

Should Pittsburgh Adopt a Citizen Review Board?

Public debate / transcript

by the Activist Debate Network

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- Black Action Society
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- Department of Communication, University of Pittsburgh
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- New Youth Culture

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8:15 - 10:00 p.m.

Room 637, William Pitt Union

AFFIRMATIVE

Christolyn Carter, Sophomore

Chris Boback, Sophomore

Joe Panzino, Senior

NEGATIVE

Jesse Richman, Sophomore

Bianca Huff, Sophomore

Tara Beichner, Junior

MODERATOR:

Kelly Happe, Second-year PhD student,
Assistant Director of Debate

CAMERA:

Tim O'Donnell, Second-year PhD student,
Assistant Director of Debate

TRANSCRIPTION:

Chris Boback, Sophomore,
Gordon Mitchell, Director of Debate

Introduction

Kelly Happe (moderator): I'm Kelly. I'm a graduate student and Assistant Debate Coach here in the Department of Communication at the University of Pittsburgh. I want to thank you all for coming out for the debate. This is actually the first debate put on this year by the Activist Debate Network. For those of you who aren't familiar with the ADN, it's basically the public component of the long and rich tradition of debate centered in the Department of Communication at Pittsburgh. Although today, members of the ADN come from many disciplines in the university. If you couldn't tell by the topic we decided to debate, one of the things the ADN feels very strongly about is that the public ought to have an opportunity to hear well-researched, well-developed arguments, as well as see them refuted. To have the chance to see a debate about important controversial issues, and to participate in a discussion about the issues. A lot of times, if you rely on newspaper accounts or local news accounts of certain issues and debates, you only see part of the picture, you don't really see arguments debated out, and the clash. So we're happy to offer a debate on this topic of police brutality. In the last two days, there's been a lot of press on the topic of police brutality. There was some information released from a federal Department of Justice investigation

into police brutality in Pittsburgh. And their conclusion corroborated other accounts by residents of Pittsburgh that there has been a problem of police brutality that has been ignored, and in some ways, sustained, in the city. A lot of awareness was activated around police brutality well over a year ago in the case of Jonny Gammage, who suffocated to death after being stopped by police officers in Brentwood. So this is something that has been talked about for awhile, and really all sides agree; even the police department and the mayor, to some extent, and the mayor agree that there's a problem. The question, and this is the focus of this debate is about, is how to solve the problem. It's a very, very important decision about how to solve it, now that there's some awareness about the problem existing. For a lot of people, it's a matter of life and death. For other people, it's also about a complete, radical re-orientation of the relationship between the public and the police, and a re-orientation, a redefinition of the role of police in society. The decision is really right now in the hands of Pittsburghers. As some of you may know, there is a petition drive to put the civilian review board on the May ballot. Council has sort of tabled this now and won't vote because they don't have the support. Now they're asking if the city of Pittsburgh to decide whether it should go on the ballot, and then of course the city will be asked to vote for that. There are a lot of questions that we hope can be raised and addressed in this debate: does a civilian review board work? Will the one that's being proposed on the petition work? Are there limitations to it? Has it worked in other cities? Is this indeed the way that the city of Pittsburgh should choose to address this problem?

Discussion of format

Kelly Happe: I'll just go over the format quickly. Each side will present introductory or constructive speeches outlining their arguments on the issue. Then there will be a series of questions they will ask each other (a cross-examination period); then some closing speeches, and then we'll open it up to the floor. And the debaters we have for you, on the affirmative side, we have Chris Boback, Joe Panzino, and Christolyn Carter; on the negative side, we have Jesse Richman, Bianca Huff, and Tara Beichner. And we're going to start with Christolyn Carter, a sophomore at the University of Pittsburgh, Business / Communication major.

First affirmative speech: 6 minutes

Christolyn Carter: What comes to mind when you hear names like Jonny Gammage, Rodney King, Mumia Abu-Jamal? What comes to your mind when you hear less familiar names like Moises Dejesus, Mark Young, Lanell Geter? We live in society where those who are there to help oftentimes hurt more than anything else. Those who are meant to uphold the law don't always abide by the law. Whether on the South Side of Pittsburgh, South America, South Africa, the South Pacific, or Southern California, violence against citizens by law enforcement officials is one of the greatest injustices done to humankind. It is a universal issue which transcends race, color, creed, religious or sexual persuasion. There is a need for a citizen review board in Pittsburgh to give voice to those who cannot speak. Those who are afraid, those who have been victimized, those who are victims, those who have been falsely accused. Within the past ten years, officers from the city of Pittsburgh have had 1,674 complaints filed against them, according to the city controller's office; 678 of those were complaints of police brutality--678 people cannot all be wrong. It is understandable that all the complaints cannot be taken care of, at least not in ten years of course, right? According to a recent FBI investigation, 62 percent of Pittsburghers said 'yes,' there is a need for a police review committee. The people of Pittsburgh need to feel safe, they want to *feel* safe in their city, from foreign *and* domestic abuse. They need to institute change in order to feel safe. How many of you have been victims of abuse, or know someone who has been a victim of abuse? You don't have to raise your hands now, but just think back, how did that person feel? how did that person tell you how he or she was treated? What steps are taken to insure justice, legal or otherwise, for that person? What can you or someone you know do when you are victimized by an officer? These are the questions that the board will hear and take action to. What comes to mind when I hear names like Mumia, Rodney, and others? Fear. Fear for those who stand by and idly watch. It is up to us, the community, the citizens of Pittsburgh. The civilian review board has worked in many other cities, including our brotherly city, Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love, which has one of the highest rates of police corruption. If a board can work in Philadelphia, why

can it not work in Pittsburgh? What makes Pittsburgh so different? I urge you tonight, as you listen to my fellow colleagues, as well as my fellow opponents, to take heed and take account of what we are saying. Listen constructively and objectively to both sides and think about yourself, think about yourself in the position of a person who has been victimized, or rather one of these officers, and think to yourself, what would I do? What would I do, if I was to step outside this door, get into my car or vehicle, and be pulled over by an officer. We don't know the minds of these officers. We don't know what they are capable of doing. We cannot say, 'Oh, he is a good officer, he wouldn't do that,' or 'He's a bad officer.' We only know from our experiences. I challenge you tonight. I thank you.

