



What they said: Baltimore reacts to DOJ report

August 10, 2016

Baltimore has been given a road map to reform by the Department of Justice, and Wednesday morning, city officials began reacting to the DOJ report's findings.

Here's a smattering of those reactions.

Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake

"Today marks an important step on our path to reform. With the release of its Findings Report, the Department of Justice is sharing with the community, the City government, and our Police Department the conclusions of its fourteen-month investigation, an inquiry that I asked for last May. The findings are challenging to hear. The report identifies significant problems in the Department. But the transparency the Report offers is crucial if we are going to improve. Policing issues have taken on a new urgency in the national discussion in light of the tragic shootings in recent weeks as well as recent developments in our own City. It is so very important that we get this right. This Report's assessment and the follow-up to it will help us heal the relationship between our police and our community.

We have not been standing by while this inquiry was underway. Indeed, some of these reforms began before I asked the DOJ to investigate the Department. The City has taken the first steps in a long path to reform, and has begun to see real benefits: Our Police Department is already making significant changes. The community is providing valuable insights. Officers and citizens are working together to improve our communities and the policing in them. We have a long journey ahead of us, but I am grateful that we could begin the process for change while I was Mayor.

In consultation with policing experts and stakeholders in the community, we have revised twenty-six key policies, including the Department's important Use of Force policy. We are now training all officers on these new policies, and we have held additional trainings on key issues that Justice has identified.

We are revamping our approach to officer accountability, including the way that the use of force by officers is reviewed and how officers are disciplined. A number of initiatives are underway to

improve the Police Department's transparency and to encourage officers to actively engage with the community. Ways to explore and implement constructive citizen "inclusion" in the Department's disciplinary process remain under active discussion. Finally, we are investing in technology and infrastructure to modernize the Police Department. The BPD has begun retrofitting transport vans to improve safety for occupants and officers as well as installing recording cameras inside the vans. We have completed a body-worn cameras pilot program and will roll out cameras for all officers within the next two years.

Much remains to be done. Change will not happen overnight. But our efforts have started the necessary process of change. They re-affirm this City's commitment to a Police Department that both protects our citizens and respects their rights.

In this hope and expectation, I know that I am joined by the City Council and particularly its President, Jack Young, who have supported our work with the Department of Justice to improve our Police Department.

I thank Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Gupta for the Justice Department's recognition of our reform efforts. And, I appreciate her acknowledgement of our extraordinary cooperation with the Department as it conducted its investigation. We are very pleased that, as a result of our work together, this investigation has been completed in fourteen months, a very rapid pace for these investigations for a police department of this size. We committed ourselves to working collaboratively with the Department of Justice and are grateful to have earned its trust.

Our Police Commissioner, Kevin Davis, and his command staff and officers at every level, have worked tirelessly to steer the Police Department on the path to reform. I am confident that, with the Findings Report as a blueprint and the partnership of the Department of Justice, the Baltimore City Police Department will become a model Police Department.

I want to thank the Department of Justice team, the Police Department, my staff, and our counsel for their hard work through this process. We will continue to work together so that Baltimore can move as quickly as possible toward full-scale implementation of the recommended reforms.

Over the next few months, we will put in place a concrete plan for change and a new culture – for the good of the City, the Police Department and the people it protects."

Gene Ryan, president of Baltimore City FOP Lodge 3

As a proud member of the Baltimore Police Department for over thirty years, and having spent my entire career on the street and now as president of Baltimore City FOP Lodge 3, I will not

allow the Department of Justice to lay blame on the shoulders of the dedicated men and women of the Baltimore Police Department.

Make no mistake, while today's findings ... is disturbing to citizens and police officers alike, it is a clear indictment of the failed leadership at all levels of city government. While many will attempt to cast blame on the police officer working the street, the Department of Justice states in their Executive Summary, and we agree, that this failure is the result of "systemic deficiencies at BPD."

