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## Fact Sheet

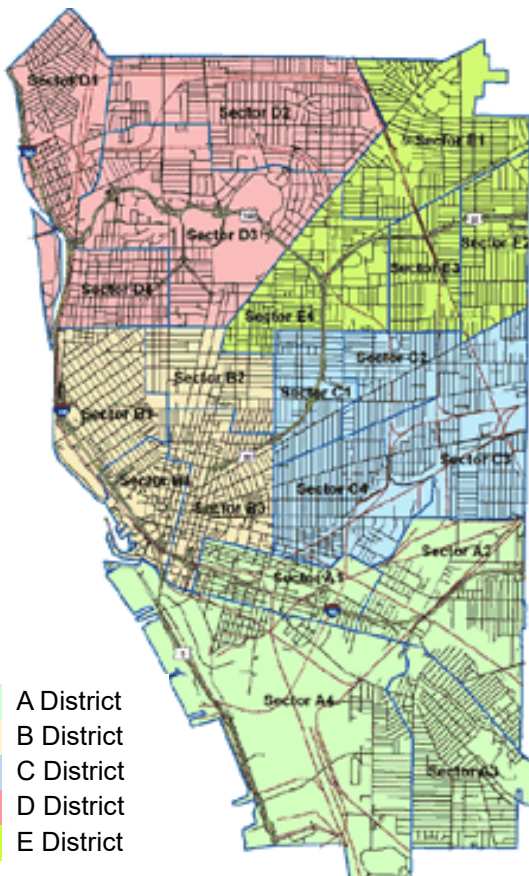
# The City of Buffalo Police Department

DECEMBER 2017

*This fact sheet was drafted by Sarah Wooton, a policy analyst at Partnership for the Public Good. It documents the history and demographics of the City of Buffalo Police Department, its recent activity, its organization and chain of command, the bodies that are tasked with oversight of the department, and how residents can file a complaint. The fact sheet shares the current schedule of district community meetings happening monthly across the City, and concludes by listing contact information for headquarters and each of Buffalo's five districts.*

## Background

Prior to the 1870s, policing in Buffalo was managed by the Niagara Frontier Police District, which oversaw Buffalo, Tonawanda, and Wheatfield. In 1871, the City of Buffalo Police Department (BPD) was established with a mission to “improve the quality of life in the City of Buffalo.”<sup>1</sup>



As time went on, the department recognized the need to diversify its force to better serve the City. The BPD hired its first female police officer prior to World War I and appointed its first black patrol officer shortly after, in 1918.<sup>2</sup>

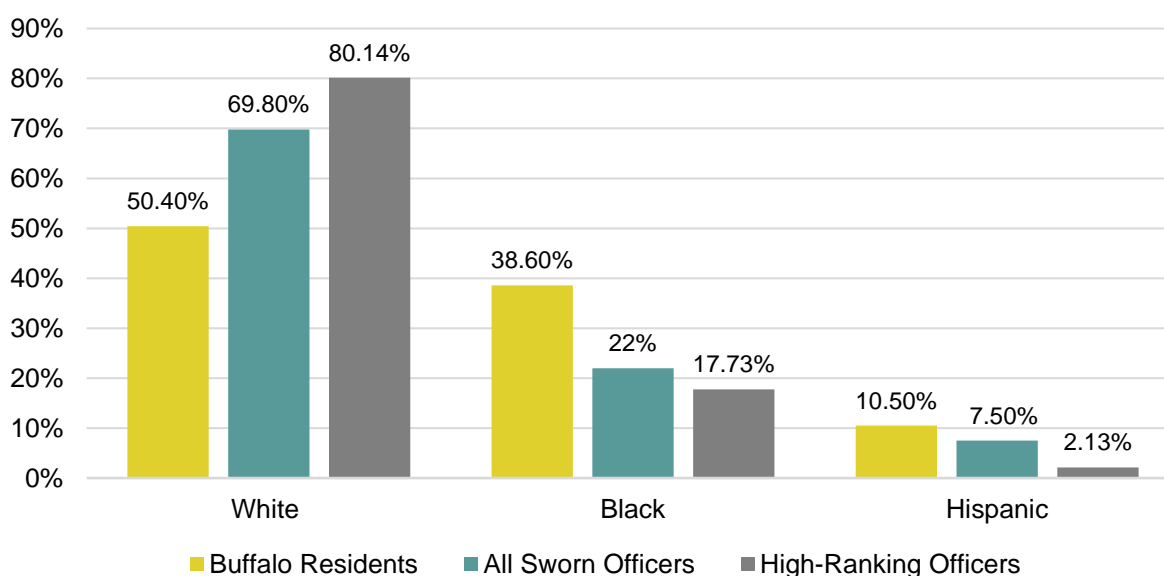
Currently, the BPD serves five districts within the City (pictured at left) and is headquartered downtown. More than 850 sworn and non-sworn individuals work for the department.<sup>3</sup>

