

Race Relations in Boston: a Tale of Two Mayors, Raymond L. Flynn and Thomas M. Menino

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The Stuart Incident

On October 23, 1989, Charles Stuart, a white, 30-year-old furrier, living in suburban Reading, Massachusetts, made a desperate 9-1-1 call to the Boston Police dispatcher. He reported that he had been shot. His wife, Carol Stuart, a lawyer, seven-months pregnant at the time, had also been shot, and was in the passenger's seat next to him bleeding and unconscious. Though frightened and in shock, Stuart was able to provide some details of the crime. He told the dispatcher that he and his wife had just left a birthing class at a nearby hospital and gotten into their car parked near the Mission Hill housing project when a young black man in a hooded sweatshirt robbed and shot them both. The dispatcher stayed on the line with Stuart while police cruisers in the area found the Stuarts' car and the two wounded victims.¹

The Stuarts were rushed back to the same hospital where they had attended Lamaze class. Doctors performed an emergency c-section on Carol to remove the baby and, hopefully, save her life. Baby Christopher was put in the intensive care unit, but died 17 days later. Carol Stuart died six hours after the surgery. After giving police his account of the events, Charles Stuart was rushed into emergency surgery. He survived the surgery, but then went into a coma for several weeks after the shooting.²

Mayor Raymond Flynn and Police Commissioner Mickey Roache were immediately told of the shootings. They received the news with deep concern. This incident, and the choices they made about how it might best be handled, could set back, or even destroy, the work the two had done in trying to improve the quality of race relations in Boston. Relations among whites and blacks in Boston had never been good. However, they had reached a nadir in the late 1960s and early 1970s when federal courts had ordered the racial integration of the Boston Public Schools through a massive program that bused children from neighborhood schools to more remote, less familiar settings. The busing sparked racial fears and resentments throughout the city, but particularly in the heavily Irish South Boston neighborhood from which many Boston politicians had emerged.³

The Battle Against Busing

The roots of Boston's race relations reach far back into history. However, the contemporary context of race relations was dominated by Boston's experience with school busing. In 1965, the National Association for the Advancement of

Colored People (NAACP) filed a lawsuit alleging unconstitutional racial discrimination in Boston's Public Schools. The NAACP lawsuit claimed inequities in the education of black children and demanded that Boston adhere to the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision outlawing racial segregation in public schools.⁴ Arguing that *de facto* segregation still existed in the Boston Public School System almost 20 years after the *Brown* decision, the NAACP demanded that the School System take action and asked that the Federal Court support their demands. The all-white, locally elected Boston School Committee denied any charges of *de facto* segregation, arguing that Boston's parents, both black and white, were simply choosing to send their children to their own neighborhood schools.⁵

In reality, most black parents believed that segregation of the School System was hurting black children who were not getting the same quality of education as white children living in wealthier neighborhoods. In addition, many pro-busing advocates believed that the School Board's refusal to design a plan to integrate the schools was done simply to appease white parents who wanted to keep black children out of their neighborhood schools.⁶

On June 21, 1974, after 10 years of litigation, Federal District Judge W. Arthur Garrity found the Boston School System guilty of deliberate segregation and ordered the state Massachusetts Board of Education to draw up a massive busing plan to integrate the schools. As the arena of conflict shifted from the courts to the streets, bitter confrontations erupted between the city's growing black community and the predominately white, Irish-Catholic, working-class community. Irish-Catholic enclaves of South Boston and Charlestown became the hubs of white protest, their anger not only focused on blacks, but also Boston's white Protestant elite of which Garrity was a member. White-on-black violence and harassment became prevalent throughout the city, though black-on-white violence also occasionally occurred. The city experienced two years of racial unrest and violence reminiscent of the Civil Rights Era that included stonings, beatings, firebombings, and shootings. A grassroots, anti-busing coalition known as Restore Our Alienated Rights (ROAR) was formed and led by two of South Boston's top political leaders, Mrs. Louise Dicks and John Kerrigan. As buses carrying black children rolled into white communities, ROAR members held up hand-painted signs that read "Resist!" and "Never!"⁷