[applause]

First negative speech: 6 minutes

Kelly Happe: Now for the negative, Jesse Richman, a sophomore majoring in History and Political Science

Jesse Richman: Greetings. It is good to see everybody tonight. You just heard that there is a problem with police brutality. This should not come as a surprise to everyone. The question, though, is what do we do about this? Christolyn talked about how people need to feel safe, and that is the main thing, that's the main point. I don't know, it seems to me that a more important thing for people to *be* safe. Feeling safe is great. Yeah, it would be a good idea if people can feel safe. The question is being safe, the question is what will help people be safe. Christolyn asked us if any of us have experienced abuse at the hands of a police officer. Her words led me back to my first attempt to get a driver's license in the fall of my junior year. I wasn't ready for the test; I failed the test dismally. I think the officer lost all confidence in me at about the point when I turned the wrong way onto a one-way street. At the end of the test, he got out of the car, he said, 'go get your dad,' my dad was sitting on a bench on the other side of the parking lot, and I started to do that in the car (not a good thing when you are driving in a car without a driver's license and with an officer standing by who doesn't like you and who knows that you don't have a license). He came up to me shouting and said, 'give me that license!' In an attack of irrational panic, I didn't give him the license. He grew progressively more livid; only the intervention of my father saved me from what could have been quite a nasty situation. The officer was not a particularly nice fellow to deal with. He was nasty; he was mean. He was not someone who I would like to meet again. But sometimes I ask myself, 'Ah Jesse, but how did you behave? What would you do?' He was overreacting perhaps, in a certain way, but how would you behave yourself? It was you, after all, who had pulled into the wrong end of a one-way street, it was you who went up on the curb. It was you who drove the car without a licensed driver and it was you who didn't give him the permit when he demanded it. And sometimes I try to put myself in his shoes, to see the world through his eyes. The kid comes in, he can't drive, he's probably a threat to public health and safety in when his father is in the car with him. He won't obey orders from authority. Perhaps I should not castigate [the officer] so much for shouting at me, for swearing and cursing. He was doing his job. We, the public, hired him to point out to us when we do things that we, the public, have decided are wrong. Perhaps he was overzealous. Perhaps he lacked sufficient self-control. Perhaps. Just perhaps, he was human. It seems to me that in our attempt to deal with the very real problem of police brutality, our goal should not be to try to have this be a big battle, with two sides going at it, and see if we can get these police officers beaten out so they're not going to come beat us up. But rather, it seems that we should try to get to the point to when that police officer pulls you over, you know that he's not going to beat you up because he's from the same community that you are. My opponents say that a civilian review board will solve the problem of police brutality. Perhaps it will, but I doubt it. We need to think not in ideals, but in reality. As my colleague Bianca will point out, civilian review boards don't always work very well in actual practice. They haven't worked very well elsewhere. One reason why a civilian review board might have problems in Pittsburgh is that the Fraternal Order of Police doesn't like it, and they will try to tie it up. This is part of the antagonistic relationship that is set up when you have a civilian review board. They will sue the board, they'll do everything they can to obstruct it. You'll get a situation in which the good officers in the police force feel like they have to observe the code of silence, not report on the bad officers, because after

all, they're all under siege from this outside entity that's trying to destroy their department. There is a better way to deal with police brutality. It's good that citizens are aware of the problem. It's good that some activists are working to bring cases of police misconduct to light. Some activists see in the civilian review board the tranquilizing drug of gradualism, a kind of weak salve that might reduce public awareness and activism, without effectively dealing with the problem of strained citizen-police relations. Because of the activism, because of the raised consciousness that has resulted, city reforms are currently underway. These reforms may not go so far in the direction of citizen oversight as some would like, but they just might work. In April 1996, Mayor Murphy moved oversight of the police department outside of the police department and into the Independent Office of Investigation. Thus there is a relatively independent police review system in place. Among other things, according to OMI manager David Kwait, now OMI is tracking the number of complaints against officers, something that was not done before. If an officer has several complaints against him, they can investigate that and work get rid of him. In the past year, ten officers have been expelled from the police department, perhaps as a result of the OMI, and perhaps because of the new police chief, McNeilly. There are a few officers in the department who are particularly bad; 59 officers (only 3% of the force) made up 32% of the complaints. If we get rid of those officers, then the number of complaints will go down. And the number of complaints has gone down over the last year. The number of complaints has declined 25% in 1996 over 1995. Progress is being made. This is all an argument for slow, careful reform. It's not really an argument against the civilian review board, as long as the board can be accepted by all or most, and provided the board can bridge the gap between citizens and the police. Can it, though? Perhaps our time would be better spent on projects like community policing, which hold out the hope of making police and citizens once more into a single community. Will the board truly help us recognize the humanity of both sides? Thank you.

[applause]

Second affirmative speech: 4 minutes

Kelly Happe: Chris Boback, a sophomore majoring in politics and philosophy.

Chris Boback: Should Pittsburgh adopt a citizen review board? That is the question that everyone in this room this evening is being asked to consider. My esteemed colleague and adversary will want you to answer the question no: Pittsburgh does not need a citizen review board. He claims that citizen review boards do not always work in real situations; he also claims that these boards reduce public activism; and his final claim is that internal reforms work better than would a civilian review board. I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, that the benefits of a citizen review board in Pittsburgh outweigh and transcend the supposed problems that the opposition has presented and will present to you this evening. I assert that these boards work for three reasons: first, they provide a forum for public discussion; second, they make the misconduct of police officers transparent to the whole community; and third, they hold police accountable for their actions. I would like to expound on these benefits beginning with the role of the public forum. In one instance, a citizen review board can be used as a mechanism for the public to voice complaints about the misconduct of police officers. Wouldn't you agree that it would be easier to voice a complaint against a police officer, to a board comprised of citizens of the community, rather than to another police officer in a police station? Who knows how many people with complaints against police officers remain silent and do not report incidents of misconduct. They let the opportunity to correct misconduct to slip away because of fear and intimidation. The citizen review board forum removes the fear from voicing complaints and allows the misconduct to be reported and made a matter of public record. This forum also gives the representatives of community organizations the opportunity to voice criticisms, make proposals, and introduce resolutions to review or reform specific police policies. The citizen review board, as a public forum, naturally results in transparency, the second benefit. These boards investigate misconduct and report their findings to the community on such issues as racism, brutality, and impunity on the part of police officers. The opposition would have you believe that police departments have divisions of internal affairs that are fully adequate for handling complaints against officers, but an important question to ask is, who is more likely to compile and publish data on patterns of police misconduct, the police department or the citizen review board?

From transparency comes the third benefit, police accountability. The opposition to these boards once again claims that the internal affairs of police departments do hold officers accountable for their actions. This is wrong. Departments dodge and avoid accountability through the police unions. These unions continually practice avoidance through political tactics, litigation sabotage, obstruction of justice tactics, and state legislation and lobbying. It is clear that accountability cannot come from within the department, but must come from citizen review boards by means of public scrutiny and pressure put upon the departments and the government. I have just outlined the three benefits of citizen review boards, but the clearest and most decisive reason to establish one in Pittsburgh comes from the success of these boards in cities across the nation. For example, Philadelphia has a Police Advisory Commission and New York City has a Civilian Complaint Review Board. Both of these review boards have subpoena power to conduct public hearings. In New Orleans, the Office of Municipal Investigators, a citizen-run agency, has been very effective. Since its establishment, more than fifty officers have been arrested, indicted, or convicted on charges including rape, aggravated battery, drug trafficking, and murder. Ladies and gentlemen, these problems with police officers are occurring across the nation and here in our own city. In order to stop and prevent these crimes, my answer to this evening's question is resoundingly *yes*, Pittsburgh should adopt a citizen review board.