For the 2017 to 2018 fiscal year, the BPD's budget is \$131 million.<sup>4</sup> The largest line items in the budget are officer salaries (\$56.6 million), officer overtime (\$9.5 million), and civilian salaries (\$6.9 million). The most highly paid officer is the Commissioner of Police at \$137,710. Most police officers and detectives are paid a base salary of between \$75,000 and \$78,000, with additional overtime and court time pay.<sup>5</sup>

## Demographics<sup>6</sup>

As shown in the graph below, of the BPD's 708 sworn officers, more than two thirds identify as white. The remaining third of officers identify as black or Hispanic. Compared to the population of city, white officers are overrepresented within the department, while black and Hispanic officers are underrepresented. This discrepancy increases when looking at higher-ranking officials in the police force (all positions above police officers and detectives). Of them, more than eighty percent are white, whereas less than twenty percent of higher-ranking officials are people of color.

Diversity in the Buffalo Police Department:  
Race of Officers Compared to Buffalo Residents



To address this discrepancy between the demographics of the BPD and the demographics of Buffalo's population, the City has attempted to diversify its force. In 2015, City officials announced the BPD 21<sup>st</sup> Century program. This provided 'pre-employment scholarships' to as many as 50 individuals for the Erie County's Police Training Academy, with the objective of diversifying the BPD's applicant pool.<sup>7</sup>

That same year, the BPD and the police union negotiated a new contract which included a seven-year City residency requirement for new hires. This was meant to ensure that officers have a stake in the Buffalo community.<sup>8</sup> Also, in 2016, the BPD removed its officer eligibility requirement of 60 college credit hours. The BPD did this so that individuals who may not have had the opportunity to pursue higher education could apply to the police force.<sup>9</sup>

## BPD Activity

In the table below, you can find the statistics that the BPD reported for its patrol unit.

	2004-2005	2009-2010	2014-2015
<b>Arrests</b>	18,002	18,644	16,299
<b>Traffic Summons Issued</b>	19,505	15,167	31,629
<b>911 Calls for Police Service</b>	225,519	229,428	204,853

In 2014-2015, arrests and calls for service were down from previous years. Traffic summons, on the other hand, more than doubled from five years prior.<sup>10</sup>

## Chain of Command and Organization<sup>11</sup>

Chains of command vary across law enforcement agencies in the United States. You can find the Buffalo Police Department's hierarchy below:



## FACT SHEET

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The chain of command is topped by the **police commissioner**. The mayor appoints this position. The commissioner's duties include overseeing the general management, budget, and personnel of the department, including creating and guiding its strategic plan.<sup>12</sup>

There are two **deputy commissioners** who support the commissioner and oversee operations. There is also a **chief of detectives**, who oversees the Homicide Unit and Narcotics Unit. Each BPD district is managed by a **police chief**. An **inspector** serves as the second in command to the chief and oversees the district when the chief is off duty. The **district captain** works directly under the chief. They oversee manpower within the district.

**Lieutenants** are directly in command of patrol officers. The **detective sergeant** manages the **detectives**, who investigate crimes. **Police officers** answer 9-1-1 calls and patrol the City. In each district, there are also two **community police officers** that engage more closely with the community and interact with residents. Their contact information is in the "Resources" section at the end of this fact sheet.

