



THE FORCE

COMMUNITY SCREENING GUIDE

“We knew there was a need to dig into the police officers’ point of view, as troubling as that is for some people to accept. I went in with an open mind, not to convince you of a specific one-sided argument, like cops are evil. That doesn’t mean that evil wasn’t revealed.”

–Director of *The Force*, Peter Nicks

FILM INTRODUCTION

The Force is an award-winning documentary providing viewers with an inside look at the challenges faced by the Oakland Police Department (OPD) between 2014 to 2016, after being placed under Federal Oversight more than a decade prior. Director Peter Nicks spent two years embedded with the OPD gaining unprecedented access to film the 171st Police Academy, including going for late night ride-alongs, observing their use-of-force trainings, filming as they manage street protests and de-escalated neighborhood conflicts, and learning the controlled chaos of the dispatch center.

The film documents the daily struggles of the department as they work to be in compliance with federal reforms, face local protests following the murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, contend with a sex scandal that deeply rattles the foundation of public trust in the institution and the subsequent challenges when the leadership of the department changes as a result of the scandal.

SCREENING GUIDE OVERVIEW

The screening guide for *The Force* supports:

- Constructive, courageous, and inclusive conversations about police reform that include community, activists, and law enforcement.
- Efforts for community members and law enforcement to foster a healthy public safety system, rebuild trust, and ensure the equitable treatment of all.
- Raising national awareness on federal police reform efforts.
- Re-envisioning and exploring avenues for civic involvement, community policing, a healthy public safety system, and security.

The Screening Guide also provides resources for facilitators and community members to prepare and organize a community event for any size group. The guide is structured to be flexible and accessible allowing facilitators to focus on one or many topics chronicled in the film. Given the sensitive and emotional content of *The Force*, we recommend reading through the entire guide before hosting your event, thinking through your strategies for “Facilitating Inclusive Community Conversations,” and having some idea of the Topics for Engagement you would like to focus on.

AUDIENCES

If you are part of a community organization

If you work within law enforcement . . .

If you are an active member of a faith community . . .

This Screening Guide will be an invaluable asset for viewing and discussing *The Force*.

The guide is produced by [Open'hood](#) and created to support screenings with General Audiences, Law Enforcement Professionals, Civic Leaders, Activists, Faith Based Coalitions, and Victim Support Organizations. If you are using *The Force* in a classroom setting, the guide can be used as a supplemental resource or as part of a more comprehensive curriculum in History, Social Studies, Civics, Criminal Justice, Critical Criminology, American Studies, Law and more.

FILMMAKER'S STATEMENT

I've been holding a camera in my hands since I was 12 years old. At family reunions, armed with my Uncle Ray's VHS camera, I discovered the feeling of looking through the viewfinder and experiencing life through another point of view. I was drawn to the challenge of capturing the personality of the people I knew so well.

My storytelling decisions are directed to a large degree by a desire to tell the stories of the lives of the people I've met on my own journey. For good and bad, these tend to be people who have faced great moral questions and confronted character-defining crises.

I believe these are the stories that stimulate conversation, reflect on the human condition and allow audiences to view themselves and the world around them in new ways. The films I respect the most resonate with the authenticity of people who may see life in entirely different ways, but where no one is placed on higher moral ground than the other.

I arrived in Bay Area for film school at UC Berkeley in 1997, after graduating from Howard University. I settled into the Oakland area and discovered this was a place that held the themes, stories and characters that had been such an important part of my life. I've been trying to tell Oakland's story ever since. This city's story is relevant to urgent national conversations we are having about health, justice and community. But it is a story that is also deeply personal.

THE FORCE is the second of a trilogy of films examining these ideas through the lens of public institutions and the communities they serve. This grand narrative examines the interplay between access to health care, criminal justice, and education in one of the most diverse and promising cities in the nation, but also a city burdened by historically record crime rates and persistent poverty. What makes Oakland so vital as a stage for this series is its diverse, engaged citizenry grappling with the big issues of equity and justice that face us all.

My intent with THE FORCE is to reframe people's perceptions of both an urban police department and the community they serve. The film comes at a watershed moment in the evolution of the national conversation about police accountability and reform. And in Oakland, CA, the birthplace of the Black Panthers, that conversation is raw and rooted in a troubled history. This is not a simple story, and it's certainly not just black and white.

THE FORCE takes the audience into the lives of those at the frontline of the national conversation around police accountability in a way that allows various cohorts to hold the power and offer their points of view in a manner that doesn't avoid complexity, but instead embraces it. The film follows efforts of the OPD to meet the requirements of federally mandated reform at a moment when the institution must also answer calls from the community to reduce crime, all in the context of a growing Black Lives Matter movement – and ultimately a shocking scandal that shakes the core of the department's reform efforts.