The Changing Political Landscape and Flynn's Rise to Power

School desegregation led many whites to flee the city in the late 1970s and early '80s. This migration of whites to the suburbs not only changed the city's racial demographics, but also profoundly impacted the political and racial power structure. "Busing [and the ensuing "white flight"] broke the back of racial politics. White politicians who had built careers on their supposed ability to hold minorities at bay soon lost power."⁸

Although white animosity towards blacks was still strong in the city, the use of anti-minority rhetoric and policies by politicians gradually became less popular. Even Hicks and Kerrigan, who for decades had successfully pitted whites against blacks to win elections, couldn't escape the changing tide. In 1977, both were defeated in their bids for re-election to the City Council.⁹

At that time, Raymond Flynn was a rising star on the city's political scene. In the early days of the struggle against school busing, Flynn had been a City Council member representing his hometown of South Boston—the core of Irish-American opposition to the forced busing. Predictably, then he had been a leader in the anti-busing movement. But unlike most of his constituents, Flynn was against the violence and intimidation tactics used by the white community. In fact, he worked closely with black leaders to taper the violence, particularly at his alma mater, South Boston High School. The high school was one of the hotbeds of racial unrest.¹⁰

Flynn was against busing, but he didn't believe in harming black kids. Flynn was pretty clear about where he stood on the issue of busing, but he always kept open backwater channels to have discussions about the racial strife happening in the schools, especially South Boston High.¹¹

In the early 1980s, Flynn was one of the first white politicians to see the writing on the wall. In a bold political move, he made a radical break from his busing-era politics.

In 1982, 1983, the whole business of gaining political capital by promoting racial divisions was over. It was all over. The defeat of Hicks and Kerrigan was a signal to all white politicians who had benefited from racial division that Boston was not going to put up with that anymore...Ray Flynn began to see that there was no future in it politically.¹²

During his 1982 campaign for mayor, Flynn publicly proclaimed he was transformed by the busing experience and was now committed to racial harmony and leveling the playing field for blacks in the city.¹³ This message of racial reconciliation was critical to Flynn, who ran against long-time civil rights leader and Rainbow Coalition candidate Mel King. King was the first black candidate in a final mayoral election in Boston's history. Although King ran a strong race, Flynn handily defeated him, receiving the majority of the white vote and a small percentage of the black vote¹⁴

A New Mayor for a New Era

In his inaugural address, Flynn vowed to “break down the walls of misunderstanding and bigotry and build a new foundation of racial harmony.”¹⁵ For Flynn, the remedy to the racial divide was improving economic opportunities for all Bostonians. Flynn believed that the real problem between poor blacks and

poor whites in the city was lack of access to political power coupled with living in neighborhoods that had received little to no share of the economic wealth centered in Boston's downtown business district.¹⁶ Flynn's strategy to level the playing field between economically disadvantaged blacks and whites was quite a balancing act given the history of distrust and conflict between these disparate communities.¹⁷

The bottom line is that Flynn had to be perceived as never forgetting about his base. For sure everyone in South Boston wasn't happy about what he seemed to be doing to help the black community, but as long as people in Southie (South Boston) felt like they had access to Ray and that he was going to get their kids jobs they were happy with him.¹⁸

Throughout his first term, Flynn took steps to honor his commitment to improve the lives of blacks in the city by enforcing numerous affirmative action and anti-discrimination policies in the provision of city services. During the Flynn era, more blacks were hired as city employees than in any other administration. For the first time, black companies were awarded set aside government contracts. Although there were no blacks in Flynn's inner circle, he placed blacks in top leadership positions overseeing several city agencies.¹⁹

Unlike previous mayors who had historically distanced themselves from the black community, Flynn appeared to be very comfortable with black people, often attending services in Black churches and playing basketball with black youth.²⁰ His open and charismatic style won over many blacks, who viewed Flynn as trying to put things on the right track for the minority community. Flynn won over 90% of the black vote in his successful 1987 re-election bid.²¹