## Special Units and Teams

In addition to the narcotics and homicide squads, overseen by the chief of detectives, the BPD has various special units and teams.

**Housing Unit:** In 2010 the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority made a contract with the City of Buffalo, under which the BPD created a Housing Unit with 18 police officers and two lieutenants under the direction of a captain. According to the contract, the Housing Unit would "develop and implement a law enforcement operation plan for the improvement of public safety on various [BMHA] properties."<sup>13</sup> The work of the Housing Unit is to be "above and beyond baseline services," such as patrols, 911 responses, and investigative follow-up; rather, the Housing Units is "dedicated to proactively addressing problem individuals and locations at targeted BMHA developments by patrolling BMHA developments and to responding to BMHA police calls in addition to baseline services being provided."<sup>14</sup>

**Strike Force:** The Strike Force Unit includes 20 police officers, four from each of the five districts.<sup>15</sup> The City created it in 2012 to replace the Mobile Response Unit, which had been operating since 2006 and was a main engine of the Mayor's "zero tolerance" law enforcement initiative.<sup>16</sup> The City describes the Strike Force Mission as:

- Identify and target gang members
- Target and eliminate high crime areas throughout the City
- Remove illegal guns and illegal drugs from the streets
- Strict enforcement of the Mayor's zero tolerance law enforcement initiative
- Make Buffalo a better place to live, work, and raise a family.

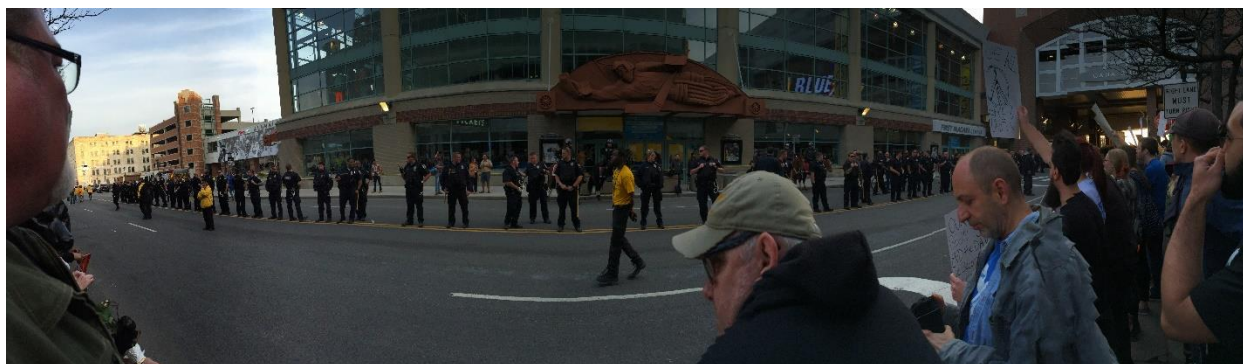
The Strike Force and Housing Unit are closely related and use similar proactive tactics. They are the main focus of a complaint filed by Black Lives Matter-Buffalo and a coalition of Buffalo

## CITY OF BUFFALO POLICE DEPARTMENT

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residents with the New York State Attorney General's office in August 2013, alleging a pattern of unconstitutional policing targeting people of color through illegal stops and searches, trespass arrests, traffic checkpoints, and use of excessive force.<sup>17</sup>

**SWAT Team:** In the United States, Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams were created in the 1960s to deal with riots and violent criminals by using military style equipment and methods, including submachine guns, assault rifles, riot control agents, and stun grenades. SWAT teams proliferated in the 1980s and 1990s as part of the War on Drugs and increased again after 9/11, particularly as the federal government became very generous in supplying local police departments with military equipment. The most common use of SWAT teams today is to execute search warrants for narcotics. Buffalo's SWAT team consists of specially trained officers drawn from all departments.<sup>18</sup>



*BPD Officers line the street outside of Niagara Center. April 18, 2016.*

## Oversight Mechanisms

Several entities have the legal authority to oversee the BPD, each at a different level of government:

**Internal Affairs Division (department level):**<sup>19</sup> Previously known as the Professional Standards Division, the Internal Affairs Division (IAD) is an arm of the BPD. The IAD's responsibility is to investigate all complaints filed against the BPD and to notify the complainant of the IAD's findings. Anyone can file a complaint with the IAD.