CAPTION Residents recount personal tales of interactions with police

The FOP is prepared to continue to demand the reforms we called for in our 2012 Blueprint for Improved Policing that is cited in the Department of Justice's findings. In addition, in order to eliminate pressure on our front line police officers coming from command staff to produce meaningless and ineffective statistics, the FOP calls for the immediate elimination of the current Comstat program. As recently as last night, and continuing at this moment, our police officers are being ordered to conduct enforcement that runs counter to the suggested reforms mentioned in the DOJ report as well as the Blueprint for Improved Policing.

The FOP is committed to ensuring our police officers, sergeants and lieutenants are heard from as the Department of Justice moves to the next phase of their investigation and prepares for a consent decree between the United States and City of Baltimore. The FOP urges each sworn member of the Baltimore Police Department to continue to fulfill their duty to protect and serve the citizens of Baltimore, and above all to back each other up and be safe.

Congressman Elijah Cummings

“This report validates what so many residents in Baltimore City already know to be true – that the trust between our law enforcement officers and the communities they serve has been repeatedly violated and is in desperate need of repair. It also underscores just how much damage we must undo, and how much work is ahead of us.

“It troubles me to read how frequently the Baltimore City Police Department has engaged in various disturbing patterns or practices, including excessive use of force and unjustified and severe disparities in the rates of stops, searches, and arrests of African Americans. The statistics are simply astounding, and the unconstitutional violations of our citizens’ rights are unacceptable.

“But as troubling as this report is, the first step in fixing a problem is to understand it, so I am grateful for the Department of Justice’s hard work bringing to light the severity of the systemic issues facing the BPD. The DOJ also importantly outlined the sources of these issues, including failures in training and equipping officers, collecting data, and holding officers accountable. I

look forward to the DOJ's forthcoming suggestions on how the BPD can make the improvements necessary to solve these problems.

"I commend Commissioner Kevin Davis for taking an open and constructive approach to the DOJ's review, and for proactively implementing policy reforms to improve the BPD, including updating the use-of-force policy and requiring that new recruits spend their first three months in the community in order to learn about Baltimore City's people and history.

"I am confident that Commissioner Davis will continue to reform our police department under the helpful guidance of the DOJ. This must be a transformative moment that leads to a movement to make the BPD a model for the nation.

"All Baltimore City residents deserve a police department that they trust will respect and serve them and I intend to monitor the progress of this review in the months and years ahead to ensure that the BPD works tirelessly to regain the public's confidence."

Martin O'Malley, former mayor and governor

The DOJ report suggests many of the actions that we must start taking again in order to improve policing and public trust in policing in Baltimore.

It is a shame that the DOJ review of policing in Baltimore chose not to look at the data and trends on enforcement levels, discourtesy, excessive force, and police involved shootings prior to 2010. Such a review would have shown reductions in each of categories of police misconduct even as Baltimore close down open air drug markets and achieved historic reductions in violent crime.

It is also a shame that no mention or analysis was made of the victims of violent crime. For in Baltimore, those victims are overwhelmingly poor and black. And their lives deserve the same level of protection that every other description of citizen should expect from their City government.

Our own experience as a City tells us there are things that work when it comes to the intertwined work of reducing violent crime and improving levels of trust between neighbors and police officers.

Make no mistake about it -- enforcement levels rose when we started closing down the open air drug markets that had been plaguing our poorest neighborhoods for years. But after peaking in 2003, arrest levels declined as violent crime was driven down.

In order to reduce crime we also took actions to improve how we train and police the police. Those actions included reverse integrity stings, affirmative recruitment practices, adequate staffing of the Internal Affairs Division, early warning systems for citizen complaints

of officer misconduct, keeping experienced supervisors on the force with competitive pay, providing professional staff to the Civilian Review Board.

Improving community trust and reducing violent crime are mutually reinforcing actions, not an either/or proposition.

Sen. Ben Cardin

"Today's disturbing report from the U.S. Department of Justice provides a devastating account on how the Baltimore Police Department systematically violated the civil rights of the citizens they were sworn to protect. In particular, the report details a pattern of illegal searches, stops, arrests and use of excessive force that disproportionately impacted African-American communities in Baltimore.

