W.E.B. Du Bois’s phrase, comes out in many ways: some people get angry and call for more police when someone rips off their house; yet others freely buy hot goods off the streets, probably stolen from someone in the same neighborhood. I have seen firsthand many times people, who would never call the police if they knew who shot or robbed, ask the police dozens of times to get involved in some petty domestic squabble. Still others complain about dealers loitering on the corner, and yet silently take a handful of bills from their teenage dealer children.

Drugs and crime ultimately reinforce the sense of powerlessness, victim-hood, and lack of social agency already abundant today. Public space shrinks, people withdraw, and distrust flourishes. Despite its superficial opposition to the “Man,” “stop snitching” is not so much defiance as a reflection of division, paralysis, and fear.



Gabriella Szpunt

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Recent articles in the *Baltimore Sun* newspaper.





# ... and then I was arrested again: one activist's struggle for the 1st Amendment

Max Obuszewski

*"A strong case has been made for the thesis that in the course of the past hundred years urban police have served as the protective arm of the economic and political interests of the capitalist system."*

—Frank Donner, *Protectors of Privilege: Red Squads and Police Repression in Urban America* (1992)

**A**s a long-time activist, I've had many encounters with the police. Sometimes these encounters have resulted in arrests, more often in extended arguments about the First Amendment to the US Constitution.

My rap sheet is extensive, as I have been taken into custody in the following places: Andrews Air Force Base, Anne Arundel and Howard Counties in Maryland; Baltimore City and County; Erie, Pennsylvania; Erie County, New York; Fairfax County, Virginia; Fort Benning, Georgia; King of Prussia, Pennsylvania; Lusaka, Zambia; New York City; the Pentagon; and Washington, DC. I do not engage in civil disobedience, but rather civil resistance. I do not break unjust laws, but risk arrest to call attention to the government's violation of national and international statutes.

I was most recently arrested on September 20, 2007, when I joined thirty-three other peace activists in a die-in in the Crypt of the US Capitol. We were using our bodies in a theatrical fashion to call for an end to funding of the illegal Iraq War. It is unlikely, though, that the legislators will heed our call, as further funding of the war seems inevitable. But I had to act because I cannot accept a bipartisan government policy that has resulted in the deaths of possibly one million Iraqis.

The Capitol Police were quite professional during our arrest, though some arrestees endured some extremely tight plastic cuffs for about an hour. We were processed within six hours, and a few demonstrators wanted to thank the police. I spoke out against the notion, reminding everyone that Rev. Lennox Yearwood was beaten up by six members of the Capitol Police on September 10.

On that day, I joined the protest outside the Cannon House Office Building. Other protesters including Rev. Yearwood were inside hoping to gain access to the hearing at which Gen. David Petraeus, commander of the multinational forces in Iraq, and Ryan Crocker, US Ambassador to Baghdad, were to assess the "surge" of an additional 30,000 troops sent to Iraq.

The Rev. Yearwood was denied entry into the hearing room, and when he questioned the police he was beaten. It appears to be standard police practice to charge the victim with assault after beating the person. While Yearwood was charged with assaulting a police officer, the charge was dismissed on September 30. Since the police assault was videotaped, prosecutors probably did not want to take such a bogus case to trial.

However, the Reverend still has to contend with a charge of disorderly conduct, despite the fact he was simply standing in line waiting his turn to enter the hearing room. Such situations are a reality for those of us who challenge

the police and demand our First Amendment rights.

On January 26, 1991, I was arrested on Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House, while protesting the upcoming invasion of Iraq by the senior Bush. I deliberately went limp, and the Metropolitan Police tried to coerce me into walking. Eventually, they carried me and tossed me in the van. A particularly brutal officer came into the van and tried to kick me in the groin. He then tied a plastic cuff around one of my ankles cutting off circulation. By the time we reached the station, that leg was numb. Nevertheless, he dragged me out and forced me to hop one-legged. Once inside, though, another officer came over and cut off the plastic tie and said, "We are not all like him." I did file a complaint with the review board, but it was ignored.

I have four pending legal cases. Besides the arrest in the Capitol Crypt, for which I am facing a disorderly conduct charge, I am dealing with a contempt conviction. This resulted from my refusal to pay a \$50 fine after the chief judge of the DC Superior Court convicted me of crossing a police line. Since I am facing incarceration, there is an ongoing legal discussion as to whether there will be another trial before another judge.

That conviction for crossing a police line is on appeal. On September 26, 2006, twenty peace activists tried to

appeal.