The IAD usually determines that officers are not at fault in allegations of excessive use of force. According to an Investigative Post analysis, officers were cleared of wrongdoing in 58 of the 62 completed investigations into excessive use of force complaints filed between January 1, 2014 and mid-September 2016.<sup>20</sup>



## FACT SHEET

**Commission on Citizens' Rights and Community Relations (City level):** City officials created the Commission on Citizens' Rights and Community Relations (CCRCR) in 2001. It is made up of eleven members appointed by the Mayor.<sup>21</sup>

Simply put, the CCRCR's mission is to eliminate discrimination and bias in the City. The CCRCR has the authority to review, monitor, and report on the relationship between the Buffalo police and community members. Among other powers, the CCRCR can review IAD investigations, recommend more training and oversight for officers, hold hearings, take testimony, and issue subpoenas.<sup>22</sup> The CCRCR is also supposed to help citizens to file and pursue police misconduct complaints.<sup>23</sup>

The CCRCR has been largely dormant in recent years. It is required by the City Charter to create annual reports, but it has not released one since 2008. It also has not used its power to hold hearings and take testimony since 2014.

**New York State Attorney General (state level):** The New York State Attorney General has a civil rights bureau that enforces discrimination laws and can also investigate police misconduct.

For example, in 2010, after receiving complaints from African American residents of Niagara Falls of excessive force used by the police, the Attorney General investigated

## FILE A COMPLAINT.

If you believe your rights have been violated during a police encounter, you can file a complaint with any of the following offices. Contact the office below for further instructions on the complaint process.



### INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Contact the Internal Affairs Division of the Buffalo Police Department at **716-851-4557**, or go to any police department building and ask for a supervisor. If you have it, bring the following information: date, time, and location of incident; names, badge numbers, or car numbers of officers.



### CITY COMMISSION

Contact the Commission on Citizens' Rights and Community Relations at **716-851-8002**, or visit Buffalo City Hall Room 1316-C. Download a Discrimination Complaint Form at:

[www.ci.buffalo.ny.us/Home/City\\_Departments/Citizens\\_Rights\\_and\\_Community\\_Relation](http://www.ci.buffalo.ny.us/Home/City_Departments/Citizens_Rights_and_Community_Relation)



### ATTORNEY GENERAL

Contact the New York State Attorney General's Civil Rights Bureau at **212-416-8250**. Download the Civil Rights Bureau Complaint Form at:

[www.ag.ny.gov/complaint-forms](http://www.ag.ny.gov/complaint-forms)



### US DEPT. OF JUSTICE

Contact the US Dept. of Justice Civil Rights Division at **202-514-3847**. To report incidents of excessive force or other Constitutional violations by law enforcement, contact the FBI's Buffalo Office at 716-856-7800, or visit One FBI Plaza, Buffalo, NY.

and concluded that the Niagara Falls police were violating the law. The City agreed to a court-supervised consent decree and promised to revise its use of force policy, improve its training and reporting, change its internal investigation protocols, and participate in arbitration of various individual complaints that had been lodged.

The Attorney General automatically investigates cases where a police officer kills an unarmed civilian in New York State.<sup>24</sup> As of July 2017, the Attorney General's office had investigated (or was investigating) eleven cases of unarmed civilian deaths by police.<sup>25</sup> Of these eleven cases, the Attorney General's office had charged one officer, closed five investigations, and was investigating five cases.<sup>26</sup> Two of those cases involve civilians killed by police in Buffalo, New York: Wardel Davis (the officers involved were cleared of wrongdoing) and Jose Hernandez Rossy (the investigation is ongoing).

Anyone can file a complaint with the Attorney General's office. It should be in writing and can be submitted online or mailed.

**United States Department of Justice (federal level):** The United States Department of Justice (DOJ) can investigate civil rights violations, including police misconduct. Anyone can submit a complaint to the DOJ.