"After the death of Freddie Gray in police custody last year, I joined with colleagues to ask DOJ to conduct this investigation into BPD. I am pleased that Baltimore City fully cooperated with this investigation, and share DOJ's optimism that all parties can work together to design and implement a comprehensive set of remedies. I look forward to working closely with BPD and DOJ as we conduct community outreach over the next few months that will provide critical input into an ultimate court-enforceable consent decree and federal court order. I will work closely with our federal delegation and federal agency partners to make sure Baltimore has the resources it needs to carry out wide-ranging reforms. All our citizens deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

"We owe nothing less to the family of Freddie Gray than to have his tragic death provide the catalyst for an overhaul of BPD that rebuilds the trust between the police and the communities they serve. We owe the citizens of Baltimore who were denied justice and equal treatment under the law the opportunity to make BPD a model police force for the nation. We must ensure that BPD officers have the best possible training, equipment, and resources to carry out their sworn duties in a lawful manner that builds trust with communities they serve, and that officers are quickly held accountable for misconduct."

Sen. Bill Ferguson

"The report is a sobering assessment of complex challenges that have built up over decades. As with any problem, the first step toward recovery is admitting there is a problem. In Baltimore, we have a problem. Now it's time to fix it."

Sen. Barbara Mikulski

"The Justice Department's report is deeply troubling and reform must be mandatory. The report shows that Baltimore police have routinely engaged in conduct that violates the Constitutional rights of our City's residents.

“Attorney General Loretta Lynch and her team at the Justice Department have shined a light on a long-term problem within the Baltimore Police Department. That’s why Mayor Rawlings-Blake requested the investigation and why I supported it.

“BPD Commissioner Kevin Davis has been cooperative and constructive in his approach to the investigation. He’s been proactive in reforming use of force, discipline and accountability within the force. Moving forward, his leadership, and that of our Mayor and City Council, both present and future, will be needed to transform the BPD and restore the community’s trust and confidence in both protecting rights and fighting crime.”

Brandon Scott, City Councilman

"This shouldn't be a surprise to anyone. We all knew this was what it was going to say. For my entire lifetime, the police department has had serious deficiencies in these areas. We need to make sure these deficiencies are fixed so that my children and my grandchildren don't have to grow up going through the same situations that I went through. Change is hard and change is difficult. A lot these things have already begun to change. This is a time for us to say we've got to get this work done," Scott told The Sun.

In a statement, he said: "Yesterday, the Department of Justice released the results of its investigation into the Baltimore Police Department. While the findings are harsh they reflect the harsh reality lived by so many throughout our city's history. Like it or not the despicable things mentioned in the report is our history and we must own them before we can fix them. These findings are not surprising to me and should not be surprising to anyone. Although I wish we could have dealt with these issues which have existed as long as I can remember ourselves, we now have a roadmap to reform. Last year, when all of Baltimore's elected officials agreed that an investigation was needed; we knew that this would be the outcome.

"Moreover, while there are many years of reform ahead of us many reforms have already begun within the department. Lastly as we continue down this path we must all realize that it will more than likely result in a consent decree with great financial impact. Tens of millions of dollars will have to be spent correcting these issues which may lead to tough fiscal decisions in the years to come. However, despite this reality we must move forward in order to leave our children and grandchildren a city where they will not have to endure what too many of us have. Baltimore and our police department will be better for it. Nonetheless, this change like all necessary change will not be easy and will take all of us to accomplish. It can, will and must be done."

Sherrilyn Ifill, President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.

“The report released by Department of Justice (DOJ) has confirmed what many African American residents of Baltimore have known and lived too long. The findings in the report are

devastating. Taken together, the findings lay bare the harsh reality of discriminatory policing in a major American city -- from discriminatory stops, arrests and searches to the use of excessive force. It's instructive that the DOJ identifies the legacy of "zero tolerance policing" as the key source of the systematic unconstitutional conduct of the Baltimore Police Department."

Former Mayor Kurt Schmoke, now president of Univ. of Baltimore

"I think the State's Attorney is correct: the overwhelming majority of our police officers are doing a good job and doing it in the right way. I know that the encounters people have with police differ greatly around the city. But people still want more police in their communities. I just think people want police officers who are both fair and firm.