The Police vs. the Black Community

A second strand of Flynn's strategy for strengthening race relations in Boston focused on working with his Police Commissioner, Micky Roache, to heal the deep-seated wounds between the Police Department and the black community. The major issues between the black community and the Department were: 1) under-representation of minorities on the police force; 2) a lack of critical allies between the police department and the black community; and 3) an unbalanced use of excessive force by police officers against black suspects. Flynn and Roache's efforts to increase the number of minority officers on the police force was helped by a Federal Court ruling that ordered several major U. S. cities to follow a consent decree. The consent decree mandated that minorities were given greater access to police department jobs. Flynn and Roache followed the outlines of the ruling by increasing the percentage of minority officers from 15 to 25% in 8 ½ years.²²

During this time, good police/community partnerships just did not exist. A big part of that issue was the absence of black police officers in the

higher levels of the police department. Members of the black community protested the discrimination. The consent degree didn't require that blacks *get* the jobs, but it *did* require police departments to put in writing why it didn't hire the minority candidate. I believe police/community relations changed when there were black officers at higher levels.²³

Flynn's Black Clergy Partners

In addition to hiring more black officers, Commissioner Roache also appointed one of his closest allies in the black community, Rev. Mickarl Thomas as the first black chaplain of the police department. Rev. Thomas was pastor of one of the city's oldest and most prestigious protestant black churches, Charles Street AME (African Methodist Episcopal) Church. Under Flynn, the police department also worked closely with the Nation of Islam and its local leader, Minister Don Muhammad.²⁴

Don Muhammad had a good working relationship with the Flynn administration. Before the Nation got involved, a black kid could spray graffiti and run the risk of the police using deadly force against him or her. But once the Nation complained to the police and got involved...that's when community/police relations started to improve. That's when the situation was turned around.²⁵

During his first term, Flynn formed strong partnerships with Rev. Thomas, Minister Muhammad of the Nation of Islam and two other most prominent black clergy; Rev. Charles Stith, pastor of Union United Methodist Church, and Rev. Joe Washington, pastor of Wesley United Methodist Church. The congregations of both Methodist churches were predominantly black, in sharp contrast to most United Methodist churches in the U.S., and they were both predominantly middle-class. Rev. Joe Washington served as a paid Senior Advisor to the Mayor. This group of religious leaders made up the Interfaith Ministerial Alliance (IMA), a loosely organized group of black clergy that represented some of the city's most powerful black churches and religious institutions.²⁶

The IMA started in the mid-1980s. It was called the *Interfaith* Ministerial Alliance because Minister Don was a part of a non-Christian organization. It was at first a small group. There was really not much organizational structure to it. Mickarl Thomas, Charles Stith, Joe Washington and Minister Don kind of held the thing together. Minister Don served as sort of the Vice-Chair and Mickarl was the Chair.²⁷

Flynn and the ministers partnered on critical issues facing the black community such as economic development, crime, fair housing, affirmative action and education. Their support of Flynn gave the ministers tremendous access to Flynn and his staff. In return, the ministers also served as ambassadors to the black community for Flynn.²⁸

Mayor Flynn made sure the IMA ministers were seen as important, they had access. He made sure he took care of them, made sure that when they had an issue that he was responsive and could deliver. Officially, Joe Washington was an advisor. He probably had more symbolic power than political power. Don Muhammad was also pretty influential. He had access and he could make things happen, especially on issues like beefing up the number of minority officers assigned to minority communities.²⁹

The ministers' considerable influence in the black community and in Boston politics made them a force to be reckoned with. In Flynn's eyes, the ministers' effectiveness as leaders made them much stronger allies than the city's black elected officials.³⁰

There was a general perception that black elected officials just don't have much influence in the black community. People understood that the ministers would deliver, if you got in trouble, needed a development project, needed some help from the police or needed the city government to do one thing or another...a lot of stuff for the black community came through the ministers.³¹

Although the Mayor and the ministers had a solid relationship, they did not always see eye-to-eye. Rev. Stith had the most contentious relationship with Flynn. Stith often publicly criticized Flynn on some of his policies and actions; however, they shared a passion for economic development in poor communities. Stith worked closely with the Flynn administration to start numerous economic justice programs.³²