The Civil Rights Division mostly focuses on cases where a law enforcement agency has a pattern or practice of violating civilians' rights. This means that the misconduct is happening on a systemic level rather than an individual or isolated case. When the DOJ finds a pattern or practice of misconduct, they negotiate a court-enforced reform agreement with the police department.

The DOJ has opened 69 investigations into law enforcement agencies since the initiative began in 1994.<sup>27</sup> It has negotiated reform agreements in 40 of those cases.<sup>28</sup> The Buffalo Police Department was the subject of one such investigation in 1997 for its use of "chemical agent propellants," such as pepper spray.<sup>29</sup>

The DOJ also has broad authority to investigate and prosecute on any civil rights violations. In 2009, the DOJ filed a lawsuit challenging the conditions at the Erie County Holding Center and the Erie County Correctional Facility.<sup>30</sup>

## **District Community Meetings**

To voice concerns and priorities, residents can also attend monthly meetings held in each district. The district chief and community police officers are typically present to offer updates, engage with residents, and answer questions.

<h2>A District</h2> <p>Third Friday of the month 10am 1847 South Park Avenue</p>	<p>Every month, Buffalo Police districts hold community meetings, where the district chief and community police officers meet with residents.</p>	
<h2>WHEN IS YOUR COMMUNITY POLICE MEETING?</h2>	<h2>B District</h2> <p>Second Monday of the month Call for time (10am or 6pm) 695 Main Street</p>	
<h2>C District</h2> <p>Second Wednesday of the month 6pm 693 East Ferry</p>	<h2>D District</h2> <p>First Wednesday of the month Call for time (11am or 6pm) 699 Hertel Avenue Temporary: 205 Esser Avenue</p>	<h2>E District</h2> <p>Second Wednesday of the month 6pm 2777 Bailey Avenue</p>

**The following is the schedule of district community meetings, as of December 2017:**

**A-District:** Third Friday of every month at 10am.

Next Meetings: **January 19, 2018 at 10am; February 16, 2018 at 10am.**

Location: 1847 South Park Avenue

**B-District:** Second Monday of every month at alternating times.

Next meetings: **January 8, 2018 at 10am; February 12, 2018 at 6pm.**

Location: 695 Main Street

**C-District:** Second Wednesday of every month at 6pm.

Next meetings: **January 10, 2018 at 6pm; February 14, 2018 at 6pm.**

Location: 693 East Ferry

**D-District:** First Wednesday of the month at alternating times. *No meeting in January and August.*

Next meetings: **February 7, 2018 at 11am; March 7, 2018 at 6pm.**

Location: 669 Hertel Avenue (Temporary Location: 205 Esser Avenue)

**E-District:** Second Wednesday of each month at 6pm.

Next meetings: **January 10, 2018 at 6pm; February 14, 2018 at 6pm.**

Location: 2777 Bailey Avenue Buffalo, NY 14215



## Resources

**Emergencies/Immediate assistance needed:** Call **9-1-1**.

**Ongoing issues:** Call your district's community police officer and/or **3-1-1**. If you call your local community police officer, the officer may be able to address the issue. If not, the officer will direct you to the appropriate number to call. Calling 3-1-1 helps the City to build a record of issues at a particular house or in a particular area, and your complaint will be forwarded throughout much of the police department. Calling your district should be your last resort because districts cannot dispatch cars from the station houses.<sup>31</sup>

**Report an anonymous tip:** There are three ways to do this. You can call the confidential tip line at **847-2255**, you can send a tip via email to [tips@bpdny.org](mailto:tips@bpdny.org), or you can submit a form online at [www.bpdny.org/Home/Services/Report](http://www.bpdny.org/Home/Services/Report).