We still haven't eliminated all the vestiges of racism. I think we're doing better than many other cities. I'm actually very optimistic [about the future]. I met with one of the young elected officials recently and told him, now, you have a corporate community that wants to remain in the city, people who want to reside in the city, and that creates more robust-public-private partnerships to address these remaining problems. Some of the same problems I faced in the 90s are still here, but you've got a climate now of people who want to work as partners with you to solve those problems.

I'm hoping people will look to the future and not just dwell on the past."

DeRay Mckesson, chief human capital officer Baltimore City public schools, Black Lives Matter activist

This report uncovers what so many people already knew to be true. Commissioner [Kevin] Davis' comments so far highlighted the need and understanding for deep, systemic change, and now we have to see what that means in practice.

I think addressing deficiencies in the police department can be politically risky, and I think some people have not been willing to take those risks. Some people put their careers above what they know to be right. I am thankful the unrest has created an atmosphere that is forcing people to address these issues. We can change the systems and the structures in a way to change the culture.

Clarence M. Mitchell IV, WBAL radio talk show host, former Maryland State Delegate and Senator

In order to make changes, they are going to have to take on the FOP, they are going to have to make structural changes. They are going to have to. Baltimore City is on the national map now.

What this report says is police are not obeying they law. They're supposed to be the arbiters of it.

The Democratic regime — I was a part of it — has had political relationships that have superseded holding people, their friends, accountable. It's called Smalltimore for a reason. If

you're engaged in wrong-doing, we gave you a pass. By turning a blind eye to what the report revealed, thousands of Baltimoreans' lives have been ruined forever.

I'm optimistic [for change]. Right now, there are eight brand-new City Council members, there's a new mayor coming on board. I feel optimistic because new voices are coming.

Del. Jill Carter

"Not one single thing I read was a surprise," said State Del. Jill Carter. The stop and frisk tactics have long fostered a mentality in the department that poor, black people in the city "needed to be contained, arrested, set apart from the rest of the city," she said.

Carter said the department will not improve as long as black residents are not actively recruited, as long as police officers are able to live outside the community. She raised concern that non law enforcement are unable to review internal affairs investigations or serve on trial boards. "There's still a great resistance to that," she said. Carter also said "as long as police are investigating themselves, it will be default to have honest evaluations."

Carter said the report is the first step, but that the department and elected leaders to change the mentality and culture of the police department, making sure officers are disciplined for invalid arrests.

"It's about changing the mentality," she said. "You have to have repercussions for it." She added, "I'm very happy this report is completed. It's been a long time coming. Maybe better a decades ago," she said, but now the department can start real reform.

Sen. Joan Carter Conway

"Some people deny the fact that there is racial bias. The black community has always been treated differently," she said.

Carter Conway, like Del. Jill Carter, said it's unacceptable that the majority of the police force does not live in Baltimore.

"You want to put in your 8 hours and move on," Carter Conway said.

Del. Curt Anderson

"We knew this was going on and this was a problem. Police officers in Baltimore City routinely pull up on young African American males and arrest them. That's just the ones we know about. This is what we heard of time and time again during hearings in Annapolis and community meetings."

Anderson said the department has to work hard to implement changes, but it will take time to regain the community's trust. "They have to adopt all of the recommendations. The main

problem, the DOJ hit it on the head. It seems like the police have created an us versus them mentality. No matter what happens, the officers have to support the officers. It's something that's got to change. It should be us and them working against the criminals. A majority of citizens in Baltimore aren't sure what they are going to get when they call police."

"There's been a long, long time where people African American people who live in poor areas in the city who felt disrespected by the police department, almost generations. To overcome that will take a very serious effort, some money, but the main thing it will take is time," Anderson said. "Even if they put in every change, it will still be years before folks in these areas have faith in the police department. it's not going to change over night."

City Council President Bernard C. "Jack" Young

Young noted he had called for a patterns and practice review in 2014.

"I wasn't surprised at all by the findings. We recognized a long time ago something wasn't right," he said. Young credited Commissioner Davis with bringing reforms to the department, such as firing officers for bad behaviors, pushing for body cameras, and attempting to improve community policing, he said.

"He has implemented a whole lot of changes," Young said. "I was hoping that they would've given us credit for some of the reforms that Commissioner Davis already put in place.

