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## Boston cops and black churches

CHRISTOPHER WINSHIP & JENNY BERRIEN

**I**N recent years, homicide rates in a number of large American cities have plummeted. Between 1990 and 1996, New York's rate dropped 58.7 percent, Houston's 54 percent, Los Angeles' 27.9 percent, Philadelphia's 17.7 percent, and Washington, D.C.'s 15.9 percent. In most, if not all of these cities, the precipitous decline in homicide rates derives from even sharper declines in youth violence. However, not all cities have been so fortunate. For example, in Baltimore, Phoenix, and Las Vegas, homicide rates have risen by 7.5 percent, 45.3 percent, and 103.8 percent respectively. A key question then is: Why has youth violence fallen so significantly in some cities but not in others?

Certainly, part of the decline in youth violence can be attributed to the robust economy, as well as to the nationwide

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*This article is adapted from a chapter in a forthcoming book edited by Gary S. Katzmann, Managing Youth Violence (Brookings/Governance), and is based on research supported by the Smith Richardson Foundation.*

decline in the number of youths aged 15 to 24, the most crime-prone age group. But these factors are present in almost all cities, and thus cannot explain the differences across the nation. Besides, similar declines in homicide rates did not occur in the mid and late 1980s when the economy was also strong. And the 7.7 percent drop in the number of youths aged 15 to 24, from 1986 to 1996, is too small to account for much of the improvement.

The dynamics of youth violence are complex, depending upon a myriad of factors that vary from city to city. But certain features of violence reduction in Boston stand out, yielding important answers as well as lessons for other cities. The drop in homicide rates in Boston has been the steepest in the nation. Between 1990 and 1996, Boston's rates dropped 61.2 percent, from 152 homicides to 59. In 1997, the rate dropped further to only 43 homicides, a total decline of 72 percent from the previous high. By 1998, only 35 murders took place. Perhaps even more stunning is that, for the 29-month period ending in January 1998, Boston had no teenage homicide victims. Since that time (as of this writing) there have been four.

Boston is also unusual in that a group of ministers, the Ten-Point Coalition, is thought to have played a key role in reducing youth homicides. The media has already lavished attention on the coalition's work. *Newsweek* ran a feature story; *Time*, *Sojourners*, the *Weekly Standard*, the *New York Times*, the *Boston Globe*, and the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* have all run major stories on the ministers. PBS made the Ten-Point Coalition the subject of a documentary.

What we will explore is whether the coalition has, in fact, played a significant role in reducing youth violence in Boston. At first glance, the answer appears to be no. Crime rates have ropped dramatically in other cities without significant involvement from the clergy. The fact that only three ministers—Eugene Rivers, Raymond Hammond, and Jeffrey Brown—have been centrally involved, and that even they have not devoted themselves to the coalition full time, suggests that too little has been attempted by the churches for them to have played a substantial role in the crime reductions. And David Kennedy, a researcher at Harvard's Kennedy School of

Government, has documented how new law enforcement policies and practices have led to more effective ways of dealing with youth violence. The assertion that the Ten-Point Coalition has been a significant player would seem to be, at best, good public relations.

We will argue, to the contrary, that the Ten-Point Coalition has played a critical role in Boston's sharp drop in youth violence. It has done so by changing the way the police (and other elements of the criminal justice system) and Boston's inner-city community relate to each other. In its intermediary role between the two parties, the Ten-Point Coalition balances the community's desire for safe streets and its reluctance to see its children put in jail. It has created what we will call an "umbrella of legitimacy" for fair and just policing.

### **The Boston story**

Boston has never been considered a violence-plagued city on the scale of Los Angeles or New York. But in 1990, 152 homicides occurred in Boston—a record high. The roots of this violence took hold in the late 1980s, when crack-cocaine found its way into Boston's inner city. As the crack market developed, so did turf-based gangs and gang violence. To protect their financial stakes in the booming crack-cocaine market, as well as to maintain "respect," the gangs increasingly turned to firearms. "Disrespect" was punished by violence. And a vicious cycle developed, in which individuals joined one gang to protect themselves from another gang. With firearms serving as the primary method of protection and retaliation, as well as being tools for spontaneous assaults, the frequency and severity of violence grew to a level never before seen in the Boston area.