The US government has insisted that because of 9/11 and the subsequent "War on Terror," it was necessary to shred the Bill of Rights to protect the homeland. This "unique" situation "forced" legislators from both political parties to endorse the repressive nature of the Bush-Cheney administration.

But Frank Donner, in his *Protectors of Privilege*, illuminates the fact that there is a 100-year history of repressive behavior by both big-city police departments and federal agencies. He gives evidence of how deeply rooted "red squads" are in US society. These may retrench for a period of time before roaring back and using unsavory tactics against dissident organizations, most of whom are engaged in "Constitutionally protected" behavior.

While Donner concentrates his research on large urban areas, he has a chapter entitled "Political Surveillance in Second-Tier Cities." In that chapter, he writes about Baltimore under the boot heel of Police Commissioner Donald Pomerleau. Baltimore's red squad was formed on July 1, 1966 when he was appointed commissioner, and it was formally known as the intelligence section of the Inspectional Services Division (ISD).

Pomerleau's reign continued through several mayors until 1982. During his time, the ISD mounted an enormous

## It appears to be standard police practice to charge the victim with assault after beating the person.

carry a symbolic coffin to the steps of the US Capitol. The police stopped us. So on appeal, I will argue my First Amendment rights were violated.

I was also convicted in US District Court in DC, after placing the names of the dead from the Iraq War on the White House fence on September 26, 2005. That conviction is being appealed on several grounds. Most importantly, four of us are raising the issue of guilt by association. There were 371 arrests that day. So the US Park Police would have difficulty in providing testimony as to what individual defendants actually did.

During a series of trials, the prosecutors would bring to the stand Park Police officers who were designated as arresting officers. They might be responsible for 70 defendants. Moreover, these officers were not the ones who actually arrested anyone.

On the witness stand, the officer would testify that particular defendants were arrested. In criminal trials, though, the prosecution must provide evidence as to what individual defendants did before arrest. However, in the protest cases in DC, judges have accepted the argument that since a defendant was arrested, she or he is guilty. I am of the opinion that the government must introduce evidence of individual guilt, and this will be raised on

surveillance project directed at the American Friends Service Committee, American Civil Liberties Union, the Black Panther Party and more than 100 other groups. Also active in Baltimore at the time was the notorious John Rees, who was an informer for the police and the FBI. Today, as the head of the Maldon Institute, he is still funneling information on "subversives" to city, state and federal agencies. (See <http://www.publiceye.org/liberty/Maldon.html> on line.—Ed.)

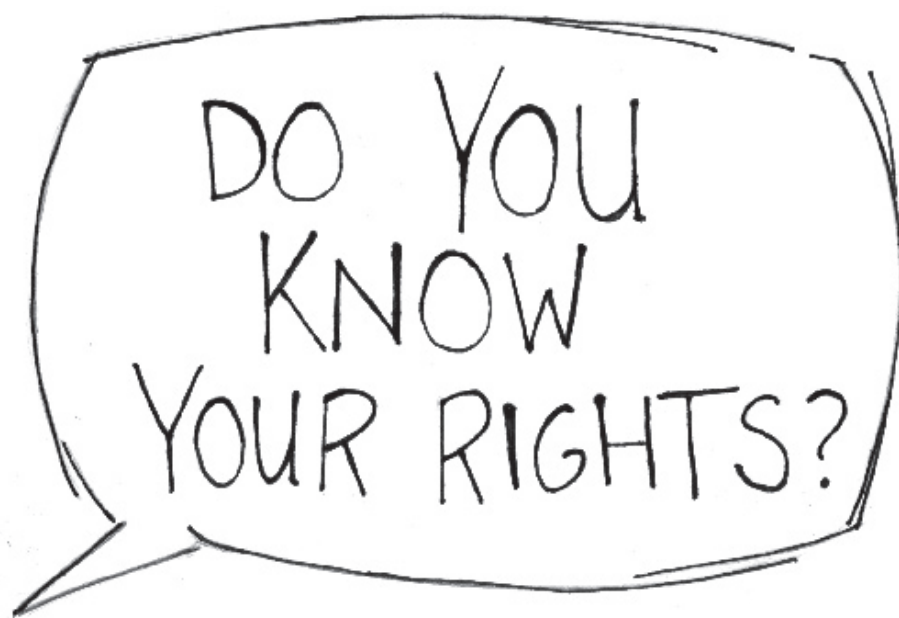
Long after Pomerleau's demise, surveillance of dissidents in Baltimore continues. Specific details will be provided once an investigation is concluded.