"There are a lot of issues that need to be addressed. We can be held accountable as we move forward," he said, adding Davis is on the right. "I think we will have a police department that we can all be proud of."

Archbishop William E. Lori

The Department of Justice report on the Baltimore Police Department is sobering and distressing and should be a cause for great concern for all people of good will in our community. The report is an affirmation of those in our community who have long criticized the policing strategies and practices of the Department and a repudiation of those whose actions have undermined both public trust as well as the inherent dignity of those they have sworn to serve and protect.

I encourage people to read the report, reflect on the findings and consider the role that each of us should play in bringing about much needed change. The long overdue reforms and changes that Commissioner Kevin Davis has already begun to enact and has pledged to fully implement are encouraging. However, it is clear from the report that nothing short of a change in the culture within the Department will result in the kind of reform that is necessary to ensure the fair and equitable treatment of every citizen of Baltimore.

While this report rightly warrants a collective call for change, we cannot ignore the good and just service of the vast majority of policemen and women who put their lives on the line every day as

they carry out their duties with respect for their office and those they serve. I pray the reaction to this report will not obscure their selfless service and will inspire others to follow them and to join efforts to address this resounding call for urgent change.

I invite all members of the community to join me in praying for our city, for those who justly protect its citizens, and for all who call Baltimore home.

Councilwoman Mary Pat Clarke

"We knew a lot of it," Clarke said. But she was surprised by the amount of incidents outlined. "Just the number of incidents that came to the attention of the justice department, the sheer number was appalling," Clarke said.

"We asked for this report, we requested this report. It's a long road forward but the outlines sound as if we need to make radical changes" between the police and the community, she said.

"It will lead us to a better city, to a one Baltimore City as we follow the guidelines. The future of Baltimore depends on us making the changes. I have every confidence that we will follow these guidelines and build a better strong city," Clarke said.

She said officers also deserve a better relationship with the people they serve, saying that the majority of city officers do good work. "These rogue officers that discredit [the department] all need to be gone. The police force needs to regain the high esteem in which it had been held in the past. It's only fair to the officers who have served so well and the communities they serve."

William "Billy" Murphy, the attorney for Freddie Gray's family

The report reveals "human cancers" pervasive throughout the department, he said. "These human tumors must be properly and surgically removed before they spread," he said. "Unless we rid the department of these cancerous tumors, the rotten police officers, we demoralize on a continual basis all the good guys who are forced to witness this under the blue wall of silence."

Murphy appeared before the news media beside Freddie Gray's father Wednesday afternoon in Baltimore. The attorney decried police commanders who ordered officers to make false arrests and officers who falsified charging documents, which he said was reported by the Department of Justice.

"They have to go," he said. "This is criminal conduct."

Freddie Gray's father did not speak and the attorneys said he would not take questions.

David Rocah

"It's hard to read this without feeling sense of rage," said David Rocah, lawyer with the ACLU who has lobbied for reforms for some of the issues identified in the Justice report. He said the

misconduct cases cited in the report show that calling the internal investigative process as "broken" is an understatement.

"We need to understand, it was only the Department of Justice that could do this because the cloak of confidentiality and invisibility that is given to those records."

"There is so much in here raised by us and others for so long it's unbelievably depressing," Rocah said. "On the other hand, I hope with the Justice Department's intervention, it will be harder to ignore and resist."

Jonathan Smith

Jonathan Smith is former chief of special litigation at the Justice Department's civil rights division, where he oversaw more than 20 investigations of police departments:

"These investigative findings provide a much-needed foundation for healing the community and beginning the reform process. It will allow all segments of the community to have a shared understanding of the issues, the underlying causes of the problem and what needs to be done to complete the hard work of reform.

Among the most remarkable findings in the report was the mapping of the stop and frisk practices. The finding that stops of African Americans are wildly disproportionate in neighborhoods that adjoin white neighborhoods underscore the role that race plays in policing in Baltimore. The practices that led to this result created a corrosive relationship between police and the communities they are sworn to serve.

The findings also demonstrate that this is not about bad police officers, but about the failure of policies, training, supervision, accountability and most importantly misplaced policing priorities. It shows that black neighborhoods are overpoliced and underserved.