Since Boston law-enforcement agencies had not previously dealt with turf-based violence and criminal gang activity, their initial response was inadequate. Up until 1990, the department denied that there was a "gang problem." Many current Boston police officers have vouched that the department simply had no policy for combating gang violence. Without an in-depth understanding of the problem or a plan of attack, police officers fell back on the aggressive, riot-oriented tactics of the 1960s. In addition, because homicide has traditionally been handled on a case-by-case basis, the police department aimed

at making the "big hit" and arresting the "big player," rather than addressing the group-based nature of gang violence.

In 1988, the City Wide Anti-Crime Unit (CWACU), traditionally responsible for providing support across district boundaries, was permanently assigned to the most violent neighborhoods of Boston's inner city. In 1989, the police department declared that any individual involved in a gang would be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Finally, the department had acknowledged the existence of a "gang problem."

But to what effect is another matter. According to one current police captain, the CWACU was expected to "go in, kick butts, and crack heads." A common attitude emerged within the force. They believed that "they could do anything to these kids" in order to snuff out their violent activity. This mentality produced, not surprisingly, highly aggressive and reportedly indiscriminate policing tactics.

### **Community backlash**

Two scandals in 1989—the Carol Stuart murder investigation and the department's "stop-and-frisk" policy—alerted the community to the police's questionable tactics. Carol Stuart was a pregnant white woman who was murdered in the primarily African-American neighborhood of Mission Hill. Her husband, Charles Stuart, who was with her at the time of her death, claimed that a black male had murdered her. As a result of the accusation, the Boston Police Department scoured the Mission Hill neighborhood, looking for suspects. The community reported instances of police abuse as well as coerced statements that were later used as evidence against a black male suspect, William Bennett. But Charles Stuart himself was later identified as the alleged perpetrator of the crime, though he committed suicide before an investigation could be completed. The mishandling of the Stuart murder investigation and the dishonesty of the victim's husband created an atmosphere, especially within the African-American community, of extreme distrust of, and disillusionment with, the Boston Police Department.

The stop-and-frisk scandal intensified these sentiments. A precinct commander's description of the department's approach to prevent gun-related violence as a policy of "stop and frisk,"

*en masse*, outraged the black community and solidified the Boston public's suspicion of the police. There is some dissension within the police department about the extent to which their policy was really to stop and frisk all black males, indiscriminately, within high-crime areas—a policy also referred to as “tipping kids upside down.” According to some officers, targeted individuals were either previously spotted performing some illegal activity or were known gang members. But officers also acknowledged that their approach was critically flawed in that it was often very difficult to “distinguish the good guys from the bad guys.” In addition, some officers admitted that there were “bad-seed” cops who acted far too aggressively in certain cases. Accusations of “stop-and-frisk” tactics led to a court case in the fall of 1989 in which a judge threw out evidence acquired in what he considered an unconstitutional search and seizure.

Because of the bad press surrounding the Stuart case and the stop-and-frisk scandal, the CWACU was disbanded in 1990. However, it must be noted that the police department's aggressive street tactics seemed to work: Boston's homicide rates fell from 152 in 1990, to 103 in 1991, to 73 in 1992. But regardless of this success, most officers acknowledged that the department's aggressive searches dangerously inflamed the community.

The Boston press began to question the police department's ability to manage even routine policing activity. In 1991, the *Boston Globe* published a harshly critical four-part series, “Bungling the Basics,” that detailed a succession of police foul-ups during the previous few years. A subsequent group of *Globe* stories reported serious failings in the department's Internal Affairs Division. The misguided investigations and questionable policing exposed by the press eventually led to the appointment of the St. Clair Commission, which was assigned the task of thoroughly reviewing Boston's police department and its policies.