Stith and Flynn's relationships sort of ebb and flowed a bit. Economic development was one of Ray Flynn's strong agenda items to try to deal with crime. He didn't take on race as such all the time, but he took on issues of fairness and economic justice and affordable housing. Stith had his development projects and through Mayor Flynn those projects got done. Stith had access or was seen as having access.³³

Stop-and-Frisk

The late 1980s brought a rise of violence across American cities from which Boston was not spared. Youth gangs turned the streets of Boston's inner city into virtual war zones. This escalation in violence was predominantly confined to the largely poor black urban neighborhoods of Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan, a 1.5 square-mile section of the city. In the fall of 1989, in a segment of this section of the city known in the police department as Area B, more than 100 people were shot during a 40-day period. The daily rate of shootings that fall was a third higher than the daily rate recorded for comparable times in the previous years. William R. Celester, a black man, was Police Commander of Area B. Celester

was determined to put a stop to the violence, particularly acts involving youth and handguns. The police department, under the direction of Flynn and Commissioner Roache, implemented an aggressive plan to end the violence and stop the proliferation of guns in the hands of young gang members.³⁴

The cornerstone of the police plan was a tactic that became known as “stop-and-frisk.” Under this policy, the police would stop any person, usually a young black male suspected of drug- or gang-related activity, and search their bodies, cars, and belongings without any evidence of wrong-doing. The stop-and-frisk policy went into effect in the summer of 1989 after three shootings in two nights injured two men, one of them critically, and a juvenile. “Known drug dealers or gang members who in any way cause fear in the community will be approached and frisked by police ...we’re not going to just talk to them anymore,” said Celester.³⁵

The stop-and-frisk policy immediately ran into trouble in the courts and in the community. Three months after the policy went into effect, Suffolk County Superior Court Judge Cortland A. Mathers ruled it unconstitutional. In his decision, Judge Mathers stated that “the police department’s policy of stopping and frisking a suspected gang member was a form of deliberate harassment and constitutionally impermissible.”³⁶ The judge’s ruling caused a major rift between the city’s legal and law enforcement communities. Many of the city’s defense attorneys sided with the judge’s ruling. In the fall of 1989, five cases were filed against the police department in one month. Top Boston defense lawyer William Leahy noted that the policy “creates a vigilante atmosphere where you simply ignore what is a fundamental constitutional protection that people’s privacy should not be invaded by police without probable cause”³⁷ The police department was angered by Judge Mather’s ruling, seeing it as hampering its efforts to reduce crime and lessening its legitimacy in the community it was trying to protect.

Governor Dukakis should have demanded that Judge Mathers spend a couple of nights in the Roxbury-Dorchester area so he can learn first-hand that gangs do exist and are wreaking havoc and fear on law-abiding citizens. We’ve never encountered these kinds of problems before. We’ve never had them shoot at officers or throw rocks at cars. We’ve never had a general threat like this. Officers say that the kids are saying to them, ‘you can’t touch me’ or ‘the judge says you can’t touch me.’ I think what’s happened is that the kids have read the newspapers and become more brazen³⁸

The city’s black leaders were divided on stop-and-frisk. Georgette Watson, a black woman and long-time youth violence prevention advocate, sided with the police. At a police department press conference Watson stated that, “Our police have protected us and have made some upstanding decisions. I feel if anyone gets shot now, the blood lies on the hands of the judge and not our police department.” Black clergy also supported the policy. Mayor Flynn held a joint law enforcement/community member’s press conference supporting the policy at Rev.