### **BPD Headquarters**

74 Franklin St Buffalo, NY 14202  
**851-4444**

### **A-District**

1847 South Park Ave Buffalo, NY 14220  
Chief: Thomas Moran – **851-4415**  
Captains: Henry Baranski & Philip M. Serafini  
Community Police Officers: Anthony LeBron – **851-4458** & David Fay – **851-4353**

### **B-District**

695 Main Street Buffalo, NY 14203  
Chief: Joseph Gramaglia – **851-4403**  
Captains: William Blake & James Shea  
Community Police Officers: Jeanan Sharpe – **851-5002** & Joseph Szafranski – **851-4815**

### **C-District**

693 East Ferry Buffalo, NY 14211  
Chief: Barbara Lark – **851-4412**  
Captain: Ron Jentz  
Community Police Officers: Leonetta Russell-Baskerville & Armon Badger – **851-4444 x1411**

### **D-District**

669 Hertel Avenue Buffalo, NY 14213 (Temporary Location: 205 Esser Avenue)  
Chief: Anthony Barba – **851-4413**  
Captain: Paul Mullen  
Community Police Officer: Christine Sikora & Mary Billings **851-5822**

### **E-District**

2767 Bailey Avenue Buffalo, NY 14215  
Chief: Carmen Menza – **851-4416**  
Captain: David Stabler  
Community Police Officer: Angelo Threats & Derrick Floyd **851-4459**

## FACT SHEET

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- <sup>1</sup> Michael Kaska, "Buffalo Police Department History," *Buffalo Police Then and Now*, accessed September 6, 2016, <http://www.bpdthenandnow.com/historypage01.html>; "Mission Statement," *Buffalo Police Department*, accessed September 6, 2016, <http://www.bpdny.org/Home/About/Mission>.
- <sup>2</sup> Ruth O'Neil, "History of Our Policewoman," *Buffalo Police Then and Now*, accessed September 6, 2016, <http://www.bpdthenandnow.com/policewomanpage1.html>; "History of Black Police Officers," *Buffalo Police Then and Now*, accessed September 6, 2016, <http://www.bpdthenandnow.com/historyblackofficerpage1.html>.
- <sup>3</sup> "About the Buffalo Police Department," *Buffalo Police Department*, accessed September 6, 2016, <http://www.bpdny.org/Home/About>.
- <sup>4</sup> This figure includes budget totals for "Public Safety Police," "Police Fleet Maintenance," and "Police-Civilians" sections of the Police Department Budget: City of Buffalo Division of Budget, *2017-2018 Adopted Budget Section II: Police Department* (Buffalo, NY: 2017), [http://www.city-buffalo.com/files/1\\_2\\_1/Mayor/2017-2018AdoptedBudget/Section-II\\_Appropriation\\_Detail\\_By\\_Department/Police.pdf](http://www.city-buffalo.com/files/1_2_1/Mayor/2017-2018AdoptedBudget/Section-II_Appropriation_Detail_By_Department/Police.pdf), 1.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> All data derived from: "Buffalo Police Department Sworn Officer Demographic, June 10, 2016," acquired during interview with BPD officials, July 2016; U.S. Census Bureau, Buffalo (city) New York, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/3611000.html>.
- <sup>7</sup> Lou Michel, "City Hopes New Initiative Will Lead to More Minority Police Officers," *Buffalo News*, October 19, 2015, <http://www.buffalonews.com/city-region/city-hopes-new-initiative-will-lead-to-more-minority-police-officers-20151019>.
- <sup>8</sup> "Mayor Brown Launches BPD21C," *City of Buffalo*, October 19, 2015, <http://www.bpdny.org/Home/Press/Current/MayorBrownLaunchesBPD21C>.
- <sup>9</sup> Luke Moretti, "Buffalo Police Drops College Requirement," *WIVB*, June 16, 2016, <http://wivb.com/2016/06/16/buffalo-police-drops-college-requirement/>.
- <sup>10</sup> City of Buffalo Division of Budget, *2006-2007 Adopted Budget Section II: Police Department* (Buffalo, NY: 2006), [http://www.city-buffalo.com/files/1\\_2\\_1/2006-07\\_Adopted\\_Budget/Police.pdf](http://www.city-buffalo.com/files/1_2_1/2006-07_Adopted_Budget/Police.pdf), 2; City of Buffalo Division of Budget, *2010-2011 Adopted Budget Section II: Police Department* (Buffalo, NY: 2010), [http://www.city-buffalo.com/files/1\\_2\\_1/Mayor/2010-2011AdoptedBudget/Police.pdf](http://www.city-buffalo.com/files/1_2_1/Mayor/2010-2011AdoptedBudget/Police.pdf), 2; City of Buffalo Division of Budget, *2015-2016 Adopted Budget Section II: Police Department* (Buffalo, NY: 2015), [http://www.city-buffalo.com/files/1\\_2\\_1/Mayor/20152016AdoptedBudget/police.pdf](http://www.city-buffalo.com/files/1_2_1/Mayor/20152016AdoptedBudget/police.pdf), 5.
- <sup>11</sup> Unless otherwise specified, the information in this section is derived from: Buffalo Police Department, interview by author, September 6, 2016.
- <sup>12</sup> Clayton Browne, "What is a Police Commissioner's Job?" *Chron*, accessed September 6, 2016, <http://work.chron.com/police-commissioners-job-25236.html>.
- <sup>13</sup> City of Buffalo Law Department, *Multiple Page Communication to the Common Council: Approval of contract with the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority* (Buffalo: 2010), <http://bflo-poverty.wikispaces.com/BMHA+Contract+with+City+of+Buffalo+for+Policing>.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup> Mayor Byron Brown and Commissioner H. McCarthy Gipson, "Operation Strike Force: City of Buffalo Police Department," *City of Buffalo*, accessed December 20, 2017, [https://www.ci.buffalo.ny.us/files/1\\_2\\_1/Mayor/PressReleases/Strike%20Force%20Information%20\(external\).pdf](https://www.ci.buffalo.ny.us/files/1_2_1/Mayor/PressReleases/Strike%20Force%20Information%20(external).pdf).
- <sup>16</sup> "Police 'Strike Force' begins patrols Monday," *WBFO*, June 11, 2012, <http://news.wbfo.org/post/police-strike-force-begins-patrols-monday>.
- <sup>17</sup> Anjana Malhotra and Parker R. MacKay to Eric Schneiderman August 30, 2017, <http://ipost.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Letter-to-NYS-AG-and-Summary-of-Findings.pdf>.
- <sup>18</sup> "BPD SWAT," *Buffalo Police Department Then and Now*, accessed December 20, 2017, <http://www.bpdthenandnow.com/swat.html>.
- <sup>19</sup> "Internal Affairs Division," *Buffalo Police Department*, accessed December 6, 2017, <http://www.bpdny.org/Home/Services/InternalAffairsDivision>.
- <sup>20</sup> Daniela Porat, "Scant oversight of Buffalo Police," *Investigative Post*, February 15, 2017, <http://www.investigativepost.org/2017/02/15/scant-oversight-of-buffalo-police/>.