[applause]

Second negative speech: 4 minutes

Kelly Happe: Bianca Huff, sophomore, communication.

Bianca Huff: Good evening ladies and gentlemen. First I am glad to see that there is still blind optimism in the world. My opponents have painted a grand picture of how civilian review boards work, but I would like to clue you in to the real picture. First I want to start with the DC civilian complaint review board. In the *Washington Post*, on April 16, 1995, DC council said that they wanted to abolish the board because of pay cuts. The council said that the board was ineffective. After a 700 case backlog, the board was just beginning to cut into it, and it had taken 15 years. I'm surprised victims could remember that they could even remember that they had a complaint after 15 years. But in actuality it took about 2 years, on average, for a complaint. But that is still a long time, because justice delayed is justice denied. The board could only suggest anything from sensitivity training to dismissal of a police officer. Now it would be nice if us citizens could just get off with sensitivity training after we beat someone to a bloody pulp. The board was abolished on August 20, 1995, and the money saved was actually used to hire new police officers. This was a slap in the face to everyone who has backed civilian review boards. Now I would like to move on to Philadelphia, where both of my opponents say that a board does work. I'd like to tell you the real way this board works. City of Pittsburgh actually invited members of the [Philadelphia] board to come and speak about their own board. This board recommended discipline in only one case out of 296. Now we could think that the police officers were so good and honest that they didn't need to be disciplined, but seriously, I mean we are concerned citizens, and this could not be likely, or else there would not have been a need for the board in the first place. Now I'd like to go on to Charleston. Now my opponent, Mr. Boback, says that a board will provide an open forum for citizens to air their concerns. Well in Charleston, the citizens fought for a board, and they got one, all right. They got a group of people who agreed to investigate police officers, and when they finished their investigations, they refused to release their findings to the public. Yet the victims would never know whether the officers received any type of discipline at all. And this didn't work out, because where's your open forum? I'm not saying that Pittsburgh should never have a CRB. What I'm saying is don't adopt one right now, because it will potentially fail, if you don't know the facts. There's a man out there right now being beaten, and he doesn't have 15 years to wait until we can get it done. Take the time to plan a CRB, so it can work effectively, and that may take two or three years to do. But what you need right now is justice. And if the Ku Klux Klan can walk on the street and preach hate, then the citizens of Pittsburgh can walk on the street and preach justice. Apathy is the best weapon that Mayor's office and the police department have against us. No civilian review board can change that; however, a board can be controlled by these institutions, and then we will never get justice for anyone.

[applause]

Third affirmative speech: 4 minutes

Kelly Happe: The last affirmative speaker is Joe Panzino.

Joe Panzino: Good evening. I'm Joe Panzino; I'm a senior here at the university. I'd like to thank everyone for coming down to this debate tonight. I think this is an incredibly important issue. I'm hoping that as we approach this new primary season, that we all kind of remember what's been going on in this city the last couple of years; I think that's going to be very important. I couldn't help but notice that another outrageously radical group once again rose to the surface to criticize our mayor ... the Justice Department.

[laughter]

There they were, criticizing our mayor regarding his proposed changes to the police department. The Justice Department provided findings from a report that ran for roughly ten months, an investigation, and they used a phrase as I heard it, and this may be in error, I don't know, but they said that Pittsburgh police engaged in 'systematic police brutality.' That's not saying there's a few, that's not even saying there's a lot. That's saying they are systematically pursuing police brutality and racism. That implies structural. That implies serious problems all the way up and down this organization. Mayor Murphy and Chief McNeilly were quick to respond that they've made a number of changes, of which no one is considering, and certainly the Justice Department hasn't looked at them. Some of their changes are good, and I believe they deserve due consideration. However, things like moving OMI, more intensive training, McNeilly said that he has developed a new lethal force policy (although I haven't seen it, and haven't been able to talk to anybody who has); they also say that they've implemented performance reviews which should help with the accountability issue. But you know, I have a problem with that. I mean if we're going to judge a guy on his performance and one of the categories is going to be how many people you have murdered this year, or how many people have you pulled over for a traffic violation that have ended up dead is part of that criteria, then I have a problem with that. I think that sends out the wrong message in a whole lot of instances. It really plays down the significance of the problem and what I think we need to do with it. Everything that the Chief and the Mayor have suggested just propagates the same system that we have in place. It's the same people, making the same kinds of decisions, around the same value determinations. It supports the old boys' network. It continues to support the code of silence that our present police system uses quite extensively. There are a number of boards across this country, 66 at last count that I understand, of which a number are quite inefficient. There are a lot of reasons for that inefficiency. But I prefer at Pittsburgh, we not so much concern ourselves with those as we should concern ourselves with those that are effective, the dozen or 15 that have had a positive impact on the community and on the citizens. In all of those cases, the boards were first independent and autonomous from the structure of the police organization itself; they possess subpoena power, so that they can subpoena witnesses in for testimony; they have their own investigative body; and hopefully in our case, everything they do will be open under 'sunshine laws,' where it will be in a place where the public will see and view their conclusions and determinations, and the actions that they've had to take, whether they be to sustain or not sustain a particular action. I couldn't help but think, when Jesse was telling the story of the traffic exam, you know, all those things you've done wrong, and I thought, gee, Jonny Gammage laid on Route 51 and died for less than that. I find that to be a real problem. That's real difficult when such a minor incident can result in loss of life like that. Back to the review board, though. In the instances where they're ineffective, they're marred with politics, they continually come into obstructionism by the FOP, bureaucrats and city officials. One of the newer things they've done is to begin to use what's called 'slapsuits,' against citizens who complain to review boards, where they hit the complaining party with a liability or defamation suit and tie them up in court for a couple of years at considerable expense. I don't think any of those things move us toward better feelings about how we feel toward the police and how the police feel toward us. I think the costs are relatively insignificant. It's not us against them. We want it to be us together. We can't wait to move on this. We need to move on it now. Thank you.

Third negative speech: 4 minutes

Kelly Happe: And now, the final negative speaker, Tara Beichner, a junior in the Communication Department at the University of Pittsburgh.