Each film – and the trilogy as a whole – wrestles with big questions of broad-based institutional, as well as individual, morality that is the binding of any organization. Each film frames these questions in a manner that highlights common themes. My primary goal in my storytelling approach is to allow these different cohorts to hold and argue for their own story. I want my films to allow people to provoke dialogue that may not always be easy. Because in today's noisy social-media-driven world, we often do not truly see or hear one another in a manner that is healthy for democracy.

My purpose is that this trilogy can serve to connect communities in meaningful ways, cutting across ideological barriers through immersive storytelling and reframing polarizing issues in a way that allows us to see each other in new ways.

– Peter Nicks

BEFORE SCREENING *THE FORCE*

Facilitating Inclusive Community Conversations

Discussing law enforcement, issues of justice, race, and community relations in community may spark challenging and deeply personal conversations as lives have been lost, families traumatized and communities deeply wounded. These conversations require sensitivity and building trust with your audience. People who feel encouraged, respected and challenged, are more likely to share openly and thoughtfully.

Here are some best practices to consider:

Prepare yourself

*Reflect upon how *The Force* touches your own life.* View the film before your event and give yourself time to reflect so you aren't dealing with raw emotions at the same time that you are trying to facilitate a discussion.

Be knowledgeable. You don't need to be an expert on police reform efforts to lead a thoughtful community conversation. Reading through this guide and familiarizing yourself with the issues it raises can help guide the discussion and offer suggestions for individual reflection, small group discussion or cross-community dialogue. It is highly recommended to invite law enforcement leaders from the community, scholars and community advocates who are highly knowledgeable and who are in support of community dialogue.

Be clear about your role. Being a facilitator is a unique role. Staying neutral, helping move along the discussion, and creating a space where everyone can share viewpoints is your priority.

Know who might be present. It isn't always possible to know exactly who or how many will attend a screening. Keep in mind that issues can play out very differently for different groups of people. Factors like geography, age, race, religion, history with law enforcement, and socioeconomic class, can all have an impact on comfort levels, speaking styles and background knowledge and be very clear with the group not to make assumptions as audience members share their point of view.

Prepare the group

Set the tone: As a facilitator you are creating a space that welcomes the exploration of ideas from multiple perspectives that may make some in the audience uncomfortable. Prior to

starting a general discussion, a Q&A with a panel, or a more interactive engagement event, be explicit and set a tone of respect.

Share the following useful guidelines.

- Set a constructive tone. Agree not to generalize for others (“Everyone knows that” or “Your community...”)
- Ask people to speak in the first person (“I think....”)
- If a speaker breaks a ground rule, gently interrupt, remind them of the rule and ask them to rephrase.
- Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to speak.
- Before starting the conversation, be clear about how people will take turns or indicate that they want to speak to avoid interruptions.

Encourage dialogue: It is important to allow all voices in the room to be heard. Talk about the difference between dialogue and debate in order to prevent one or more people from dominating the conversation. In a debate, participants try to convince others that they are right. In a dialogue, participants try to understand each other and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and actively listening to each other. Remind people that they are engaging in a dialogue, and if it is helpful, invite participants to write down their questions or comments on cards to turn into the facilitator prior to opening the floor for dialogue.

Encourage active listening. Ask the group to think of the event as being about listening, as well as discussing. Participants can be encouraged to listen for things that challenge as well as reinforce their own ideas. You may also consider asking people to practice formal “active listening,” where participants listen without interrupting the speaker, then paraphrase to see if they have heard correctly.

Remind participants that everyone sees through the lens of their own experience. Who we are influences how we interpret what we see. So everyone in the audience may have a different view about the content and meaning of the film they have just seen. Inviting speakers to identify the evidence on which they base their opinion, without a defensive tone, can help people to understand one another’s perspectives.

Take care of yourself and group members. Discussing experiences of racism and the law can open deep wounds. If the intensity level rises, pause to let everyone take a deep breath. Think about how you might help people express their hurt while also seeking to find common ground or appreciating the presence of good intentions.

PRE-SCREENING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

If time and format allows, invite audiences to think about and/or discuss these questions before screening *The Force*.

1. What life experiences inform your own perspectives on the role of police in communities?
2. Do you believe that there are multiple perspectives on the issue of police reforms and that each should be equally valued? Or do you think there is a right and wrong to this issue?

INFORMING THE DISCUSSION

The FAQ and Timeline help build an accurate context for *The Force* as audiences will have a range of familiarity and fluency with the laws, policies, and history of what unfolded in Oakland. And while this documentary followed the events in one community, we know that today many cities and small communities across the United States share the challenges and struggles of the OPD. With this in mind, we hope *The Force* will stand as a jumping off point for cities, organizations, and individuals to reflect upon and learn from the experiences of others.