OSI-Baltimore

The DOJ's findings affirm and uplift the grievances that Baltimore communities have leveled against the BPD for decades. It is important that the federal government has now acknowledged the validity of these grievances, but it's deeply troubling that these unconstitutional practices continued for years despite efforts from the community to raise the alarm. It should not take a federal investigation to prompt reforms to a system so deeply in need of them. The fact that community concerns have not been taken seriously only underlines the need for greater community engagement and civilian oversight of the BPD...

While this initial agreement between the two parties is a good start, it's crucial that further discussions toward the development of a formal consent decree include strong community input, which has largely been ignored or swept aside in the past. OSI-Baltimore grantees, including

Baltimore United for Change, the ACLU of Maryland, and No Boundaries Coalition-whose report, *Over-Policed, Yet Underserved: The People's Findings Regarding Police Misconduct in West Baltimore*, is cited multiple times in the findings report-made great efforts to ensure that community voices were consulted during the investigation. These and other community voices must have input into the creation and implementation of the consent decree...

We hope that these reforms are not weakened in the negotiation process. Rather, we hope that the Mayor and BPD will take full advantage of the negotiations and eventual consent decree to transform the BPD into a model of equitable and effective policing.

The DOJ investigation and the resulting consent decree can be an important part of implementing systemic reforms to the BPD. But consent decrees in other cities have a mixed record of success. These efforts cannot work in a vacuum. They require constant pressure and continual effort for years to come. We have an unparalleled opportunity to reform the deeply entrenched problems in the Baltimore Police Department and increased attention to community concerns going forward. Let's make the most of it.

ACLU of Maryland

The Department of Justice's findings on the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) document in devastating detail what Baltimoreans have decried for years: Baltimore's Black residents are racially-profiled, harassed, stopped, searched, arrested, and assaulted by police, in violation of the U.S. Constitution. Baltimore residents subjected to these abuses have included children and teens, the elderly and individuals in crisis.

Worse still, community members are both structurally and intentionally thwarted from holding officers, including school police who often operate collaboratively with BPD officers, accountable for violating their rights.

Critically, the DOJ report draws attention to the total lack of supervision and accountability that has allowed abuses to flourish unchecked within the BPD. As an organization that also advocates for fair student discipline and works with coalitions tracking school-based arrests, we are equally concerned by the findings that Baltimore School Police operate as an auxiliary law enforcement agency of the BPD.

The DOJ findings are a long overdue memorialization of the experience of generations of Black communities in the City. But, without the commitment of law enforcement, the City Council, and the Mayor's office to a fundamental overhaul of the department and current accountability structures, the findings will not translate to meaningful change in the everyday lives of Baltimore's residents.

Moreover, while the external accountability that comes with DOJ oversight is promising, law enforcement must ultimately be accountable to the communities it serves. So, as the DOJ and

City leaders negotiate a consent decree, we urge them to support Baltimore's residents playing a central role in both crafting and implementing reforms.

Wade Henderson, president and CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

This report says nothing that Baltimoreans of color haven't been saying for years and what national civil rights advocates have been saying since the wrongful death of Freddie Gray: that in communities of color, Baltimore police act more like an occupying force than a partner in public safety.

What's different is that this is a report written by the U.S. Department of Justice with the weight of the federal government and the chief law enforcement officer of the nation behind it. Congress and the city of Baltimore should finally listen.

This is not just Baltimore's story; it's the story of over-policed communities of color nationwide. The Department of Justice has documented heinous mistreatment of minorities in Cleveland, Ferguson, New Orleans, and elsewhere and deep-seated racial disparities persist nationwide at every juncture of the justice system.

As the evidence continues to mount in reports, statistics, dead bodies, and bereft families, we urge Congress to finally start taking police reform seriously. Congress must take up and pass the End Racial Profiling Act of 2015; The Law Enforcement Trust and Integrity Act of 2015; and The Stop Militarization Act of 2015.

We applaud the Department of Justice for releasing this report. Now it's up to Congress to act on its findings.