Tara Beichner: Publicly we renounce racism. Publicly we support individual liberty. Publicly we denounce crime. Publicly we demand stricter sentencing laws and more cops on the street. Privately we 'know' that most crimes are committed by African-Americans. Privately, we are willing to surrender others' personal liberty in an effort to safeguard our own. Privately we want the plague of crime removed from our streets at whatever cost. Publicly we clamor for a civilian review board to increase police accountability. But privately we harbor our doubts that the civilian review board is nothing more than a mock jury; hollow and useless in the face of some thirty years of subterfuge, brutality, and misconduct at the hands of Pittsburgh's law enforcement officials. It is the dynamic between public and private beliefs and attitudes and their inherent contradictions that I wish to explore this evening in regards to the civilian review board. The DOJ's discoveries this week come as no surprise to anyone who has carefully followed the Gammage trial and others before him of lesser fame that Christolyn mentioned. The general public though was shocked, troubled, and worried about the findings. Why? Because our fine city seemingly has no record of malfeasance. Why? Because law enforcement officials and their comrades in crime have successfully created a network which denies accountability and shields officers from scrutiny. Yet seemingly the CRB is the silver bullet which will finally expose the cracks in the justice system, curb police brutality, and increase accountability. One should always be wary of the silver bullet solution. Remember all of the horror movies from childhood, where the hero shot the werewolf with a silver bullet, only to have him revive two clips later for a second round of combat? When I watched these movies I always became irritated that the protagonists turned their backs on the slain creature only to have him arise behind them and attack when they were least expectant. The protagonists' complacency is not unlike the complacency that will inevitably arise with a civilian review board which is heralded as the solution to Pittsburgh's problem. My fear is that the public will vest all trust and responsibility within the board and fail to address the more pressing problems, the root causes for police brutality and misconduct along racial and class lines. At this point the public/private dichotomy becomes crucial. Let me review the three public distinctions and their private counterparts: first, the stereotypical racial composition of crime that influences police behavior and conditions public acceptance of police tactics; second, the sacrifice of individual liberty in the name of the greater good to be served by protecting the public's liberty as a whole; third, the notion that our streets have become a dangerous place for law enforcement officials and a rhetorical battleground for politicians who operate under public mandates to reduce crime at any cost, and if that means a few lives lost, or a few civil liberties sacrificed along the way, then it's all fair. Operating behind each of these assumptions is a code of conduct for today's police. This code is often not criticized, especially in the light of recent violence against officers, for example the shooting of officer Taylor last year (who off duty, attempted to arrest some individuals who were defacing public property), as well as the police officer was dragged behind a car and ended up shooting the two young black men that had been dragging him. Thus, I think the problem has been that there have been hundreds of abuses levied by police officers against the black minority community. However the civilian review board is not the answer because it leads us to fail to see the procedural problems behind this, such as the inherent racism that might exist within the police department internally, as well as the fact that there needs to be more accountability. Thus my argument is that we should look *prevention*, not end-of-the-pipe solutions once another brother or sister has suffered abuse at the hands of police. However, the implications of the seemingly perfectly functioning civilian review board are far more costly than it may first appear. The public in its search for the silver bullet, once it is found, walks away from the beast, trusting that it has been taken care of. What is needed instead is increased vigilance. Vigilance that demands that cops deal with their racial biases and intolerance with multicultural training, by working with neighborhoods hand-in-hand to develop mechanisms which heighten awareness and lessen the inclination of officers to lash out, especially if they know the individuals and their family. Vigilance that is there every time a complaint is filed to see that it is handled properly and does not get pushed under the table or lost in the shuffle. The moral of this story is: be careful what you ask for. The solution

may be a sham, and a hoax, and what is needed is continual activism and vigilance that never allows the police to get away with the subterfuge that has gone on for some 30 years.

Cross-examination period

Kelly Happe: Now we'll have a 10-minute cross-examination period where the students will ask questions of each other. We'll start with the affirmative.

Effectiveness of internal reforms

Chris Boback: You stated that internal reforms by the police department are the way to go, rather than a civilian review board. In effect, this would be the police policing themselves. So my question is how can you assure me that there will be an adequate level of unbiased and impartial investigation conducted?

Jesse Richman: I can't assure that, but what I can say is that at the present time, the present system's reforms seem to be having a positive effect. Ten officers have been dismissed from the police force in the recent past for police misconduct. The number of complaints have gone down 25%, which seems to indicate that police brutality in the community has declined. But I suppose that all I can say is that at the present time, it appears that police officers are policing themselves with at least a higher level of honesty than in the past.

Union obstructionism

Jesse Richman: You said that police unions pose an obstacle to the effectiveness of civilian review boards. How do you propose to prevent that from happening under the board you are suggesting?

Joe Panzino: The obstructionist activity?

Jesse Richman: Yes.

Joe Panzino: It all comes down to how much autonomy and independence is granted to the particular board in question. The board that we propose is not the same board that the mayor is currently proposing; nor would it function in the same way. We're seeking more extensive structural changes than what Mayor Murphy has currently proposed. We believe that [police union obstruction tactics] would be addressed through greater autonomy.

Jesse Richman: Based upon your studies., the boards that are effective are the ones with the greatest autonomy?

Joe Panzino: Greatest autonomy, greatest independence, own investigative body with subpoena power.

New Orleans board

Jesse Richman: Chris, you mentioned that the New Orleans board dismissed 59 police officers for misconduct. How long has that board been in existence?

Chris Boback: The source that I got that information from did not say.

Jesse Richman: OK, it seems to me that unless that board was extremely new, the OMI [in Pittsburgh] might put up a better record if it keeps its present pace. In eight months, twelve officers have been dismissed. In four years, that comes to about the same rate as the New Orleans board.

Status and effectiveness of current internal reforms

Joe Panzino: Jesse, when were the changes put in place?

Jesse Richman: April of last year.

Joe Panzino: So you believe that the changes of moving OMI, which I don't even know if it's been moved yet ...

Jesse Richman: They're in the process of moving them out of the building.

Joe Panzino: But it's still the same performance review officers in charge, correct? It's the same horse with a different name. We still don't have the performance review in place, we still don't have a lethal force policy in place. I don't know that you can take these changes to be the reason why the rates are down 25%. Is the reason why there's been a 25% drop the fact that these changes have been made, or is there more violence, more brutality, more people dying in custody but people choose not to make these complaints?

Jesse Richman: It seems to me that the more plausible argument is that the reason the rates are down is because of lessened police brutality. It could be that because of all the publicity and because of the new police chief, the police are behaving somewhat better. But I find it hard to believe that the reason the rates are down 25% is because the police are beating people so badly that they can't come in and complain.

Tara Beichner: I'd like to follow-up with an answer to Joe's question. One thing that Jesse didn't highlight was that the Department of Justice's report will list a series of recommendations that the city must meet, and if the city does not meet them, then the city can be taken to court. So in addition to what the police department has already been doing, this DOJ list of recommendations acts as an external check. It's not like there's an absence of an external check.

Joe Panzino: Murphy said they're working in these areas; that they've already made these changes.

Tara Beichner: "In his press conference yesterday, he said that. But that's not entirely true. His rhetoric is not in congruence with actions that have actually been taken. But if he fails to meet the explicit recommendations, there will be a lawsuit against the city, so there is a sort of external action going on now, some kind of continual scrutiny."

Composition of board

Bianca Huff: Who would be on the civilian review board?