FAQ

What is Congressional Federal Oversight and what are Consent Decrees?

Congressional federal oversight includes the review, monitoring, and supervision of law enforcement agencies, programs, activities, and policy implementation. In 1994, three years after the 1991 videotaping of the beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles Police Officers, Congress passed the [Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act](#). Included within this act was a provision giving the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) unprecedented power to investigate and litigate local or state police departments who exhibit a pattern of unconstitutional practices such as the use of excessive force, racial profiling, or police misconduct. These investigations often result in an agreement between the DOJ and the police department called a **consent decree** - an agreement the DOJ and the courts use to reform departments found to have violated citizens' civil rights through police misconduct.

Why was the Oakland Police Department placed under a consent decree?

In July 2000 evidence emerged that four OPD officers known as the "Rough Riders" had for the previous four years made false arrests, used excessive force, planted evidence, and falsified police reports. As a result a federal civil rights case was brought ([Allen v. City of](#)

[Oakland](#).) As part of the negotiated settlement, the OPD was required to undergo major reforms and federal oversight was initiated in order to maintain constitutional policing.

What reforms were introduced in Oakland?

Under the oversight of an outside monitoring body, the department was given 51 tasks to complete including an overhaul of the use-of-force policies, new procedures for reporting and investigating arrests, documenting and reducing racial profiling in car and pedestrian stops, and tracking discipline of officers through internal affairs.

Is Oakland unique? What other cities are under consent decree?

Oakland is not alone. Other police departments have been placed under consent decree including Los Angeles, Detroit, Seattle, Cleveland, New Orleans and Ferguson. Currently there are over a dozen cities today with consent decrees in place including Ferguson, Mo., Cleveland, and Seattle.¹ What was particular about Oakland was that after nine years of noncompliance a federal judge temporarily placed the department under a receiver who had total control over the department.

What is the current leadership of the OPD?

Libby Schaaf continues in her role as Mayor of Oakland. Anne Kirkpatrick was appointed as Oakland's Chief of Police and in February 2017 was sworn in. She is Oakland's first female Chief of Police.

What is a Civilian Oversight Commission?

On November 8, 2016 Oakland voters overwhelmingly approved Measure LL establishing a Police Commission to oversee the police department's policies and procedures, and approved the creation of the Civilian Oversight Commission - a community police review agency empowered to investigate police misconduct and recommend discipline. The Mayor and Police Commission, made up entirely of citizens, have appointed seven individuals to the Civilian Oversight Commission. Four were selected from over 144 applications from the community, and three were appointed by the Mayor. [The Coalition for Police Accountability](#), based in Oakland, was recently honored by the National Association of Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE) with the Contributing to Oversight Award for their work to create a local, civilian, oversight structure for the OPD.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/03/us/justice-department-jeff-sessions-baltimore-police.html?mcubz=3&r=0>

How long do consent decrees usually last?

The Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice has entered into 40 total reform agreements where there was a pattern-or-practice police cases.² Twenty of those were court-enforced consent decrees, and 20 have been settlement agreements.³ The length of these decrees ranges from Cleveland, OH (2 years) to Los Angeles (9 years).

What has been the cost to the City of Oakland for this oversight?

The city of Oakland spent more than \$13.6 million on court monitors, audits, and law enforcement equipment. In addition the OPD invested in new technology such as body cameras, computer servers, and computerized systems to evaluate performance and be in compliance.⁴

How much has the City of Oakland paid to settle police misconduct lawsuits in the past 17 years? According to Oakland Police Beat, the city has paid out \$74 million to settle 714 lawsuits since 1990.⁵

Timeline of Federal Oversight of the Oakland Police Department

The events leading up to and surrounding the federal oversight of the OPD are a complicated mix of events and actors. This timeline helps explain the chronology.

June 2000: Keith Batt, an Oakland police officer trainee, blows the whistle on four OPD officers who allegedly beat and framed drug suspects in West Oakland. This case became known as the “Riders.”

Dec. 2000: A class-action lawsuit was filed by alleged victims of the Riders. The case, [Allen v. City of Oakland](#), settled in February 2003 with the city paying \$10.9 million to 119 plaintiffs and an agreement to implement 51 reforms within the OPD.

Feb. 2005: Federal Judge Thelton Henderson threatened to hold Oakland officials in contempt after learning the city had made almost no progress in implementing reforms.

Jan. 2007: Federal monitors found that Oakland had completed less than one-quarter of the reform tasks. Citing lack of progress, Judge Henderson extends federal monitoring over the Oakland police through 2010.

² Institutional failures that cause systemic police misconduct are commonly referred to as pattern-or-practice cases within the DOJ. <https://www.justice.gov/crt/file/922421/download>, p. 5.

