

National Network  
For Safe Communities

**National Network  
For Safe Communities  
at JOHN JAY COLLEGE**

# **Police-Community Reconciliation as a Framework to Build Trust and Increase Public Safety**

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# Overview of National Network for Safe Communities

*We support cities implement proven strategic interventions to **reduce violence** and improve **public safety**, minimize arrest and incarceration, **strengthen communities**, and improve **relationships** between law enforcement and the communities it serves.*

# National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice

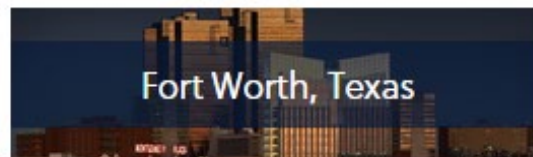
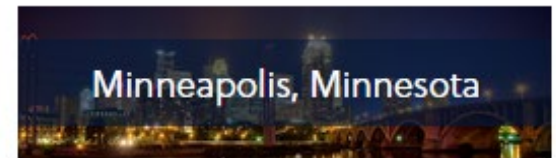
- In July 2013 **President Obama** gave a powerful speech after the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the killing on Trayvon Martin
- Directed Attorney General Eric Holder to establish a **large scale effort to address the trust deficit** between police and minority communities
- Led by **National Network for Safe Communities**, in partnership with the Justice Collaboratory at **Yale University Law School**, the **Center for Policing Equity** and the **Urban Institute**

# Basic Overview of the NI

## Mission:

- Improve relationships and increase trust between communities and criminal justice agencies.
- Advance the public and scholarly understandings of issues related to those relationships and effective strategies for building trust

## Pilot Sites:



# Pillars of the National Initiative

## Procedural justice

Focuses on the way police interact with people, and how these interactions shape people's views of the police, their willingness to obey the law, and cooperate and engage with legal authorities

## Implicit bias

Describes the automatic associations all humans make about groups and group members, and how these associations impact behavior in certain situations

## Reconciliation

Repairing relationships between police and minority communities by addressing history, grievances, and misconceptions, and finding common ground

Additionally, the NI is responsible for modifying interventions for special populations, including LGBTQIA individuals, Native Americans, immigrants, youth, and victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

# Context and Framing

- Historical legacies of harm done by the institution of policing
- Harm is not exclusive to the past
- High levels of mistrust, cynicism and ‘legal estrangement’ between police and communities of color
- When communities don’t trust the police they are unlikely to cooperate
- Public safety is mutually generated by police and communities

# Initial Survey Findings



**25%** of community members feel that police stand up for values that are important to them

Rectangular Snip



**77%** think that obeying the law ultimately benefits **everyone** in the community

Pre Surveys done by Urban Institute in Stockton, CA in 2015

# Goals of Reconciliation

Reconciliation involves deliberate attention by law enforcement and community actors to:

- Historical facts
- Recent and present conflicts and harm
- Dominant narratives
- Potential misunderstandings about facts, motives, and narratives
- Common ground and common goals going forward



# Key Elements of Reconciliation

- ‘Fact Finding’
- Acknowledgement of Harm
- Sustained Listening
- Narrative Collection and Sharing
- Explicit commitments to ongoing policy and practice change

# Fact-finding

This process should produce a clear, objective account of the history that has necessitated reconciliation.

For example:

- **Historical abuses** under color of law; current perceptions of police and policing
- Facts around **profiling, arrest rates, and incarceration**
- **Experiences and narratives** of members of the public and of police officers
- The role of “stop snitching” and the like in undermining crime and violence prevention

# A Recognition of Harm

- Acknowledgement of the harm done through active commission of violence and the harm of omission of protection
- Apologies for specific instances
- Acknowledge harmful practices that are still occurring
- Must be done authentically
- Has a significant impact on communities

# Sustained listening to members of the public

Many alienated communities feel that the police do not listen to them and are not genuinely open to community perceptions and ideas.

Chiefs and other members of police departments need to spend a meaningful amount of time hearing what the public thinks and wants.

For example:

- **Small-group meetings** between chief and command staff and key members of community
- Listening Sessions /“**Circles**” between rank-and-file officers and community members

# An explicit commitment to “better policing”

Police leadership should enter reconciliation process committed to, and make clear to the public that it wants, change.