Christolyn Carter: It would be made up of community activists, some members of the FOP, some legal counsel, and citizens of Pittsburgh.

Power of the board and the issue of structural change

Joe Panzino: [Tara] raised the Taylor incident, and tied it to the incident in East Liberty in which an officer was dragged. In fact, I recall that in that case, Taylor was drinking heavily, and that he was acting out of line. For the ten officers who have been recently disciplined, their offenses have ranged from sex crimes to assault. And I think that out of 1800 complaints over ten years, that all you can squeeze out is 10, I don't think that's enough. We need some real structural changes here. This is fine that the mayor and McNeilly want to make these kinds of changes. But what happens down the road when mayor Murphy is out of office? What happens when McNeilly is no longer police chief? The fact is that we have a generational forgetting here. We have people who, after a number of years, forget that that's the way the rules were supposed to be applied. And then we get back into running this same old system again. McNeilly said in today's paper that it was common to change the verdict on professional standards reports.

Tara Beichner: My argument was that a civilian review board cannot be effective unless there is codified structural change that occurs, and that we don't begin to ... punishing a police officer using a civilian review board that may or may not have real punitive power does little to change what actually goes on in the organization. In the police department, they feel like when go to Homewood, they can beat up anybody they want, or behave rudely. That increases antagonism, so that even if there is not a case of actual police brutality, the implicit antagonism between law enforcement officials and the black community increases the chance that brutality will actually occur. Thus we have to deal with attitudes; the root cause that explains the conflict between African Americans and law enforcement officials. So my return question to you is, what type of structural changes would arise out of a civilian review board itself? They really have little more than recommendation power. All they can do is recommend.

Christolyn Carter: You said that all they can do is make recommendations. But you're looking at other cases. There's no citizen review board established in Pittsburgh yet. You're comparing it to what's already been established [in other cities]. What power would the CRB have in Pittsburgh? Like Joe said, we would have punitive power ...

Joe Panzino: An investigative body ...

Christolyn Carter: Right. We would have our own separate entity, not just relying on the established order. If we have our own investigators and our own attorneys, they're basically more honest then. I would like to go back to a statement that [Tara] and Bianca made, that activism is what we really need. We have activism. That's not structure. That does not work. How many activists were out petitioning to get the Gammage case litigated by a higher court? That's been in litigation for the past two years. We need a body that has legal counsel. You have activists out there who don't have any concept of the legal ramifications. We do have activists out there, and they are good people; they want to seek change, but you're dealing with a bigger beast. It's like David versus Goliath. We need an army. The army would be composed of the CRB, which, like I said, would have members of community, members of the FOP, members of city council, ordinary citizens such as myself and others, and we would work together. We know there are problems within the system. I don't think all police are bad. Ninety-nine percent of the time, systematically there are. But at the same time, the ten percent that do want to work with us, to sit down and discuss this, then we're talking about action.

Closing arguments

Kelly Happe: Now before opening it up for audience questions, we'll have two short rebuttal speeches, starting with the negative. Bianca?

Bianca Huff (negative): I'll try not to be militant, but I am black, and female; a minority of a minority. I believe that we have the right to protest brutality outwardly. As Tara said, what the city of Pittsburgh needs is action now. I'm talking about picket signs, phone campaigns; I'm talking about utter chaos. Don't get me wrong, I don't mean that we should go out rioting into the streets. I'm talking about a little organized disruption, and by that I mean sitting in front of the street where Mayor Murphy lives, until he wakes up and gets the point. The best thing to use is our votes. If they don't listen to what we say about justice, we can always vote them out in the next election. That's a heavy threat. Don't let yourself be sidetracked by a police department and the mayor who don't really care about the problem or the law. Stir things up now so citizens can become a splinter in the finger of Mayor Murphy that he just can't get out. If the citizens want a review board, then take the time to plan one that will be effective. Not one that will pacify the anger that is waiting to overflow. Thank you.

Joe Panzino (affirmative): We're talking about accountability here. That's what we're talking about. We want a structural change to make the police accountable for their actions on the street. We don't want something that's going to work today, going to work for a year or two, because when McNeilly's gone it goes with him. That would do nothing. This is no new thing. This kind of violence in the streets is not some recent phenomenon. In fact, go back over decades and you'll find the same sort of thing happening, and people are getting fed up with it. Catching officers on video tape, eyewitnesses coming forward; what would have happened to Rodney King had there not been a video recorder that night? It would have been just another guy complaining, all beat up, and he would have sat in his cell and that would have been the end of it. We don't have video recorders on every corner. I don't want video recorders on every corner. But I want my police accountable. If they're going to draw down on someone with a pistol in the street, I want them to answer for it. I want to be sure that that use of deadly force was required, because the next time, that might be my son. That might be my dad, that might be my friend there in the street, who was maybe doing nothing. I want some accountability today. That's all we're looking for; structural accountability. This is not an expensive process; there are a number of boards in this country that work very effectively, if they're allowed to operate. If you just want to put a board in place that's there for namesake only, we might as well save our time, and we might as well not deal with it. Let's put a board in that's going to make a difference.

Questions from the audience: 40 minutes

Kelly Happe: Thank you very much. We have time for audience questions. If you're asking a question, be sure to direct it to the affirmative or negative side.

Competence of board members

Audience question: I have a question about the civilian review board and its makeup. How can you be sure, you discuss makeup and you want to give very broad powers, but how can you be sure that these people on the civilian review board will be familiar with police procedures and not just a bunch of people who hate police and want to go after them, even when they justifiably use force?

Joe Panzino: One of the things we do; it was already mentioned that we have representatives from the FOP. We have a seasoned officer in place in the department who can provide insight into the kinds of tactics that are required. And it will be an educational process to get involved in something like this. They need to have a clear understanding. You know, Mayor Murphy just said his six year-old son knew more than the Justice Department about running a big city police department. My response is maybe we picked the wrong Murphy.

[laughter]

Subpoena power

Audience question: This question is for Tara. Now your opponents have stated that the review board that they propose will have subpoena power; it can force witnesses to appear in front of the board in order to answer questions. My question is wouldn't that subpoena power aid the sort of activism and alternatives that you are discussing, by making public issues of police misconduct when prior to the board, might not even have been noticed?