At this point, the Boston Police Department began a desperately needed overhaul to deal with the negative publicity. “Bad-seed” cops were weeded out. The old and disbanded CWACU was transformed into a new unit, the Anti Gang Violence Unit (AGVU), which espoused a “softer” approach to violence prevention. The aggressive and indiscriminate—though

admittedly effective—street tactics of the past were sharply curtailed. As a result, the short-term drops in homicides during 1991 and 1992 were followed by a sharp upswing in the homicide rate to 98 in 1993.<sup>1</sup>

The release of the St. Clair Commission's report in 1992 spurred further administrative changes at the highest level. The report cited extensive corruption within the department and recommended major changes. In 1993, Mayor Flynn resigned, and Police Commissioner Mickey Roach was replaced by the New York Police Department's Bill Bratton, who brought a new philosophy and a spirit of innovation to the Boston Police Department.

### New police methods

According to current Boston police officers, community policing tactics, which formerly "just existed on paper," were actively pursued under Commissioner Bratton. Many officers reported that the new administration was more open-minded, more willing to break away from traditional policing practices.

The newly organized Anti Gang Violence Unit looked for improved methods to manage gang violence. They targeted the areas where they had failed during the past few years. They were determined to employ "squeaky-clean" policing strategies in order to win back the community's trust. The AGVU also pursued an increasingly multi-agency approach to combat youth violence. Then, in 1993, the AGVU underwent an administrative change, becoming the Youth Violence Strike Force.

Other agencies within Boston's law-enforcement network were also being revamped. Workers in the probation department became disillusioned by the "paper-shuffling" nature of their jobs. Because of the dangerous levels of violence within certain Boston districts, probation officers had given up maintaining a street presence or making home visits. Consequently, the enforcement of curfew, area, and activity restrictions was entirely absent. Lacking enforcement, probation came to be

<sup>1</sup> The question of causality and timing here is complex. The most aggressive period of stop-and-frisk tactics ended in 1990. Yet the homicide rate continued to fall in 1991 and 1992. If one believes that the causal connection is contemporaneous, then this is evidence of a lack of a causal effect. However, if the causal effect of nation enforcement lasts more than the implementation of a current



viewed by law-enforcement officials as a "slap on the wrist" that had little effect in the battle against youth violence.

A strategy called "Operation Nightlight" was developed to make probation meaningful and effective. It began when three probation officers and two police officers ventured out in a patrol car on the night of November 12, 1992. During this first night, they made contact with several youths who were violating the terms of their probation. Youths suddenly became aware that they could no longer blatantly disregard the terms of their probation because their PO might show up at their house after curfew. Subsequently, Operation Nightlight became an institutionalized practice of Boston's law-enforcement agencies.

Inter-agency collaboration to address the issue of youth violence has now become standard procedure in Boston. The Boston Gun Project, a three-year program begun in 1995, brought together a broad interagency group, including the Police Department, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, Probation Department, Boston school police, and Suffolk County District Attorney. Policy researchers (primarily David Kennedy and his associates at the John F. Kennedy School of Government) and key community members also played vital roles. The Gun Project coalition has attacked the problem both on the supply side, by cracking down on suppliers of illicit firearms, and on the demand side, by identifying high-risk individuals. These individuals, 1,300 in all, representing less than 1 percent of their age group city-wide, were responsible for at least 60 percent of the city's homicides.

In 1994, another program to reduce gun violence, "Operation Scrap Iron," was initiated. It attempted to identify smugglers who were illegally transporting firearms into Boston. Gun trafficking within certain sections of the city was completely shut down by using such methods as "area warrant sweeps" in dangerous neighborhoods. In one housing project, the police arrested everyone with outstanding warrants in the area. Follow-up teams of street and youth workers offered their services to these areas once the police were gone. As one police officer noted, these strategies made sure that, "everyone was involved and brought something to the table."



emerged with the implementation of Operation Cease-Fire. Operation Cease-Fire fully institutionalized inter-agency collaboration among Boston's crime-fighting agencies: Police, Probation, Department of Youth Services, Street Workers, and others. In addition, it involved key community members, primarily from faith-based organizations in the Boston area.