The US Constitution is but a piece of paper on display at the National Archives. Constitutional protections are only safeguarded when enough citizens get into the streets and demand their rights. The best way to honor the First Amendment is for "the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

*Max Obuszewski, a member of the Pledge of Resistance-Baltimore. To get involved in related dissident activities, contact him at [mobuszewski@verizon.net](mailto:mobuszewski@verizon.net).*



# Some important things to remember if you're stopped by the police.



Think carefully about your words, movement, body language, and emotions.

Don't get into an argument with the police.

Remember, anything you say or do can be used against you.

Keep your hands where the police can see them.

Don't run. Don't touch any police officer.

Don't resist even if you believe you are innocent.

Don't complain on the scene or tell the police they're wrong or that you're going to file a complaint.

Do not make any statements regarding the incident. Ask for a lawyer immediately upon your arrest.

Remember officers' badge and patrol car numbers.

Write down everything you remember ASAP.

Try to find witnesses and their names and phone numbers.

If you are injured, take photographs of the injuries as soon as possible, but make sure you seek medical attention first.

If you feel your rights have been violated, file a written complaint with police department's internal affairs division or civilian complaint board.

What you say to the police is always important. What you say can be used against you, and it can give the police an excuse to arrest you, especially if you bad-mouth a police officer.

You must show your driver's license and registration when stopped in a car. Otherwise, you don't have to answer any questions if you are detained or arrested, with one important exception. The police may ask for your name if you have been properly detained, and you can be arrested in some states for refusing to give it. If you reasonably fear that your name is incriminating, you can claim the right to remain silent, which may be a defense in case you are arrested anyway.

3. You don't have to consent to any search of yourself, your car or your house. If you DO consent to a search, it can affect your rights later in court. If the police say they

have a search warrant, ASK TO SEE IT.

4. Do not interfere with, or obstruct the police -- you can be arrested for it.

## IF YOU ARE STOPPED FOR QUESTIONING

1. It's not a crime to refuse to answer questions, but refusing to answer can make the police suspicious about you. If you are asked to identify yourself, see paragraph 2 above.

2. Police may "pat-down" your clothing if they suspect a concealed weapon. Don't physically resist, but make it clear that you don't consent to any further search.

3. Ask if you are under arrest. If you are, you have a right to know why.

4. Don't bad-mouth the police officer or run away, even if you believe what is happening is unreasonable. That could lead to your arrest.

## IF YOU'RE STOPPED IN YOUR CAR

1. Upon request, show them your driver's license, registration, and proof of insurance. In certain cases, your car can be searched without a warrant as long as the police have probable cause. To protect yourself later, you should make it clear that you do not consent to a search. It is not lawful for police to arrest you simply for refusing to consent to a search.

2. If you're given a ticket, you should sign it; otherwise you can be arrested. You can always fight the case in court later.

3. If you're suspected of drunk driving (DWI) and refuse to take a blood, urine or breath test, your driver's license may be suspended.

## IF YOU'RE ARRESTED OR TAKEN TO A POLICE STATION

1. You have the right to remain silent and to talk to a lawyer before you talk to the police. Tell the police nothing except your name and address. Don't give any explanations, excuses or stories. You can make your defense later, in court, based on what you and your lawyer decide is best.

2. Ask to see a lawyer immediately. If you can't pay for a lawyer, you have a right to a free one, and should ask the police how the lawyer can be contacted. Don't say anything without a lawyer.

3. Within a reasonable time after your arrest, or booking, you have the right to make a local phone call: to a lawyer, bail bondsman, a relative or any other person. The police may not listen to the call to the lawyer.

4. Sometimes you can be released without bail, or have bail lowered. Have your lawyer ask the judge about this possibility. You must be taken before the judge on the next court day after arrest.

5. Do not make any decisions in your case until you have talked with a lawyer.

## IN YOUR HOME

1. If the police knock and ask to enter your home, you don't have to admit them unless they have a warrant signed by a judge.

2. However, in some emergency situations (like when a person is screaming for help inside, or when the police are chasing someone) officers are allowed to enter and search your home without a warrant.

3. If you are arrested, the police can search you and the area close by. If you are in a building, "close by" usually means just the room you are in.

We all recognize the need for effective law enforcement, but we should also understand our own rights and responsibilities -- especially in our relationships with the police. Everyone, including minors, has the right to courteous and respectful police treatment.