Tara Beichner: On the first point, I don't think that selectively choosing to subpoena a few standers-by qualifies as activism. If they were activists, they would happily be subpoenaed. They would willingly come forth and say 'yes, I saw this. I'm making a public statement.' In regard to [the issue of] why accountability does not raise awareness, typically, I mean from the case studies that Bianca gave, most of these boards work behind closed doors. They don't get much attention. For example, the coroner's inquest that's supposed to be a fairly public event. But as we have found out from the work of the Campus Coalition for Peace and Justice, there was nothing open about that, and they are currently trying to stymie efforts to gain access to the records and figure out exactly what happened in that coroner's inquest and the hearings that were held. I still think that what is needed is continual vigilance, and supporting communities that wish to raise charges against police departments in general. That's what needs to occur. There needs to be a legal fund set up to allow minority litigants and poor litigants to successfully mount complaints, and that is not what is happening right now. And even if a civilian review board is established, their ability to actually force these police officers to be taken to court on criminal charges or on civil rights charges is minimal to non-existent. There is not a single board in the country that has that kind of power. And given the climate in this city, there's no way [a Pittsburgh board] would get that kind of power. So what's needed is vigilance, especially in the area of making sure that when a case is mounted, that citizens are encouraged to go to the police department, rather than go through this long drawn-out process of a civilian review board, and who knows what happens then.

The board and root problems

Audience question: I agree with the point that accountability is crucial, but it seems that you're listing an awful lot of problems with the civilian review board. You list politics, obstructionism, city officials, lawsuits against citizens, and litigation as being things that are blocking citizen review boards from being effective in the status quo. If that's true, I don't see any answer to Tara's accusation that the civilian review board will just be a quick-fix solution that will actually decrease the propensity for racism and discrimination which is the root of the problem. Can you tell me how the civilian review board will actually start to address the entrenchment we have in these horrible things that we all agree need to be fixed?

Joe Panzino: It's true that in most cities, CRBs are a symbol; that's what they've become. They don't have subpoena power; they don't have their investigative bodies. In fact they have to rely on going to the police to provide the investigative material for the cases that come before them. You can't do that. You've got the fox watching the hen house here. They're not going to report. They haven't done it for decades. They're not going to it now. The [CRB] group has to be autonomous, they have to be independent, they have to have separate funding. All of these things are going to have to work together. The best battle against this [police brutality] is for people to know, to see what's going on here. Once you start bringing things out in the open and on the table, things start settling down a whole lot. People are lot less likely to pull out a gun at someone and start shooting when they know that they could very well end up on the front page of tomorrow's paper instead of just having the matter scooted under the rug by some police official.

More on root cause arguments

Audience Question: I'd like to ask a question to the negative that addresses this issue, because I think it's a false choice to say well, there's racism and there are all these other factors contributing to the 'real' problem underlying police brutality. But why is that a reason not to have a civilian review board, or not to push for one of the independent type that's being advocated by the affirmative here? Isn't that the best hope of a CRB having some type of teeth, some type of power. Why should we delay a civilian review board that might be able to do that because there are all these other endemic things. And why wouldn't the affirmative's answer there potentially be right, like with things like civilian review boards, peoples' tendencies to be racist might decrease because you've got a body that can deal with them?

Bianca Huff: I think if you don't delay and get the facts surrounding other civilian review boards and how they have failed in other cities, then this one [in Pittsburgh] is also going to be a token. It's going to be a token that the city holds up to say, yes, we've done something about the problem.

Audience follow-up question: But the city has resisted it. You talk about activism, but this is what the activists have seem to want.

Bianca Huff: Once they've got all the support and all the signatures, I don't think the city officials will resist. Then we can have an effective board. It took me an hour to find this information. It's easy. They invited the Philadelphia civilian review board and it was not working, and I don't think anybody looked at it at all.

The role of activists

Christolyn Carter: That's a very good question. And you said it was up to the activists to find the information and go their police force?

Bianca Huff: No, I didn't say that.

Christolyn Carter: No? Am I misquoting you? I just want you to repeat the part about the activists' job.

Bianca Huff: I was saying it is the job of those pushing for a civilian review board to bring a strong proposal to the mayor.

Christolyn Carter: You didn't say anything about activists?

Bianca Huff: No, I didn't.

Christolyn Carter: OK, well it seemed like you did. OK, but anyway, the point is that the activists would not have the staying power that a board would have. That [activist] is just one person, what we need is an army. The police force has their own attorneys, they have their own subpoena powers, they are no match for an activist. Once again, many activists do not have an understanding of the legal system, do not have knowledge of the police force. And that's why it's up to the CRB to fight for these individuals. The activist basically has the forefront job; they have the petitions, they have the picket signs. OK, but what happens when you put the picket signs down?

Bianca Huff: But it's an ongoing process.

Christolyn Carter: Yes, it's an ongoing process, but the activist can be holding up a picket sign forever, while the brother is being beat down or the person is being held up in court. Like we have been saying, we need a CRB that has its own attorneys, that has power of autonomy, and has people who explain to the citizenry the tools of ...

Bianca Huff: Like I said, I did not say we should not have a CRB; I said a CRB must be effectively prepared, first.

Tara Beichner: One of the points that has been made is that a citizen review board would deter police brutality. I just don't buy that argument, that Vojtas is going to say, oh, I won't do that because I might get slapped on the wrist by a civilian review board. I don't think that's true. Our argument is that they need sensitivity training, that procedural changes need to take place first. For a civilian review board to have teeth, first there must be mechanisms in place that facilitate investigative studies into what has been going on, as well as not focusing on merely end-of-the-pipe solutions; you need to focus on prevention strategies. And by proposing the civilian review board, you are proposing a silver bullet response, a kind of "OK, we have our civilian review board, that will solve all our problems." We need to focus on procedural changes for real change to occur. The second thing that you said was that activists universally want a CRB. That's actually not true. The Campus Coalition for Peace and Justice has not taken a position on the CRB, based on the argument that I've been making that it will quiesce the movement, that there will no longer be so much activism.

Board's effect on activism

Audience follow-up question: So people that are concerned about police brutality are as naive and stupid as to think that the CRB is a silver bullet?

Tara Beichner: No, to a certain degree it takes away the momentum of the movement.

Audience follow-up question: But where's the movement? Where did we hear cries of injustice before we had a dead Jonny Gammage?

Bianca Huff: The problem is apathy.

Audience follow-up statement: And that's why I think this person's comment here, that the civilian review board would be bringing stuff out into the open, to use subpoena power to ask questions and make people justify why they used force, that's the kind of space and place that can be used to keep activism going.

Bianca Huff: There's a good chance that there won't be public hearings surrounding a civilian review board.

Joe Panzino: That's for us to determine.

Bianca Huff: But the mayor is here, and the mayor doesn't want that. He still has say.

Tara Beichner: The CRB being proposed on the petition ballot is very vague, and we have no idea what that board will eventually look like. We have to be careful about what we're actually advocating.

Kelly Happe: I have a copy of the proposal here if anybody wants to see it.

The silver bullet solution syndrome

Audience question: Yes, I would just like to let Jesse know that effective today, David Kwiat announced his resignation and he will be stepping down from OMI. And for Bianca, I don't know how you feel, but Sala Udin spent many years constructing this whole CRB, so for you to say it wasn't really well researched, he's got a stack of research this high [raises arm to ceiling]. And I just want to ask this whole group; Tara had talked about the silver bullet. But don't you think that's what is currently in place; because the system right now, that's the silver bullet system, because when a police officer does something wrong, it's sort of swept under the carpet. Isn't that the same sort of analogy you used, you know, in the movie when the guy shoots the werewolf but then turns around and the werewolf rises. What we're advocating is that with a CRB, we think that

once the bullet is shot, then that person will not rise. And you guys talked about 10 police officers having been disciplined?