³ <https://www.justice.gov/crt/file/922421/download>, p. 43.

⁴ <http://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Oakland-police-misconduct-cases-raise-doubts-on-8350857.php>

⁵ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/05/29/police-misconduct-settlements_n_7423386.html

Nov. 2009: Monitoring is again extended through 2012 and new monitoring team is put in place led by Robert Warshaw, the police department's preferred candidate.

Sept. 2010: Judge Henderson threatens receivership after the new monitoring team found OPD making little progress in implementing reforms.⁶

Oct. 2012: Plaintiffs in Riders case petition judge for a receiver to be placed over the Oakland Police Department, citing continued failure to implement reforms.

Dec. 2012: City reaches deal ceding extensive authority of the department to a court-appointed compliance director and receivership avoided.

March 2013: Judge Henderson appoints Thomas Frazier, a former Baltimore chief and San Jose deputy chief, to the powerful position of Compliance Director.

May 2013: Frazier pens scathing report of department and its leadership, plans to reinvestigate several high-profile misconduct cases.

Feb. 2014: Judge Henderson fires Frazier. Robert Warshaw assumes the duties of the compliance director in addition to being the monitor.

Sept 2015: Officer Brendan O'Brien commits suicide leaving a two-page typed letter naming some of his fellow officers and their sexual involvement with a woman who allegedly threatened to reveal their relationship to the OPD which began when she was 17.

Dec. 2015: Compliance appears near.

March 2016: The Monitor becomes aware of the sexual misconduct allegations that the OPD had been investigating since Sept 2015. Further investigation of Officer O'Brien's suicide reveals a larger sexual misconduct scandal. (In a report issued in June 2017, it was found that an intentional cover-up by the leadership of the OPD had occurred.⁷)

June 2016: Chief Sean Whent resigns as a result. Within eight days of Whent's resignation, two other Chiefs resign and Mayor Libby Schaaf appoints City Auditor Sabrina Landreth to

⁶ The term "federal receivership" is often heard in bankruptcy law when an owner is no longer trusted to run the business—usually because of bankruptcy—and a trustee is appointed by the court to manage the company's assets. Just as a business can be found incompetent in money matters, a government agency can also be found incompetent, usually in its capacity to act constitutionally, and receivership is put in place. <https://oaklandnorth.net/2012/10/12/possible-oakland-police-department-receivership-raises-many-unanswered-questions/>

⁷ http://dig.abclocal.go.com/kgo/PDF/Oakland_PD_Swanson_Report.pdf

lead administrative and personnel matters as Oakland conducts a national search for a new chief.⁸ The monitor's powers are expanded to help audit and reform the department's recruitment and training.

Nov 2016: Oakland votes to establish Civilian Oversight Commission aiming to be fully operational in Fall 2017.

⁸ Timeline annotated from <http://www.mercurynews.com/2016/07/13/oakland-police-in-13th-year-of-federal-oversight/>
Accessed 9/5/17.

AFTER THE SCREENING: TOPICS FOR CIVIC DIALOGUE

Post-screening events and discussions with a compelling film such as *The Force* offer an invaluable opportunity for learning, considering different points of view, sharing personal experiences in an inclusive forum, and engaging in respectful and thoughtful conversations. Each of these steps, when honored and supported, contributes to nurturing and building community and rebuilding the public's trust in local law enforcement.

Topics for Civic Dialogue are four overarching touch points from *The Force* for facilitators to use in organizing their post-screening dialogue event. Each section includes:

- (1) a curated selection of relevant quotes from the film, outside interviews, or relevant research to spark responses, inspire reflection, and even serve as talking points to generate conversation.
- (2) discussion questions to think more deeply about how *The Force* informs and/or complicates viewers current understanding of law enforcement as an institution, police officers as public servants, and the complex relationships within departments and with the communities they serve.

This section is intended to be flexible and adaptable for facilitators to choose and focus on one (or all) of the issues in whatever order is the most appropriate for the size and format of the screening event. Each section does not offer answers or attempt to problem solve. Instead the spirit of *Topics for Civic Dialogue* supports efforts to engage and support audiences as they discuss and engage with the complex issues within *The Force*.

The topics include:

What Do We Know About Police Practices and Ethics?

Balancing "To Serve and Protect" with Upholding Public Safety and Public Trust

Addressing Toxic Culture within Law Enforcement Departments

Recognizing and Addressing Implicit Bias in Law Enforcement

What Do We Know About Police Practices and Ethics?

"One police officer can affect the credibility of a department, of a city. One police officer can have an impact on this whole country."