For example:

- Practicing more **effective** and respectful policing
- Reducing arrests, incarceration, etc.
- Focusing on **key offenders** rather than the broader community
- Doing less **unintended/collateral damage**
- Implementing new strategies that **proactively repair** and **reduce harm**

# Narrative sharing

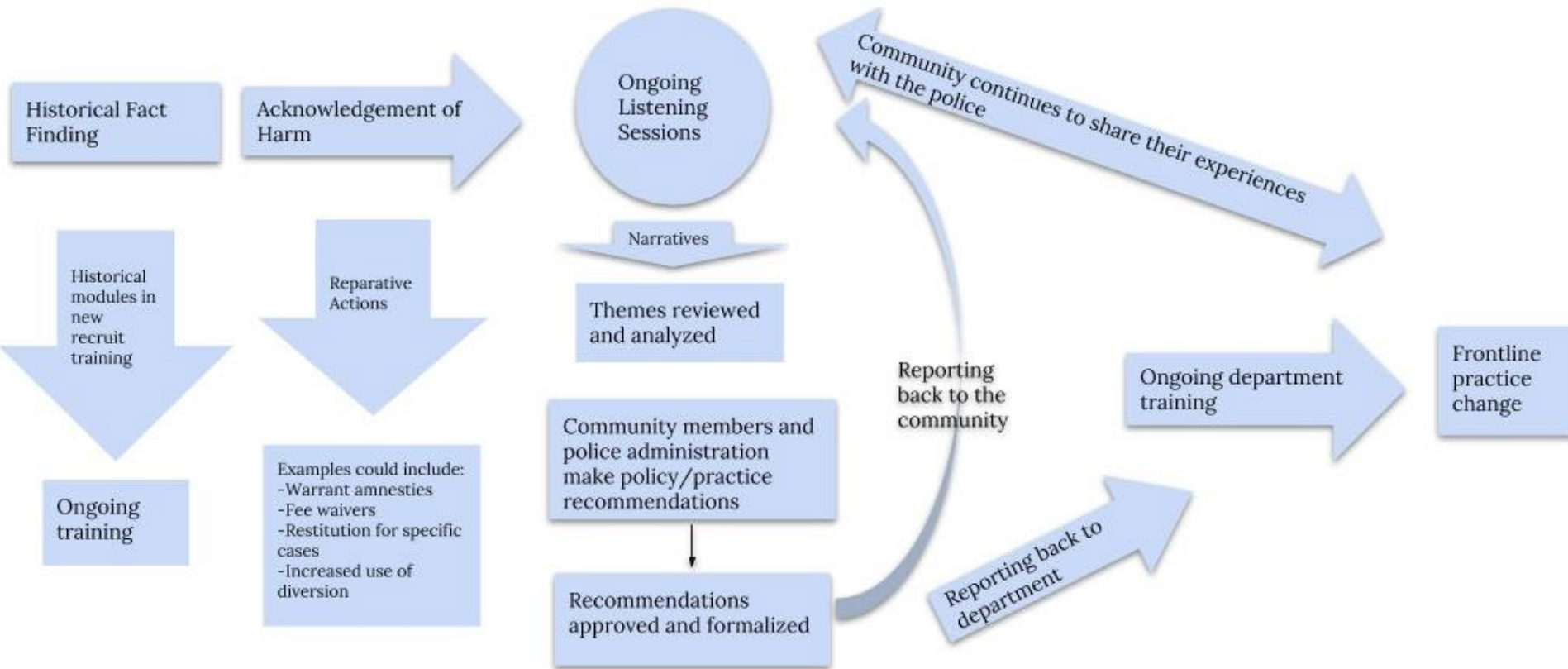
Police and alienated communities need to understand what those on each side think of the other and why they have come to think it through narrative sharing.

We cannot confront the historical or emotional scope of this mutual mistrust without sharing each others' accounts of the experiences that shape their present-day perceptions.

For example:

- **Officer** interviews
- **Community** interviews
- **Small group meetings**
- **Key stories** and **perspectives** made public

## Department Wide Reconciliation Framework



# Examples in Practice

- **Stockton, CA** – Chief of Police had more than 20 listening sessions with community members
  - Key themes from listening sessions now inform how the Community Advisory Board makes recommendations for policy and practice changes
  - City has seen a 30% reduction in homicides and 35% reduction in Non Fatal Shootings in the past year
- **Birmingham, AL** – Listening Sessions with survivors of Domestic Violence highlighted specific policy issues that were then immediately addressed



# Initial Lessons Learned

- **Support and buy in** from Police and local government **leadership** is essential
- Process must be **owned by the police** but the **community needs to drive it**
- Acknowledgements of harm need to be followed by **concrete actions** that reduce harm
- Reconciliation needs to be understood as essential to **public safety**
  - It is a philosophy not a program
- Police must recognize **the diversity of their communities** and engage accordingly

# Questions?

**Find out more:**

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