Jesse Richman: They were fired.

Audience follow-up: But I heard, at least by talking to Dave Kwait, that at least six of them were still getting paid. It seems that you guys, for some reason, you seem to be afraid of change. Is that why you're afraid of giving this a try, because you're afraid of change?

Tara Beichner: I don't think we're afraid of change. It's just like some of the things Bianca has been saying; we want real change. I know that Sala Udin's proposal has been backed by a lot of work. And his proposal is probably the best proposal is probably the best that we have. But we should also spend more time looking into what will be best for the city of Pittsburgh. We need more than his proposal. We need the change to be codified into law so that it can't change with the changing of the guard. As far as the silver bullet is concerned, I think the silver bullet of the past, at least as far as police accountability, has been unmasked as ineffective, and I think that at some point, a civilian review board will also be shown to be not a silver bullet solution, and once again we will be left grasping for answers when another Jonny Gammage arises, because police will continue to not testify, to shroud evidence, and to keep up the blue wall. Without structural change, the civilian review board is hollow and impotent, and really cannot do anything. They can talk about this all they want and say isn't this horrible, but without real procedural change, their efforts are meaningless.

Jesse Richman: Responding to one of your points about my data. According to the Post-Gazette of today, McNeilly has terminated 10 officers for offenses ranging from sex crimes to assault. So I don't know where your data is coming from; maybe you're right, but according to the Post-Gazette, I'm right.

Law and order mentality: the real beast

Audience question: I guess this question will wind up being a question for the affirmative side. We've heard a lot of talk about teeth and beasts, and so forth, I guess my question is addressed to the fact that none of the panelists seem to have mentioned idea of the real beast, and that is at a national level, the sort of law and order mentality exhibited by the Democrats and the Republicans, and locally as well. And so when I hear solutions like activism or voting, as Bianca suggests, I wonder exactly how that will break down. We have a shared system of oppression, particularly against people of color. One example of that locally would be criminals escape from Western Penitentiary; what you get is ten people demoted, one person fired. Jonny Gammage gets killed, and John Vojtas goes back and gets vacation time. Especially with black citizens, they're either in jail, or beaten up, or dead, and that's where both Democrats and Republicans want them. So I guess what seems to me happening, or what you're proposing is changing one organ within the beast, but the beast retains its teeth. How do you see this change in organ having any real effect?

Joe Panzino: I'll try to answer your question with another question, if I can. Ask yourself, what would happen if Mayor Murphy walked out of his office tomorrow and said, 'I've had enough of this activism, I can't take it any more, just tell me what you want me to do.' What are you going to say to him? We want to end racism? We want to stop police brutality? This is pie in the sky. I think everyone will agree that the Constitution, and democracy, is not a perfect form of government. It's a government made up of people. And it's going to have its flaws in operation because people operate within it. They will use and abuse the structure of our government. But [the CRB] is something for us; it's something that we can work with. Because to the largest extent, I think that people know that they're going to be found out, it's the criminal that won't break into the house when the light's on; it's the guy that won't go up and steal a car because it's got an alarm on it. That's one of the things that will deter crime; people don't want to be found out.

Christolyn Carter: I just want to add to that. You can't fight the system individually. You have to fight the system from within the system. That's the only way to get real change. If the ACLU and the FBI had not come into Pittsburgh, this would not have been posted on the front page. And activism has been going on for the past ten years, but since the FBI stepped into it, and the federal government wants to sue Pittsburgh, then you have to stop and think that this is a bigger thing that

we're up against. It's not just some people crying to city hall, saying 'Justice for Jonny Gammage.' The government is pointing its finger at Pittsburgh and saying 'Clean up your yard. What is the matter with your house here?' That's what we're advocating for. We're advocating for a larger structure to fight the current system.

Current brutality rates

Audience question: This is a question for Jesse. You said that police brutality since Mayor Murphy, I'm paraphrasing, you said that it's been down 25% ...

Jesse Richman: What I said was that complaints for police brutality in 1996 are down 25% compared to complaints in 1995. That's according to the Post-Gazette.

Audience follow-up question: Does that mean that police brutality itself is down?

Jesse Richman: I don't know. It would indicate to me that it is likely that brutality is down. Especially with all of the publicity around, with the Gammage case, I would expect people to be complaining when they were subjected to brutality by the police. So the fact that complaints have gone down, that indicates to me that it is likely that brutality itself has declined.

Audience follow-up question: Because if you had said that police brutality went down 25%, I was going to ask you if could put that into rough numbers according to how many people have been brutalized.

Jesse Richman: I couldn't do that. I could say that complaints have been running in the range of about 200-300. That's total complaints. I don't know how that breaks down into physical versus verbal abuse.

Audience follow-up question: So based on the complaints, you feel that we don't need a civilian review board?

Jesse Richman: I feel that a civilian review board would not be able to effectively handle the problem. I was also pointing out that that apparently, the problem has declined somewhat over the past year; that measures seem to have been taken that seem to have some effect.

Audience follow-up question: OK, what measures?

Jesse Richman: Including the creation of OMI to replace OPS, including the monitoring of police officers, including the new codes of conduct and use of force police which McNeilly has talked about. I have heard the accusation that no one has actually seen this policy, perhaps that's true, but at least he says it's there. And presumably there is something to what he says. And even if there isn't the publicity surrounding it will probably have some effect. What I'm saying is that there seems to have been some reduction in police brutality over the last year, and that in agreement with my colleagues, the civilian review board has serious problems.

Uniqueness of the Pittsburgh board

Audience follow-up question: All right then, just two questions. How do you know that the civilian review board, as proposed by Pittsburgh, the one that they're [the affirmative side] is proposing, won't do a better job than what Murphy's put into place? And my second question is in the cities where there are civilian review boards, have activists stopped being active? Have they quit? Have they went home and watched TV and forgot about it all because they have a CRB?

Jesse Richman: Well the second question is more for my colleagues than myself. As far as the first question, how do we know that it will not be more effective? We don't know for certain. All we can do is point out that one quarter that the civilian review board have some effect. The vast majority have just ended up as figureheads. That doesn't bode well. There are provisions in the Pittsburgh Home Rule Charter that will prevent that will make it difficult to have a extremely powerful board. I'm not God. I can't say absolutely that the board will definitely not be effective. All I can say is that it is probable that the board will not be effective.

Audience follow-up question: Would you say that a civilian review board could be more effective? Would you admit that?

Bianca Huff: Unless the Pittsburgh charter is changed, a civilian review board is not going to have any more rights than any other civilian review boards that have been operating across this country. Unless the law itself is changed.