-Oakland Police Deputy Chief Leronne Armstrong

There are no federal standards for police training nor are there universal standards for the structure, size, or governance of police departments in the United States. States set different minimum requirements for officers and at the agency level, different agencies can

adopt minimum training requirements as well. Therefore each department is subject to different state, county, and city laws and codes and establish their own policies, practices, and officer training programs.⁹ This highly localized running of law enforcement agencies can be both an asset and a liability. For example, a small town would not be beholden to the rules established by a large city department and thus be more responsive to its community needs, while a large city department may require and need different training, equipment, and structures to keep their communities safe. And while these variables exist, all law enforcement departments are bound to uphold **constitutional policing** - meaning that policing must be conducted in accordance with the parameters set by the U.S. Constitution, state constitutions, and the many court decisions that have set forth what the text of the Constitution means in terms of the everyday practices of policing.

Share this passage from former Chief Sean Whent spoken at the start of *The Force*.

Police departments are having to...to document why they do the things that they do, and rightfully so. Remember, we are the government. The nation was founded on the fundamental belief of...of a mistrust in government. That's what the Bill of Rights comes from. At the core of the foundation of this nation is a mistrust of government. And we are the most visible sign of that government. We drive around in a black and white car with flashing lights on it, and wear a uniform with a bright star. We give you tremendous authority and a gun. It's not unreasonable for people to expect you to be explaining why you do the things that you do. But in the context of...of a lawsuit alleging civil rights violations where it was alleged that we were stopping people for no reason, searching them for no reason, sometimes taking them to jail for...for no reason, or made up reasons, you understand why there...there's the level of scrutiny that there is.

Related to that, you are required to report misconduct. I don't want bad cops here. Period. I don't need them. So this is your...your blue wall of silence bullshit that people talk about. We don't have a blue wall of silence. No more. It doesn't exist anymore.¹⁰

Questions for Civic Dialogue:

- What is your perspective on the role of law enforcement as a public institution?
- What did you see in *The Force* that restored or eroded your trust in law enforcement?

⁹ <https://www.justice.gov/crs/file/836401/download>

¹⁰ From the transcript of *The Force*, p. 19.

- What do you believe is ideal relationship between law enforcement and the community it serves?
- What scenes in *The Force* informed your understanding of police practices and ethics, or how officers balanced the complexity and priorities of their job on a daily basis?
- Generally, state and local police officers take the Oath of Honor at the beginning of their career. Read the Oath of Honor with your audience and invite responses.

“On my honor, I will never betray my badge, my integrity, my character or the public trust. I will always have the courage to hold myself and others accountable for our actions. I will always uphold the constitution, my community, and the agency I serve.”

- What do you see in your community that nurtures or erodes your trust in local law enforcement?

Balancing "To Serve and Protect" with Upholding Public Safety and Public Trust

“The badge you now wear on your chest is a symbol of the public’s trust. The actions of a single police officer, on or off duty, anywhere in the country, reflect on all of us. We must conduct ourselves ethically at all times in order to remain worthy of the public’s trust.”

-Former Oakland Police Chief Sean Whent

“It’s important to remember that 94-97% of police time is spent with 3-6% of the population-those that are in regular relationship with police have a *very different* experience than others. Every person’s experience with the police is different and folks need to understand this if we are going to build a society *for all of us*.”

-Reverend Ben McBride, PICO California¹¹

In the final report of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, an overarching recommendation of **procedural just ways** was put forth. The report stated “Decades of research and practice support the premise that people are more likely to obey the law when they believe that those who are enforcing it have the legitimate authority to tell them what to do. But the public confers legitimacy only on those they believe are acting in procedurally just ways.

¹¹ Rev McBride is featured in *The Force* and is the Director of of Clergy Development for [PICO](#) (Pacific Institute for Community Organizing) California. PICO is the national network of progressive multi-racial faith-based community organizations in the United States established in 1972.

Procedurally just behavior is based on four central principles:

1. Treating people with dignity and respect
2. Giving individuals “voice” during encounters
3. Being neutral and transparent in decision making
4. Conveying trustworthy motives.¹²

In *The Force* we see, on the one hand, upholding procedurally just behavior as the goal of the reforms. On the other hand, we see the psychological struggle and stress individual officers face side by side with the trauma of the community as lives are lost.

Feeling empathy for law enforcement in the midst of violent events in cities such as Ferguson, Mo. is not easy or simple. Creating an inclusive space where multiple perspectives are welcome and where audiences feel invited to share thoughts and feelings is a challenging but helpful step. Attempting to problem solving or taking any particular stance may cause further tension. Respect the tension in the room by acknowledging each individual’s experience and allowing all voices to be heard.