If your rights are violated, don't try to deal with the situation at the scene. You can discuss the matter with an attorney afterwards, or file a complaint with the Internal Affairs or Civilian Complaint Board.

Produced by the American Civil Liberties Union and taken from [www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org).



# Bulletin Board

## Historic Human Rights Victory

After a three-year struggle for living wages at Camden Yards, we have secured a historic human rights victory of a living wage due to hard work, commitment and sacrifice!

In 2004 a small group of homeless persons, along with a handful of allies, decided to take on the city's largest employer of day labor: Camden Yards. Taking on Camden Yards meant taking on one of the richest persons in Maryland and the entire state government itself.

### Looking back on our struggle

Looking back it's hard to believe that we took on this fight, given how hard a fight it turned out to be. We've been ignored, lied to and been told again and again that we're too small and that our demand is too great.

But rather than give up when Peter Angelos, owner of the Orioles and one of the richest persons in Maryland, broke his promise to pay a living wage, we kept fighting. And we kept fighting when Knight Facilities Management, the contractor, broke the promise to hire the Living Wages Co-op, which would of been the first step for living wages at Camden Yards.

We kept fighting at the Peanuts for Poverty Wages protest, even though many in labor told us to back off of Angelos. We kept fighting when Angelos told workers to "f--- off" to our faces and when he did everything he could to block the Living Wages Co-op.

### The spirit of the Underground Railroad

We carried our fight to the path of the Underground Railroad, when we proposed the Living Wages Co-op in Saginaw, Michigan. That's when we stopped along the route of the Underground Railroad on our way to "take justice into our own hands." We kept fighting when, for two weeks, nobody from Knight or the Maryland Stadium Authority called to tell us the status of the Living Wages Co-op, until just days before the May 15, 2006 start date.

Right after the defeat of the Living Wages Co-op we started protesting at the Let Us Work! protest on May 15, 2006. We quickly regrouped at the Staying on Track Retreat in 2006. That's when the idea for the Living Wages Hunger Strike was first considered and was when we decided to ramp up the fight to secure our human right to a living wage and to be organized at work.

We kept fighting. We committed to the Living Wages Hunger Strike at the second Staying on Track Retreat in 2007. And we took that commitment all the way to victory.

### The fight for human rights continues

But the fight doesn't stop with living wages at Camden Yards. The United



Workers is a human right organization, fighting to secure human rights for everyone, everywhere. The fight continues until the chains of poverty are broken.

### Join the fight for human rights

Our next fight will be to ensure that the cleaners who work at the stadium now have a fair opportunity to work at the new living wage rate, and to make sure that all other human rights violations are ended at Camden Yards. Join us as we continue the fight for human rights!



## Hotel Workers Call for Boycott Unite Here

After eighteen long months of failed negotiations and continuous company pressure, workers at the only union hotel in Baltimore are calling for a boycott of their own hotel. This difficult decision was endorsed by a majority of workers at the Sheraton Baltimore City Center hotel on Fayette Street at a general meeting on October 18th, exactly two years after the hotel was purchased by the Kentucky-based corporation, Columbia Sussex.

Columbia Sussex is notorious for profit-seeking at the expense of workers, instituting massive layoffs (over 900 at the recently acquired Tropicana Casino in Atlantic City—nearly a fifth of the workforce) and making up the difference by

increasing workload for the remaining employees, exploiting vulnerable temp labor to fill what should be permanent positions, and cutting out certain essential positions altogether, jeopardizing the safety and health of the rest of the workers. At the Baltimore Sheraton, for example, Columbia Sussex has eliminated almost all housemen and laundry staff, the workers responsible for cleaning and delivering linens to housekeepers on each floor of the hotel, yet is demanding that housekeepers clean more rooms a day. As a result of these cutbacks, there are never enough linens to finish rooms and housekeepers are literally fighting one another for supplies. Even under the workload currently stipulated by the contract (15 rooms a day), many





housekeepers find themselves in constant pain and often suffer injuries they are afraid to report. This is only one small example of how changes made by Columbia Sussex are taking a daily toll on workers.

In addition to increased workloads and ongoing violations of the contract, Columbia Sussex has been actively working to divide workers and bust the union. Many of the workers at the hotel have been there for decades, and some were around during the original fight to organize, over thirty years ago. After months of enduring harassment and intimidation by the company, workers have decided that enough is enough. This battle is no longer simply about a union contract at one hotel, but about what low-income and service sector jobs in Baltimore are going to look like in years to come. As the city eagerly pours more and more money into developing the tourist industry, the workers who service these industries are demanding decent wages, affordable healthcare for their families, job security, and most importantly, respect.