### **Birth of the Ten-Point Coalition**

Members of Boston's religious community were among the most vocal and publicized critics of the earlier aggressive tactics of the police department. Reverend Eugene Rivers, in particular, became a controversial figure during these years because of his harsh criticism of Boston's law-enforcement agencies as well as the city's black leaders. It is therefore quite remarkable that these religious leaders were later active participants in such law-enforcement initiatives as Operation Cease-Fire.

Boston's religious organizations did not begin working together until 1992. Until that point, most African-American clergy within Boston followed their independent agendas. Faith-based activity did not, for the most part, address the crisis of youth violence. Rivers did establish outreach programs for gang members and other community youth, but his differences with other clergymen made his effort a lone endeavor. A single tragic event finally instigated collaboration among Boston's African-American clergy. In May 1992, the Morning Star Baptist Church held a service for a youth murdered in a "drive-by" gang shooting. During the service, a shootout and stabbing occurred among several of the gang members. A melee ensued within the sanctuary.

The brazenness of the attack—within the walls of a church—captured the attention of the clergy, inciting them to action. They perceived that they could no longer effectively serve their communities by focusing solely on their own congregations. The community, with its troubled youths, had to become an extension of the church. Thus was the Ten-Point Coalition born, including some 40 churches, with Reverends Rivers, Hammond, and Brown as the key leaders. A "Ten-Point Proposal for Citywide Mobilization to Combat the Material and Spiritual Sources of

dealer, Selvin Brown, was issued, calling upon churches to address the crisis of violence in their communities.

The creation of the Ten-Point Coalition marked the official beginning of Boston's African-American religious community's organized involvement in the youth-violence epidemic. As of 1992, relations between African-American community leaders and Boston's law-enforcement agencies were still strained. Rivers was constantly "in the face" of Boston law enforcement and viewed as a "cop basher" in police circles. He established a constant presence in the troubled neighborhoods of Dorchester and was in contact with the same kids as the Anti Gang Violence Unit. Rivers' aggressive advocacy for local youth, in and out of the courts, led to many confrontations with the AGVU. But this initial antagonism was eventually replaced by cooperation. A number of events, along with the new, improved policing approach, spurred the turnaround.

In 1991, Rivers' house in Four Corners, one of the most violent areas of Dorchester, was shot at for the first of two times. Though he and his family were not harmed, the incident reminded him, in the most literal sense, of the dangers of a solitary campaign against youth violence. Rivers increasingly sought allies in the religious community and in law-enforcement agencies.

The Ten-Point Coalition, and especially Rivers, had habitually and severely criticized the Boston Police Department. Now they sought to engage in constructive cooperation. In 1992, the coalition set up a "Police Practices Coalition" that monitored policing in the Boston area. Positive interactions with law enforcement increased, convincing the clergy that the department was indeed interested in reform. To acknowledge the department's progress, the ministers instituted a ceremony called the "Police Youth Leadership Awards," which would honor "good cops." These improved interactions between the African-American clergy and law enforcement were followed by other initiatives, and their relations have continued to evolve and expand in recent years.

### **The McLaughlin murder**

Today, inter-agency and community-based collaboration is

the police and the community. This progress was tested with the investigation of the McLaughlin murder. On September 25, 1995, a white assistant attorney general, Paul R. McLaughlin, was shot and killed on his way home from work at the commuter rail station in West Roxbury, a middle-class, predominantly Irish neighborhood in Boston. A well-respected prosecutor, McLaughlin had recently been working on a task force against gang members. His murder appeared to be a "hit" in retaliation for this work.