Thomas's church³⁹ State Attorney James Shannon participated in the mayor's press conference voicing his support for the policy. Black elected officials held a separate press conference where they called on Governor Dukakis to convene an investigation into the legality of stop-and-frisk. They also voiced disapproval of Attorney General Shannon's role in the mayor's Charles Street press conference. The elected officials viewed Shannon's public support of the controversial policy as an indication of the Attorney General's lack of impartiality towards police practices, which his office was legally mandated to investigate.⁴⁰

The stop-and-frisk policy further strained relationships between the police and the black community when later that year, during a routine stop, a plain clothes police officer shot a black man named Rolando Carr. While being frisked by the officer, Carr reached into his pants pocket to take out his keys. The officer mistook Carr's keys for a gun and shot him.⁴¹ In addition to the Carr shooting, residents of the predominately black Fort Hill housing project in Dorchester began complaining to the media and community leaders of constant harassment by police since the beginning of stop-and-frisk.⁴² Although the policy was creating a major public relations dilemma, Flynn and the police department stood their ground stating their belief that the constitutionality of the policy was not an issue and that those against the policy needed to "get off the backs" of police officers trying to do their jobs.⁴³

The Stuart Case and Flynn's Response: The Raid on Mission Hill

On October 23, 1989, less than one week after the city's black elected officials called on the Governor Dukakis to investigate the stop-and-frisk policy, the Stuart incident described above took place. Although Flynn and Roach were concerned about the potential of the incident to inflame racial tensions in Boston once again, they seemed to have judged that they had very little choice about what to do.

Without any confirmation of Stuart's story, Mayor Flynn and Commissioner Roache ordered police officers to use all available detectives to find the Stuarts' shooter.⁴⁴ The police did house-to-house raids in the predominately black Mission Hill Housing Project where the robbery and shooting had allegedly occurred. In addition, the police elevated their use of stop-and-frisk.⁴⁵ The unlawful search and seizure practices by the police went on for months. Finally, despite the doubts of many in the police department, William Bennett, a black man with a long criminal record, was named as the key suspect in the Stuart shootings.⁴⁶

Just days before Bennett's indictment, Charles Stuart's brother, Matthew, confessed to police that his brother Charles had killed his wife, Carol; a possible motive being to cash-in on a large insurance policy Charles had taken out on his wife before her untimely death.⁴⁷ David MacLean, a friend of Stuart's, later testified in court that Stuart had tried to enlist his help in killing Carol. According to MacLean, Charles was angry with Carol, who was planning to quit her job after their child was born, a move that would have made it financially impossible for

him to start a lucrative new business venture.⁴⁸ On January 4, 1990, Charles Stuart jumped off the Tobin Bridge into the icy waters of the Boston Harbor.⁴⁹ With Stuart's leap went the hard-sought relationship between Mayor Ray Flynn and the black community.

The aftermath of this case was traumatic for the city. The black community saw Flynn's handling of the case as playing into white fears about the propensity of blacks to engage in irrational violence in comparison to whites.⁵⁰ Flynn blamed Charles Stuart for committing a "sinister hoax" on the city and made no apology for his decision to order an aggressive police response in Mission Hill, saying that he "responded the way any mayor would have."⁵¹ Legal battles ensued around the various civil rights violations made during the unlawful search and seizure practices of the police. At the urging of black elected officials, Governor Dukakis established the St. Clair Commission to investigate the handling of the Stuart case by the mayor and the police.⁵² The Commission's final report harshly criticized the police department, recommending a major overhaul of the department starting with termination of Commissioner Roache.⁵³ Flynn decided to stick with his long-time friend and ally as Police Commissioner, while attempting to rebuild relationships with the black community.

Flynn took his case to his black clergy allies. Although Flynn and the police's management of the Stuart shootings angered many of the black ministers, they eventually realigned themselves with the mayor, helping him to announce new youth programs for the city's predominately black neighborhoods.⁵⁴ The ministers also participated in an effort to bring about racial healing after the Stuart incident. The black clergy's choice to side with Flynn deepened the divide between the ministers and black elected officials. The black elected officials felt that neither Flynn nor Roache had actually apologized to the black community for the police's actions.⁵⁵ The mayor's goal to lead Boston through a healing of its deep-seated racial divides had been significantly set back⁵⁶

Violence Enters the Church

The virulent racial politics of the busing era never revived, but the tensions within Boston remained high. Crime continued to be seen through a racial lens, with whites seeing blacks, and particularly young blacks, as a continuing threat to their security. The police continued to search for ways to reduce crime without discriminating inappropriately against Boston's black community. But levels of violence – particularly among young African Americans – continued to rise at alarming rates.