<sup>21</sup> Chapter C, Article 18-20, Commission on Citizens Rights and Community Relations, Charter of the City of Buffalo (Accessed June 21, 2016, <http://ecode360.com/13552306?highlight=communitypercent20relations,communications,communities,community,relations,relating,relation,related>).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Exec. Order. No. 147 State Reg. (July 8, 2015),

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/old-files//EO147.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> Office of the New York State Attorney General, *Biennial Report of the Office of the Attorney General's Special Investigations & Prosecutions Unit* (New York: Government Printing Office, 2017), [https://ag.ny.gov/sites/default/files/sip\\_biennial\\_report\\_2017\\_0.pdf](https://ag.ny.gov/sites/default/files/sip_biennial_report_2017_0.pdf), 8.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, *The Civil Rights Division's Pattern and Practice Police Reform Work: 1994-present* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2017), <https://www.justice.gov/crt/file/922421/download>, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>30</sup> Department of Justice Office of Public Affairs, "Justice Department Files Lawsuit Challenging Conditions at Two Erie County, New York, Correctional Facilities," *The United States Department of Justice*, September 30, 2009, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-files-lawsuit-challenging-conditions-two-erie-county-new-york-correctional>.

<sup>31</sup> Joseph Szafranski (Community Police officer, B-District) in discussion with the author, September 6, 2016.



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