When the police department issued its description of the assailant—"black male, about 14 or 15 years old, 5 foot 7, wearing a hooded sweat shirt and baggy jeans"—there was instant concern among African Americans that such a vague profile could easily apply to many young black males. But immediate and reassuring responses from law-enforcement officials and community leaders helped to abate the potentially divisive nature of the vague description. The law-enforcement community had its own objective: Many suspected that McLaughlin was targeted mainly because he had prosecuted many gang members and wondered whether they were also in danger. The law-enforcement community therefore made it a priority to respond to the murder quickly and decisively.

So did leaders in Boston's African-American community. The executive committee of the Ten-Point Coalition publicly condemned the murder at a press conference the following day. Rivers cited the press conference as critical in preventing what he described as an "open season on black youth"—which he believed did occur during the Carol Stuart murder case. In the press conference, the clergy expressed sympathy for the McLaughlin family and placed a strong emphasis on bringing the city together to avoid the threat of severe polarization by advocating an aggressive, but fair, investigation of the murder.

This immediate and firm stance sent several important messages. First, the ministers emphasized that even a community characterized by historically antagonistic feelings toward the police would not tolerate the vengeful murder of a law-enforcement official. Thus the African-American youth in the community were told that the murder must not be interpreted as a kind of justifiable self-defense. And, by pledging their support for a fair police effort, the ministers emphasized that

police aggression or harassment was unnecessary and would not be tolerated. In addition, the ministers' statement defanged the media. By taking a stand in support of police action, and by exhibiting trust in the department's approach, the black clergy made it less likely that the media would exaggerate or aggravate a tense situation. Finally, the coalition's stance indicated that, as a police source put it, the "clergy viewed them (the police) as a much different police force" by the time of the McLaughlin murder and were confident that the department would carry out a "professional investigation."

The improved police tactics were displayed during this particularly sensitive period. Commissioner Paul F. Evans spoke on a radio station with a large black audience soon after the murder to emphasize the limited value of the vague assailant description and to assert that an effective investigation depended on cooperation between the police and the community. The commissioner also joined the ministers at the Ten-Point Coalition's press conference to highlight police cooperation with the African-American community. Both the law-enforcement community's and black clergy's approach toward the McLaughlin murder illustrated the dramatic shift that had occurred in the relationship between these two groups since the late eighties and early nineties. (A convicted murderer, Jeffrey Buy, was indicted for the McLaughlin murder and is currently standing trial.)

### **Blacks and the judicial system**

Something very unusual has happened in Boston: The black community and law enforcement are no longer at odds with one another. A moment's reflection on the general state of relations between African Americans and the judicial system will confirm just how unique such trust is. Many black communities in America's largest cities believe themselves to be at war with the local police. The metaphor of the police as an occupying military power is frequently invoked. The reasons for this perception are perfectly well known. The shooting in New York this past February of Amadou Diallo, an unarmed African street vendor, has again brought national attention to this problem.

activities, even though they are, to an overwhelming degree, disproportionately the victims of crime—and the crimes are frequently committed by their fellow residents. In his book, *Race, Crime, and the Law*, Randall Kennedy describes the growing alienation of black inner-city residents from the criminal justice system. He locates the origins of their resentment in the South and in the historical lynchings of blacks, offering as evidence, the following quotation from Gunnar Myrdal's 1944 book, *An American Dilemma*:

The Negroes ... are hurt in their trust that the law is impartial, that the court and the police are their protection, and indeed, that they belong to an orderly society which has set up this machinery for common security and welfare. They will not feel confidence in, and loyalty toward a legal order which is entirely out of their control and which they see to be inequitable and merely part of the system of caste oppression. Solidarity then develops easily in the Negro group, a solidarity against the law and the police. The arrested Negro often acquires the prestige of a victim, a martyr, or a hero, even when he is simply a criminal.

Kennedy describes how this same dynamic is at work today:

It largely explains why many blacks rallied around the gang of boys who raped a white jogger in New York's Central Park, around Marion Barry, the mayor of Washington, D.C., who was caught red-handed smoking cocaine, around Alcee Hastings, the federal district court judge who, based on allegations of corruption, was ousted from office by the U.S. Senate (only to be subsequently elected to the House of Representatives), around Damian Williams and the other hooligans who gained notoriety when they were filmed beating a hapless white truck driver (Reginald Denny) in the early hours of the Los Angeles riot of 1992, and around Mike Tyson, the boxing champion, when he was imprisoned for rape.