Questions for Civic Dialogue:

- How do you define public trust?
- How do you describe a safe community?
- What do you think are the best practices within law enforcement departments to uphold procedurally just behavior?
- Is the mental health of law enforcement a consideration for new recruits? What services would you hope are provided for officers?
- How does a community heal if a history of police misconduct has occurred? What initial steps can be taken to repair the harm?
- Share and discuss what director Peter Nicks shared about making *The Force*.
“My insights are valuable, what I was privy too was unusual, an average person doesn’t get that opportunity. If the rest of the country spent that time with the institution, their opinions would change on a variety of levels, not just about police, but about society. What you see from there is different, consequences of poverty, profoundly vulnerable people, that feels important. The film was only a sliver into that insight.”¹³

¹² https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce_finalreport.pdf

¹³ Interview with Peter Nicks, September 6, 2017.

Addressing Toxic Culture within Law Enforcement Departments

“This police department has a history that we have to own up to. It’s our legacy.”

-Former Oakland Police Chief Sean Whent

“We are out here saying the OPD is guilty of statutory rape, and the whole department needs to be held accountable, whether you were directly engaged in having sex with a minor, or even if you just knew about it, you need to be held accountable.”

-Activist, Cat Brooks

“I feel that this is an appropriate time to place civilian oversight over this police department, and to send a very clear message about how serious we are of not tolerating misconduct, unethical behavior, and to root out what is clearly a toxic, macho culture. I want to assure the citizens of Oakland that we are hell bent on rooting out this disgusting culture and holding those accountable, responsible for their misdeeds.”

-Mayor of Oakland, Libby Schaaf

“[T]ransformation is more than just . . . enactment of specific reforms. It really is a fundamental change in how the community relates to the police department and vice versa.” -Vanita Gupta, Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Department of Civil Rights Division during the Obama administration.

Questions for Civic Dialogue:

- How do you define toxic culture?
- In *The Force* we hear Captain Leronne Armstrong sharing these reflections with a class of new recruits.

High value. High character. Integrity. All of these things we want in each one of you. And that’s why you’re here. Each one of you has those things - today. You have those things today. Now all of you came in here for the right reason. You all wanted to join the Oakland Police Department to do the right thing, right? You all want to help make Oakland safer, right? And everybody that sat in the seats before you felt the same way. Now on day one, when you hit the streets, things are going to get a little bit different.

And Mayor Libby Schaaf later stated in the June 2016 press conference, “I believe that the problem of a toxic, macho culture is not unique to the Oakland Police Department. It is not unique even to policing.”

- Do you agree or disagree with Mayor Schaaf's criticism?
- How do you understand what Captain Armstrong says to new recruits and the criticism of Mayor Schaaf?

Recognizing and Addressing Implicit Bias in Law Enforcement

"Where is the trust? There's no relationship without trust."

-Protester, *The Force*

"One thing that really stood out to me is that when you become a cop, you change. Cops get a distorted view of the world around them, as more unsafe, more violent than it is. And, unfortunately in Oakland the people committing most of the crime are largely African American, so racial disparity is threaded through everything."

-Director Peter Nicks, *The Force*

"It's a very difficult time in this country to be a police officer."

-Former Oakland Police Chief Sean Whent

"All human beings have biases or prejudices as a result of their experiences, and these biases influence how they might react when dealing with unfamiliar people or situations. An **explicit bias** is a conscious bias about certain populations based upon race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or other attributes. Common sense shows that explicit bias is incredibly damaging to police-community relations, and there is a growing body of research evidence that shows that **implicit bias**—the biases people are not even aware they have—is harmful as well."¹⁴

-from the final report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing

The use of officer body cameras has also become both a tool for police reform and a tool for documenting implicit bias. In the first systematic analysis of body camera footage collected from the Oakland Police Department, Professor Jennifer Eberhardt and Dan Jurafsky of Stanford University found officers of all ethnicities consistently used less respectful language with black community members than with white community members.¹⁵ Published in the National Academy of Sciences the team writes about the implications of this type of difference as it relates to establishing or eroding trust and police legitimacy.

¹⁴ https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce_finalreport.pdf, p. 10.