One of the victims of that violence was a young man named Robert Odom. As Robert Odom's parents sat at their son's funeral the evening of May 14, 1992, they could not have imagined that the tragic loss of their 20-year-old son, accidentally killed in a drive-by shooting, would be followed by yet another tragedy. But that night, inside the sanctuary of Morningstar Baptist Church, the

unthinkable happened. As 300 of Odom's friends and family listened to the soloist sing the black gospel hymn "His Eye is on the Sparrow," several young men wearing black hoods entered the sanctuary. For a while, nothing happened. The young men innocently blended into the service. As the obituary was about to be read, one of young men yelled, "That's him!" pointing to 21-year-old Jerome Brunson seated in a front pew. Brunson took off running and the group of teens chased Brunson through the church beating on him. Brunson managed to free himself and ran outside, but the group caught him and stabbed him nine times, once in the head.⁵⁷

Following the melee at Morningstar Church, the city was literally in shock. Never in Boston's history had such an act of brazen violence happened inside the walls of a church. That week, a group of elected officials, city and religious leaders held a meeting, attended by over 200 people, to devise a plan to combat the city's rise in youth violence. Police Commissioner Roache, Senator Ted Kennedy and Cardinal Bernard Law attended the meeting. The first element of their strategy was a letter for clergy leaders to circulate throughout their congregations the following Sunday. The letter called on families and community members to take greater responsibility for the scourges of drugs, irresponsible sex, and violence plaguing the city. The ministers planned to meet again the following week to draw up an action plan and set-up a series of meetings with other community leaders and area youth.⁵⁸

A New Breed of Clergy Emerges

The media and the city's secular leadership were supportive of the black ministers' strategy, but internally, a rift began to develop between the more established black religious leaders and a group of upstart activist black clergy. During the larger meeting, a few of the activist clergy, led by Rev. Bruce Wall, a well-known area youth worker, and Rev. Eugene Rivers, pastor of the Azusa Christian Community, walked out of the meeting protesting the fact that many youth workers and young people had been intentionally excluded. They felt this decision was counterproductive to building the much-needed bridges between the church and the city's young people. Later that week, Bruce Wall and Eugene Rivers joined forces with three other like-minded clergy and announced their own Ten Point plan to mobilize churches throughout the city to work directly with youths on the streets.⁵⁹

The ministers' plan called for churches to adopt a gang, evangelize to youth on street corners and in public schools, and to establish rape crisis centers. Their proposal also included meetings with the school superintendent and various school principals, the development of crime watch programs, partnerships between churches and health centers to provide pastoral counseling for families during crises, church led discussions of alternatives to gang life, and more cooperative efforts among churches and ministries around these issues.⁶⁰ The three other ministers working with Wall and Rivers included: Rev. Ray

Hammond, Pastor of Bethel AME Church; Rev. Jeffrey Brown, Pastor of Union Baptist Church; and Rev. Gilbert Thompson, Pastor of New Covenant Church. Their plan was a far cry from the strategy the city's more established black ministers had proposed.⁶¹

I remember when Eugene Rivers presented the Ten Point idea to Mickarl Thomas, who was the Pastor of Charles Street AME Church and a lot of those other black preachers in town who were more established. They were like, 'You want to work with the thugs! That's fine for *you!*' The working directly with young thugs thing was a non-issue for the city's more established black clergy.⁶²

The ministers began meeting at the Rivers' home on Friday nights and walking the streets. During their walks, the ministers would provide counseling, mediation, connections to social services, and simply an adult presence on the streets. These Friday night walks developed into a regular street ministry that ultimately involved over 30 ministers and lay people. The ministers would meet-up for prayer and then work the streets until 2:00 a.m.⁶³ During the day, the ministers met with police and probation officers, street workers, judges, and each other. Many of the ministers also developed close relationships with the youth they were encountering on the streets and it felt like they were reaching those kids.⁶⁴