The point is that excesses of the judicial system, both historical and present, have led inner-city minorities to view our criminal justice system as totally lacking in legitimacy. The result: Criminals are often seen as political dissidents and martyrs.

\*If Randall Kennedy's portrayal of inner-city minority residents' attitudes toward the criminal justice system is even somewhat accurate, it is hardly surprising that police have found it nearly impossible to deal with youth violence in our

from residents, the only option has been aggressive tactics that only further alienate community residents.

But why is the relationship between police and inner-city residents in such a chronically sorry state? Inner-city residents often have conflicting goals. On the one hand, they desire, as do all Americans, safe streets and neighborhoods. On the other hand, they do not want to see their children locked up. As Glenn Loury has noted, "The young black men wreaking havoc in the ghetto are still 'our youngsters' in the eyes of many of the decent poor and working class black people who are often their victims." Given these conflicting desires, how are decisions to be made about whether a particular youth should be arrested or jailed? When should a youth be given another chance? What are the costs to the community versus the benefits to the youth of his not going to jail? When a youth gets into trouble, a terrible and difficult decision must be made. The youth may be allowed to remain in the community, potentially endangering its residents. Or the youth may be sent to jail, depriving him of his freedom and perhaps his future. Neither option is attractive to black parents.

But one thing remains clear: Most inner cities simply do not have institutions that can deal with this problem in a way perceived as just, both by the local community and the broader society. The police are too biased in favor of safer streets; social workers, street workers, and community organizers are too sympathetic to the kids. Community residents themselves frequently base their judgments upon who is in trouble and what the individual's relationship to them is. How is a decision to be made that is fair and just?

### **The umbrella of legitimacy**

In Boston, the ministers of the Ten-Point Coalition participate in making decisions that are perceived to be fair and just. Through their involvement with at-risk youth and their intervention in situations where youth are in trouble with the law, they have projected a sense of fairness. Consequently, they have created an "umbrella of legitimacy" for law enforcement. This "umbrella" enables the police to do their job in a way that is in the best interests of the larger community and



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If one were in search of legitimacy, there could perhaps be no better conferees than religious ministers. Ministers have a unique moral standing in society. They are expected to be fair and to protect the interests of the less fortunate. Amid the inner city, they and their churches are one of the last formal institutions committed to the welfare of their neighborhoods. Within the black community, especially, they are often looked to for leadership. In the case of Ten-Point, two of the three core ministers live in Boston's inner city; all three are well known for their extensive work with inner-city youth. These factors have lent Ten-Point considerable credibility in Boston's inner-city community.

The unique relationship between the police and Ten-Point is built on a number of implicit understandings, each of which potentially supports the legitimacy of the police: that youth violence needs to be dealt with as a criminal problem; that some kids need to be jailed both for their own good and the good of the community; that a small number of youths constitute this problem and that the ministers will help identify those youths; that the ministers will have a say in what happens to specific youths; that if police use indiscriminate and abusive methods in dealing with youths, the ministers will take the story to the media.

The first assumption is that, at least over the short run, youth violence must be treated as criminal. Yes, such factors as poverty, single-parent households, and inadequate schools contribute to youth violence. But the immediate problem will never be solved if law enforcement plays no role. Thus ministers have made it clear to at-risk kids that they have two choices. If they go straight, the ministers will help them to succeed in school, find jobs, and resist the peer pressure exerted by gangs. However, if they decide to participate in gang activities, the ministers will do their utmost to see them put in jail. The ministers make it clear that they are doing this both for the community's and the kid's own good. They are doing it for the community because the kid is a threat to its safety. They are doing it for the kid to save his future, even his life. If a kid is going to be involved in a gang, it is better that he be in jail than on the street.