¹⁵ Along with seven other colleagues, Eberhardt and Jurafsky examined transcripts from 183 hours of body camera footage from 981 stops from 245 different OPD officers conducted in April 2014. <http://www.pnas.org/content/114/25/6521>

Routine traffic stops are not only common, they are consequential, each an opportunity to build or erode public trust in the police. Being treated with respect builds trust in the fairness of an officer's behavior, whereas rude or disrespectful treatment can erode trust. Moreover, a person's experiences of respect or disrespect in personal interactions with police officers play a central role in their judgments of how procedurally fair the police are as an institution, as well as their willingness to support or cooperate with the police.¹⁶

Phillip Atiba Goff, [President of the Center for Policing Equity](#), (CPE) has shown that it is possible to reduce implicit bias through training and policy interventions with law enforcement. Research suggests that biased associations can be gradually unlearned and replaced with nonbiased ones, but it takes leadership, patience, and changes in practice and training. Perhaps even more encouragingly, one can reduce the influence of implicit bias simply by changing the context in which an interaction takes place.¹⁷

For example, in work done with the Las Vegas Police Department in 2012-2013, CPE assessed racial and gender biases and the use of force when apprehending suspects on foot chases. Because most foot chases occur in poorer neighborhoods which tend to have more people of color (suspects in more affluent areas were more likely to be white and in cars), a new rule was instituted that the officer chasing a suspect, who was found to have an elevated heart rate, was pumped up with adrenaline, and would often be reactive in the heat of the moment, could no longer physically touch a suspect. This change in policy led to a decrease of almost 10% in the use of force in 2013 because if officers were using less force on foot chases, there would be fewer instances of excessive force involving suspects of color.¹⁸

Questions for Civic Dialogue

- In your own words, how do you understand implicit bias?
- How does implicit bias shape the interactions between police and citizens and the outcomes of those interactions?
- In what ways does implicit bias affect public safety?

¹⁶ <http://www.pnas.org/content/114/25/6521>

¹⁷ <http://www.unc.edu/~fbaum/teaching/articles/SeeingBlack.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://www.wired.com/2015/01/implicit-bias-police-racism-science/>

CALLS TO ACTION: EFFORTS TO REBUILD PUBLIC TRUST

No single reform or leader can entirely solve the fractures that may exist between communities and law enforcement. Rebuilding relationships and institutions takes multiple efforts and patience. In December 2014 President Obama signed an Executive Order establishing the [*Task Force on 21st Century Policing*](#) with the charge to identify and make recommendations to the President on best practices for effective crime reduction, building public trust, and how best to foster collaborative relationships between law enforcement and the communities they protect. On May 18, 2015 the task force submitted a comprehensive final report that delivered recommendations for long term improvement, reducing crime and building trust.

However with the change of administration in January 2017, a change of priorities away from federal oversight appears to be on the table. In his first act as Attorney General, Jeff Sessions issued a two-page memorandum calling for “a comprehensive review of the department’s police reform programs” which includes current and pending consent decrees.¹⁹

We invite all audiences to consider these Calls To Action as you build upon your experience of seeing *The Force* and continue to engage in the urgent topic of community safety, public trust and police reform.

1. Support Civilian Oversight Commissions Locally and Nationally

Civilian oversight of law enforcement supports the community and the police by ensuring greater accountability, protecting civil rights, supporting effective policing, building bridges with the community, managing risk, and overall increasing the confidence in the police as transparency, community involvement, and accountability have been maintained.

The Civilian Oversight Commission in Oakland will be working in earnest beginning in the Fall of 2017 to oversee the Oakland Police Department. Currently Civilian Oversight Commissions are in place in cities such as [Newark](#), [Washington D.C.](#), and [Seattle](#).

¹⁹ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/sessions-police-review-means-for-federal-reform/> and https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/03/us/justice-department-jeff-sessions-baltimore-police.html?mcubz=3&_r=0

2. Challenge Your Own Perspective: Establishing Circles of Human Concern

Consider Reverend Ben McBride's perspective as a point of entry for community dialogue in relation to law enforcement.

I think of us as living our lives in the back corner of one of four quadrants: police, victims of crime, people who love the police, and people who hate the police. We have to understand the experience of each of these quadrants. We probably aren't going to change our quadrant, but we can move from our corners to start to see the perspectives of the others. We have to see every perspective as legitimate, because the way a person sees the situation, that's real for them. If everyone can move from their corners, it doesn't change who we are - none of us are going to divorce ourselves from our experience - but if we can be informed by the views of others, we can move closer to where those four corners of the quadrant intersect. That's what I call the **"circle of human concern"** and that's where we can shift the conversation from how it's been for the last 50 years to something different.

Share Rev. McBride's [Op-Ed published](#) in the San Francisco Chronicle, asking audiences to share statements that resonated with them.

3. Support Coalitions Strengthening Community-Police Relations

Reverend McBride is one leader in the [Trust Through Reform](#) project, an initiative focused on transforming the public safety system into one that we can all trust. A focus of their work centers on convening partnerships around "Bringing the H.E.A.T", or hiring, equipment, accountability, and training. Through leveraging training co-led by law enforcement and community members, Trust Through Reform works to "recenter the conversation about community-police relations through understanding cynicism, implicit bias, and the historical impact of policing among contextual groups."²⁰

4. Learn About Principled Policing²¹

In November 2015, law enforcement executives from across California gathered together for the first training on "Principled Policing" hosted by the DOJ. Principled Policing was the first Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST), a certified course on procedural justice and implicit bias in the state of California founded in 1959.