The dismay over the Morningstar attack caused the broader religious and political community to take note of the new strategies and ideals of the Ten Point clergy. The ministers formed partnerships with area schools, probation officers, the police department and even the Roman Catholic Church. Cardinal Bernard Law became a vocal supporter of the Ten Point ministers, often meeting with them to discuss their plan of action. Law's support gave the ministers a high level of legitimacy and political clout in the broader white Irish-Catholic community.⁶⁵ *The Boston Globe* was also an early supporter of the Ten Point strategy.⁶⁶ Being thrown into the spotlight forced the ministers to quickly learn the political game, while simultaneously holding on to their religious calling.⁶⁷

None of these guys were out to get rich or famous off of this idea ...quite honestly I don't think they even realized what they were getting themselves into. They were basically unknown guys who collectively had never worked together before. When they came together there was a void in the city's black leadership and a crisis of youth violence on the rise. It was clearly an act of God that brought these very different characters together to work in unison...that's what really makes the fact that the Ten Point plan was so successful such a miracle.⁶⁸

A New Approach to Policing

The 1991 St. Clair Commission report urged City Hall to make real changes in how the police department was run. Two years after the release of the report, Mayor Flynn still had not implemented many of the Commission's recommendations, which included the direction to fire the mayor's close friend and political ally, Police Commissioner Roache. In the summer of 1993, Commissioner Roache resigned as Police Commissioner to run for elected office.⁶⁹ On June 29, 1993, Mayor Flynn promoted Roache's number-two, Bill Bratton, to Police Commissioner. With Roache out of the way, Commissioner Bratton ushered in a new era of policing initiatives just as the Ten Point plan was taking off. Under Bratton's leadership, the department modernized its equipment and made sweeping changes in its policies and procedures, the cornerstone policy being community policing.⁷⁰

Bratton reached out to the black community's political and religious leaders in his efforts to promote the new community-policing model. Bratton's innovations also depoliticized the department's promotion system by eliminating some deputy superintendent positions that had been held by supporters of former mayors. He also reorganized the command staff by shifting more responsibility and authority to police captains. Bratton promoted well-respected officers such as James Claiborne, William Johnston, and Paul Evans. These promotions earned him points with department observers who for years had seen talented young officers with innovative ideas passed-over. In addition to changes in the department's hiring practices, the department had begun to revise its training curriculum for recruits and its in-service training for officers, to include community policy methods.⁷¹

For many long-time critics of the police department, Bratton helped to destroy the public perception that the police department is controlled by City Hall, as it was when Roache was commissioner. Unlike his predecessor, Bratton welcomed having the District Attorney's office involved in criminal investigations as early as possible to ensure that investigations were handled properly. Bratton showed both in terms of leadership and visibility that he had a very different style that I think to the public represented a refreshing change. He set a new tone in the department.⁷²

Flynn Goes to Rome, Menino Rises

With the city facing the rising violence along with other major social, political, and economic challenges, Flynn made a move that once again changed the city's power dynamics. On March 17, 1993, Flynn, who had campaigned tirelessly for the Clinton/Gore Presidential ticket, was appointed by newly elected President Clinton to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican, ending Flynn's ten-year tenure

as Boston's mayor. In accordance with city policies, then-City Council President Thomas Menino, an Italian-American representing the working-class community of Hyde Park, was appointed Interim Mayor. Ironically, Menino was in the midst of campaigning against Flynn for the job.

After his appointment as Acting-Mayor, Menino continued his campaign. Some feared that being Acting-Mayor for five months prior to the election would give Menino an edge over the other candidates, allowing him to coast into the Mayor's Office. However, Menino campaigned as if he didn't have the job. He worked hard to build a strong, diverse, broad-based coalition across the Irish, Italian and black communities not just to get votes, but because he believed that diversity was the key to bringing the city together in ways his predecessor had not.⁷³ Building strong ties within the black community was of top importance to Menino. He had lived in Boston his entire life and had seen first-hand how blacks had been mistreated and abused by white politicians who made promises, but didn't deliver on them.⁷⁴