Joe Panzino: Point of clarification. Jesse mentioned the newly implemented OMI; these are not verbal abuse cases. These are all physical abuse cases. They don't even consider verbal abuse cases.

Empirical effect of boards on activism

Audience follow-up question: Will you answer my second question? My second question was, there seems to be the idea that with a civilian review board, that just kills all activism, that people just won't want to push any more. So in places where there is a civilian review board, are people still active? Is there a lot of activism, or is there no activism? Is there any evidence for what you're saying?

Bianca Huff: People are still active in the cities where there are civilian review boards. However, in the case of Pittsburgh, people were not active in the first place. They were just apathetic. They didn't care until Jonny Gammage case came to light.

Public forum function of the board

Chris Boback: I want take off on that point. The civilian review board is a means to a public forum. It brings these matters to light. You don't have to wait for the six o'clock news when you find out that someone has been gunned down in the street. You have the system under CRB, they're publishing patterns on police misconduct. And through activism, then you can put pressure on the police department to change its policy, and on the government, to monitor the police to make sure it doesn't get out of hand.

Bianca Huff: But once again I say, you may not get a public forum with a civilian review board.

Chris Boback: Why not? It could be in the guidelines, in the structure of the board itself.

Background of the debaters

Audience question: I'm just curious, how many of the panelists are actually from Pittsburgh?

Jesse Richman: Could you define 'from Pittsburgh'?

[laughter]

Joe Panzino: Spoken like a real bureaucrat.

[laughter]

Audience follow-up question: Actually lived in Pittsburgh, or actually know the city? Two?

[Joe Panzino and Tara Beichner raised their hands]

Protests against boards in other cities

Question from the audience: A quick response to this man's question back here, Michael's question. I know that at least in New York, activists are protesting against the civilian review board.

Kelly Happe: The same is true in San Francisco. We have time for a couple more questions.

What's realistic?

Question from the audience: My question is for Joe. In response to Joel's question, you responded with the analogy of the pie in the sky. Don't you think that's a little defeatist, to justify the civilian review board by saying that racism is inherent in society and that rather than trying to stop it, we should just try to minimize the problem?

Joe Panzino: It's a realist approach, that's all. Let me try to provide an analogy. We've got a rat in the house. We've got a rat running loose in the house. We've got one trap. Depends on where we put it, depends on what we load it with, depends on how we set it. OK? We're not going to

clear out the rat population. There's no way were going to bring an end to the rat population in this country. But we could get that one that's in the house, eventually.

Audience follow-up question: Why not fumigate the house?

[laughter]

Christolyn Carter: Whatever it takes.

Joe Panzino: That's what we're looking for. What we're saying is that whatever we been trying in the past is not working. We're going to call the Professional Standards Office the OMI, then we move public safety out to East Liberty ... This is all the same thing; it's shuffling cards. It's a shell game.

Audience follow-up question: Exactly. That's my point. Isn't the civilian review board just another attempt to shuffle the cards, to use the bureaucracy to stop a problem that seems to be inherent in society that we can't fix anyway? That seems to be within the same cycle that you're talking about.

Joe Panzino: The Justice Department has been very clear that the problems we have are structural problems within the police department, and the administration itself. It's practiced systematically.

Audience follow-up question: How do you change what's in the system? How do you change what's in the police officers? All you do is create an external body that may or may not regulate the police? If it's true that the problem is within the police, that it's within the police themselves, I'm not sure exactly how an outside check, another bureaucratic system involving people, who are just like the police, to fix the problem?

Christolyn Carter: How would you advocate change?

Audience answer: Oh, I'm just a critic.

[laughter]

Christolyn Carter: No. Could you answer my question? In light of the current situation, how would you advocate change? And in addition to that, my colleagues have said activism works. But activism without structural change is just activism. They have activism in Bosnia, and in Yugoslavia. I forgot the number, but the activists were shot down in the street, and demobilized, and shuffled out. They had to conquer the forces from within. The activist leader had to become the president in order to succeed. Could you answer that for me?

Audience answer: Sure. In my current position as a critic of the argument, I agree that prevention is the best way ...

Christolyn Carter: What is prevention?

Audience answer: Education.

Christolyn Carter: How?

Audience answer: Through schools, through the police system itself.

Christolyn Carter: How? You're going to educate the police?

Audience answer: Yes. You concede that that's the part of the problem that needs changed.

Christolyn Carter: How?

Audience answer: Classes, I don't know.

Christolyn Carter: And that's going to come out of the taxpayers' money?

Audience question: In regards to what's happening in New York and San Francisco, it's a little hard to compare that with what's happening here. I don't think we really know how their particular systems are designed, how they're set up. I can say that a CRB here would be a totally volunteer body where people would get no pay. That they would be extracted from seven districts, and to be fair and impartial they would have their own economic structure, and they would hear various

complaints, and you're right they would only be a recommending body. And from there it would be up to the Mayor and whoever to go forward with it.

Education

Audience question: You were saying something about education. Education is good, and it is needed. But whose to say that with the education, they're [the police] going to go out and perform different now? There still needs to be a sword. Just like a criminal, he's got to be held accountable. Whatever education he gets, he gets a great education, commits a heinous crime, there needs to be a system in place that holds him accountable for his actions. And that's what they're saying; they want the police to be held accountable for their actions. I believe they need sensitivity training, because there is an attitude adjustment that they need. But they need this as well. They can get the sensitivity training, they can get the education they need, and still go out and perform otherwise. What does this say? Like the good I would do I won't do. And evil I hate I find myself doing. So they could end up still going out there and perform the same nonsense after sensitivity training. That's why we still need the sword to be held accountable.

Audience statement: How many people have actually seen a community-oriented [police] station open? I mean my drive-by one is almost always closed.

[laughter]

Audience statement: The community-oriented and sensitive police are driving with the other guys.

Jesse Richman: Perhaps that's something we should focus on.

Bianca Huff: It all goes back to the mayor, and to the council; what's the board going to do to ensure accountability?

Closing of debate

Kelly Happe: We really should end. It's a quarter to ten. Thank you for coming. People can continue to discuss, but we'll officially close the discussion. But I should mention that we are planning on having another debate, and getting people like Sala Udin and other advocates, for against the civilian review board, to come and have a public debate and do something like this again.

[applause]

Announcement of visit by Tim Stevens

Audience statement: My name is Johnny, I'm the vice-president of the Black Action Society. This is Mike Barge, the Treasurer. This Monday, we're bringing in Tim Stevens. We've had posters everywhere, all over the city. So if you could come, it will be this Monday, the 17th, eight o'clock in the Assembly Room. Basically the focus will be on the national convention. We'll have mikes set up in both aisles for a question and answer format, and I'm sure there will be a lot of questions for Tim. So if you guys can come out and support us Monday, we'd really appreciate it.

[applause]