Mayor Libby Schaaf also published [Principled Policing Accountability Report](#) in 2015 outlining the specific procedures the Oakland Police Department would uphold.

²⁰ <https://www.trustthroughreform.com/about/>

²¹ https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/law_enforcement/principled-policing-white-paper.pdf

5. Organize a Post-Screening Event for *The Force*

"I'm hopeful this project brings empathy and understanding to all members of our community. Pete is a talented local filmmaker who captured a difficult moment in Oakland's history. The film also documented the challenging realities our police face every day, as well as the community's legitimate anger toward past injustices."

-Oakland Mayor, Libby Schaaf

6. Hold a Community Panel

Convening local stakeholders for a panel discussion following by a Q & A session is a reliable format to use for a community conversations. Local law enforcement, leaders of advocacy groups, legal scholars and other community stakeholders can be helpful to better inform the community and offer a chance for multiple perspectives to be shared, respected and heard in an open format.

Serving as a panel moderator may be helpful given the emotions associated with this topic. It may also be helpful to review and share the "Facilitating Safe and Inclusive Community Conversations" tips outlined in the opening of this discussion guide.

Potential Partner Organizations/Speakers to Consider:

Local chapters of national civil liberties and civil rights organizations, such as:

ACLU, find a local affiliate: <https://www.aclu.org/about/affiliates>

National Urban League, find an office near you: <http://nul.iamempowered.com/in-your-area/affiliate-map>

NAACP, find a local unit: <http://www.naacp.org/pages/find-your-local-unit/>

Local chapters of civilian rights and law enforcement organizations, such as:

NACOLE (National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement).

Also refer to their list of U.S. oversight agencies: <https://nacole.org/resources/u-s-oversight-agency-websites/>

Local police department and/or police chief

Organizations dedicated to peace and community building:

Veterans for Peace, find a local chapter: <http://www.veteransforpeace.org/vfp-chapters/find-a-chapter/>

Justice Studies/ Journalism professors at local colleges and universities

Local law enforcement agencies

Seek out local grassroots organizations aiming to support and reform public safety concerns

RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE

The resources included in this section were selected on the basis of informing the research specifically for the development of this Community Screening Guide.

General Articles on *The Force*

San Francisco Chronicle, "[Director Peter Nicks approaches Oakland police documentary with an open mind](#)," September 3, 2017.

Emerson Collective, "[Film About Oakland Police Spurs Critical Conversation](#)," July 2017.

The New York Times, "[Going Hyperlocal, Films Explore the Pain of Racism](#)," August 25, 2017.

Articles Exploring Federal Oversight

The Mercury News, "[Oakland Police in the 13th Year of Federal Oversight](#)," July 13, 2016.

Politico, "[How a Dirty Police Force Gets Clean](#)," March/April 2015.

Chicago Tribune, "[Federal Overhaul of Police Departments Brings Mixed Results](#)," April 5, 2017.

Frontline, "[What Jeff Sessions' Police Review Means for Federal Reform](#)," April 4, 2017.

Information On Public Safety

Oakland Magazine, "[The Year of No Police Shootings](#)," April 3, 2017.

Website: Center for Policing Equity, <http://policingequity.org/>.

Articles On Implicit Bias

DOJ, "[FAQs on Implicit Bias](#)."

Stanford University, "[Police officers speak less respectfully to black residents than to white residents, Stanford researchers find](#)," June 5, 2017.

Social and Personality Psychology Compass, "[Implicit Bias and Policing](#)," 10/1 (2016).

538, "[Why Are So Many Black Americans Killed by Police?](#)" July 21, 2016.

Articles On Toxic Culture

LA Times, "[Accuser in Oakland police sex abuse scandal settles claim for nearly \\$1 million](#)," May 31, 2017.

Mercury News, "[Oakland police sex scandal: New revelations in death of officer and wife](#)," August 5, 2016.

Articles On Civilian Commissions

KQED, "[Oakland Residents Vote on Citizen Oversight of Police Department](#)," October 27, 2016.

Oakland Post, "[New Citizens Police Commission Could Become Among Strongest in Nation](#)," August 17, 2017.

Frontline, "[Is Civilian Oversight the Answer to Distrust of Police?](#)" July 13, 2016.

On Policing Reform

[Final Report of The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing](#)

Police Reform vs Policing Reform, [Letter](#) from Ronald L. Davis, Director of US Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

[SF Chronicle Op-Ed](#) by Reverend Ben McBride on the success of the community and police working together
[PBS: Frontline's Policing the Police](#) looks at the challenges of reforming a police department.