Mike Greenberger, professor of law

"The report seems worse than I thought it was going to be, although I knew it was not going to be pleasant reading," said Mike Greenberger, who worked at the Department of Justice from 1999-2001 and today is a law professor at the University of Maryland.

Still, Greenberger is optimistic for the potential for reform via a consent decree, to be entered between the police department and the Justice Department. "This process works wonders," Greenberger said of the consent decree. First implemented in Los Angeles following the beating of Rodney King, the consent decree has been used to reform police departments in Prince George's County, Montgomery County, Cincinnati and Los Angeles. In each of those places, Greenberger said, it was successful at simultaneously improving police-community relations and reducing crime.

"This report is not something to jump for joy about," Greenberger said. "But it will start the

healing process that has historically has improved the relationship of the department with minority populations, and crime is reduced to boot."

Rev. Jesse Jackson

The tragedy of Baltimore is it is part of a national pattern. In Baltimore, the feds started investigating the patterns and practices of the city's police department after the people rose up and filled the streets in protest, following the death of Freddie Gray. In Chicago, the DOJ came to town after street protests over the killing of Laquan McDonald, the 17-year-old shot 16 times by police.

I doubt when DOJ releases its report on the Chicago police department in the coming months the findings will be much different than what they were in Baltimore. Indeed, what has made the Black Lives Matter movement so widespread is that abusive police behavior is so pervasive. The men in my family have been racially profiled and stopped for no reason. The women followed in stores as suspects instead of customers.

That is why a White House conference on violence, police misconduct, racial disparities and urban reconstruction is so urgently needed. That is why police need to live as neighbors and not strangers and occupiers in the communities they are sworn to serve and protect.

Jonathan Blanks of the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank

Jonathan Blanks said the lack of record-keeping cited in the DOJ report "kind of blew my mind." According to the report, the BPD told the DOJ they couldn't find files for 20 officer-involved shootings – including one fatal shooting. "That's crazy," he says.

More broadly, Blanks says, the report reflects the failures of the broken windows, zero-tolerance approach to police work, which has resulted in "heavy policing for the sake of heavy policing." Ironically, he said, the aggressive approach makes it harder for homicide to do their jobs given mistrust between the community and police force.

Blanks says Americans need to reassess how we look at policing and that the day-to-day way police go about their jobs. "There's a style of policing that's aggressive and abusive, and very many times unconstitutional and that has negative effects on communities."

Danyelle Solomon of the Center for American Progress

For Danyelle Solomon, the findings of the Department of Justice investigation aren't particularly shocking, but are "an example of all the things that we as a nation are struggling with and talking about now."

Solomon is currently researching links between the origins of modern policing and 19th-century slave patrols in the southern United States. American policing “was created to control the African American community,” she says.

“Throughout history law enforcement has not necessarily protected the African American community, but instead enforced the status quo upon them.”

Jamie Gorelick, former top DOJ official who now works with WilmerHale

“We tried in partnership with the Department of Justice to do this investigation a different way,” said Jamie Gorelick, a former top DOJ official who now works with WilmerHale, the Washington, D.C., law firm representing the city during the DOJ investigation.

Though some had criticized the mayor’s decision to hire WilmerHale – arguing that it was an unnecessary expense, and that the firm would seek to portray BPD in the best possible light — Gorelick dismissed this criticism as false, saying “Everyone knew that there were problems” with the Baltimore Police Department and “We knew that the findings would be tough and we urged the DOJ to dig as deeply as it needed to be and get to the point of helping us implement change.”

Rather, Gorelick says, the city hired WilmerHale to streamline the investigative process and to help implement changes while the investigation was happening. The DOJ’s investigation of the Baltimore Police Department took 15 months instead of the typical two to three years. Gorelick says that the expedited investigation will allow Baltimore to make the necessary reforms to the department. The consent decree, she says, should be completed within this calendar year.

Overall, Gorelick says, the “The department had a willing partner in Baltimore.” The work of the Department of Justice and the cooperation of the city, she says, could serve as model for other cities seeking to reform their departments. “There will be cities that want to fight every aspect of the investigation, as has been the pattern, but if you want to move through the investigative stage to change and address the problems, what Baltimore is doing is a model and what the Department of Justice has done in Baltimore is a model.”