On Thursday, November 15<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 PM, workers and allies will be rallying at the Hopkins Plaza on West Baltimore Street, between Liberty and Charles, to officially announce the boycott and march to the hotel under the banner of B-More United! While union workers from all over the country will be joining the march, it is equally as important that the local community turn out to stand with us.

The Sheraton workers are represented by UNITE HERE!, a service sector union representing over half a million workers in the United States and Canada, and 1,600 workers throughout Baltimore.

## SMEAC Fights for a “House for a House”

By Nathan Sooy, Executive Director, Save Middle East Action Committee (SMEAC)

Owning a home is thought to be a part of the rite of passage of being an American. But for many, if not most, of the working poor home ownership is more and more out of the question. Middle East Baltimore’s African American homeowners have achieved this success through sweat, blood, and hard work over a couple of generations. While some might question the value of a home in East Baltimore – the homeowners of Middle East Baltimore take great pride in their homes, their streets, and their families.

The attempt of East Baltimore Development Inc. (EBDI) to recreate Middle East as a largely middle class neighborhood through their redevelopment is merely a symptom of the overall urban pattern of gentrification. While Baltimore’s process of gentrification varies by neighborhood, the overall pattern of housing prices is decidedly upward. Most low income people find themselves more and more out of the picture of homeownership.

In Middle East Baltimore large institutional players, the City of Baltimore and Johns Hopkins University, have decided create the Biotech Redevelopment Park with accompanying housing opportunities. To do this they will eventually displace over 800 families. East Baltimore home sales value significantly lags behind the city as a whole. If the largely low-income homeowners of



Middle East merely received the fair market value of their property then it would have been likely that most of these families could not have remained homeowners. But largely because of SMEAC research and advocacy, resident homeowners and renters will receive substantive relocation benefits from EBDI. The average relocation benefit for a homeowner in the first phase of relocations was \$153,000. This allowed displaced Middle East Baltimore homeowners to remain homeowners. SMEAC advocacy successfully pushed to allow residents to utilize their relocation benefit anywhere in the country that they want to go.

But can relocated Middle East Baltimore residents afford to live in EBDI’s “New Middle East Baltimore”? EBDI’s plans to build \$250,000 houses and somehow provide programs to sandwich low income homeowners into them with expensive mortgages and equity fund investment in each home. Middle East residents have called this program impractical and unrealistic for the average person.

SMEAC instead proposed a “House for a House in Middle East Baltimore” program that will allow a relocated homeowner to purchase a new fully rehabbed home in Middle East with no new mortgage. “House for a House” is an approach to relocation that Middle East homeowners can live with. EBDI has tentatively agreed to SMEAC’s proposal and is developing implementation plans for the program. While we are happy with this step, we have to ask our unanswered question. Why did it take SMEAC to propose what EBDI should have done from the very beginning? A possible answer: the EBDI project is not designed for the benefit of the low-income people of color who live in Middle East.

*The Save Middle East Action Committee (SMEAC) has been fighting for justice for the East Baltimore residents who have been or will be displaced by East Baltimore Biotech project since 2001.*

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### Boycott of Baltimore City Center Sheraton Hotel Launched by UNITEHERE

by Flint Jones

Baltimore City Center Sheraton Hotel workers call for a boycott of their own hotel. Rally and picket line on Thursday, November 15, 2007 at 3:30PM, 101 W. Fayette Street. Indepth details of issues.

### September 15 Protest Against US War in Iraq

by Nicholas Collard

WASHINGTON -- Thousands demonstrate against the US war in Iraq. As many as 190 people were arrested during an anti-war protest and “die-in” on Saturday, Sept. 15, 2007. The protest was organized by the ANSWER Coalition and other groups...

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## Challenging Empire: The U.S. in the Middle East

A talk by  
**Phyllis Bennis**

Phyllis Bennis is a Fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies, Washington, DC and the Transnational Institute in Amsterdam. She is a writer, analyst and activist on Middle East and UN issues and is the author of *Understanding the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Primer* (2007) and *Challenging Empire: People, Governments and the UN Defy U.S. Power* (2005)

**Thursday, December 6, 2007**  
**Remsen Hall Room 101**  
**Johns Hopkins University**  
**7:30 p.m.**

Sponsored by the  
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