Implicit in this "choice" is a second assumption—that *come*

kids are sufficiently out of control that the only option is for them to be put away. It is not apparent that the ministers thought this in the beginning. Certainly, the police did not initially believe that the ministers would support the incarceration of certain individuals. Interviews with both police and ministers indicate that cooperation became possible at a single critical point—with the public acknowledgment by the ministers, most vocally by Rivers, that some kids were simply so out of control that they needed to be locked away. This did not mean that the police and ministers agreed on *which* kids needed to be put behind bars. But both parties now had the same definition of the problem, disagreeing occasionally on what should be done in particular circumstances.

A third assumption has been the understanding by both police and ministers that only a small number of youths cause most of the problems. Kennedy has estimated that this number is only 1 percent of the entire age group—1,300 youths. As Rivers has said, it only takes a few kids shooting off guns to terrorize a whole neighborhood. This is why standard stop-and-frisk procedures can be so oppressive. For the dozens of kids stopped, only one is truly part of the problem. An essential part of the informal agreement between Ten Point and the police has been that the ministers will help identify those kids who are the real problems. That is, they serve the police in a remote surveillance capacity. This not only makes police efforts more effective but increases their legitimacy by ensuring that they focus on malefactors only.

A fourth and related assumption is that the ministers have a nonofficial role in determining how different individuals should be treated by the judicial system. In some circumstances, this has meant that the ministers have contacted the police to request that certain kids be arrested. In such cases, the ministers will sometimes help police locate the kids. In other cases, it has meant that the ministers have appeared in court to argue either for leniency or for a stiff sentence.

Thus the umbrella of legitimacy allows the police to function more comfortably. The ministers enable the police to deal with the problem of youth violence without recrimination from the press or the community. The umbrella only provides coverage for specific activities, however, bringing us to the

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Thus the umbrella of legitimacy allows the police to function more comfortably. The ministers enable the police to deal with the problem of youth violence without recrimination from the press or the community. The umbrella only provides coverage for specific activities, however, bringing us to the

final assumption. When police focus on the truly bad youths, when they deal with these youths in a fair and just way, and when all this is done in cooperation with the ministers, their activities fall under the umbrella. Activities outside these boundaries fall outside the umbrella and will not be tolerated.

Our analysis suggests that Ten Point has become an intermediary institution between the police and the community. Black leaders now have some control over the judicial process and some say over who should be jailed and who let free. Ten Point helps adjudicate between the sometimes conflicting goals of having safe streets and keeping kids out of prison. Critically, because of the Ten-Point Coalition's involvement, the different treatment of different youths is more likely to be seen by the community as legitimate. Hard decisions are being made, but in a way that is seen as fair and just.

### **Cooperation is key**

The police cannot be effective if their activities are not perceived as legitimate by the community. Communities want both safe streets and their youth out of jail. Choices need to be made—choices that are likely to be considered unjust by some subset of residents. In this environment, police action, no matter how beneficial, is often condemned as illegitimate.

The Ten-Point Coalition has evolved into an institution that addresses this situation. They have created what we have called an umbrella of legitimacy for police to work under. Freed of knee-jerk suspicion and benefiting from community cooperation, the police can concentrate on truly violent youth, rather than indiscriminately monitoring the innocent with the guilty. We believe that this new dynamic, which is unique among most major cities, has contributed to the spectacular drop in homicide rates in Boston.

The lesson of the Boston experience is this: In the struggle against crime, police cannot go it alone; they need the cooperation of community leaders. Such partnerships help reduce youth violence and, equally important, delineate what constitutes legitimate police behavior. Police strategies can only acquire true legitimacy within inner-city communities if the community supports appropriate police tactics while harshly criticizing inappropriate tactics. In these circumstances, churches

and ministers are ideal partners. And, at the very least, the possibility that Boston has found an effective strategy for reducing youth violence, without severely and broadly compromising the civil liberties of its inner-city residents, is very exciting.