Menino was clearly not one of those white politicians that just went into the black community six months before the election to butter them up for votes. He had lived through the bussing era, working on the side of desegregation. He'd seen how the former Irish political machine had polarized the city through violence and intimidation. He gave the black community credit for being smart and wanted to give them a larger piece of the pie. This strategy won Menino support in the black community. Although he ran against a black candidate, Menino won an overwhelming large portion of the black vote.⁷⁵

Even *The Boston Globe* commented on how free Mayor Menino's campaign had been from the 'ethnic and racial rancor' common in Boston politics.⁷⁶ In the end, Menino's bridge-building style appealed to a large cross-section of voters. Once elected, Menino made clear his commitment to diversity in city government. Menino placed even more people of color in prominent positions in city government than his predecessor. Unlike Flynn, Menino's inner circle included both blacks and Latinos. For the first time in the city's history, a black woman was appointed the Mayor's Chief of Staff. Menino also placed large numbers of blacks, Latinos and Asians in key top positions in his administration. He also worked to increase the number of minorities in the Boston Police and Fire Departments.⁷⁷

Menino understood that the city's racial makeup was changing – that the Irish-Catholic stronghold on Boston politics was breaking. It was critical for his success to build true confidence with Boston's minority community by investing in their neighborhoods and making sure that his administration looked like the people it represented. The mayor is realistic about the city's rich racial, ethnic and cultural diversity. He's also

hopeful, I've often heard him speak of his hopes that one day a future Boston mayor will be black or Latino.⁷⁸

In addition to building bridges across racial lines, Menino was committed to stemming the rise in homicides and crime through community policing and partnering with black clergy. After Commissioner Bratton resigned to become the Commissioner of the New York City Police Department, Menino quickly appointed Paul Evans to the job. Evans was a protégé of Bratton, who was on the forefront of the community-policing movement.⁷⁹ Evans was a great fit for Menino's style of leadership, which was to surround himself with hard-working, smart, innovative people, who share his vision and then empower them to succeed.⁸⁰

Although Paul Evans was a white Irish-Catholic son of South Boston, Menino saw that intrinsically unique quality in Evans to build bridges between the black community and the police. Menino and Evans had known each other for a long time. Menino admired Evans because he was a good cop, had come up through the police rank-and-file, wasn't afraid to get his hands dirty, and was a known entity in the minority community.⁸¹

Menino, Evans and Black Ministers

Both Menino and Evans understood the importance of building true partnerships between City Hall and the communities they served, particularly the black community. They were also aware of this new breed of activist clergy challenging the city's establishment to address the rise in violence.

At the beginning of his time as mayor, Menino reached out to the Ten Point Ministers by having 'get to know each other dinners' at his home in Hyde Park. Ray Hammond, Gene Rivers, and Bruce Wall and others would join the mayor and his wife, Angela, who would make a big pot of spaghetti for them. They'd sit around the dinner table and talk politics, education, and religion, and what was happening in the city. The mayor wanted to build a true bond with the ministers. He knew how strong the influence of black ministers was in minority communities. He also really admired that these ministers were willing to work on the streets.⁸²

Menino and Evans's first test of their partnership with ministers came just six weeks after Evans took the reins as commissioner. On March 24, 1994, several police officers kicked down the door of a retired black minister named Accelynne Williams and pointed semi-automatic weapons at him. It was mid-afternoon when the mayor received the call from Commissioner Evans about the shooting.⁸³

I remember the Commissioner asked the mayor how he was doing. The mayor said, 'I'm doing great!' At that point, Evans said something to the effect of... 'You're not going to be doing so great once I tell you what

happened.’ Evans went on to explain that a police informant had wrongly tipped-off the police about drugs being sold out of Rev. Williams’ apartment. After the police officers knocked down Williams’ door, a brief struggle took place, upon which Rev. Williams had a heart attack and died. I remember the mayor was stunned and grieved, but he quickly recovered and outlined the plan for action.⁸⁴

That night the mayor asked Evans to go on the 6 o’clock news and publicly apologize for the accidental killing of Rev. Williams. The mayor, who was already scheduled to speak at an Urban League dinner that night, used his speech to explain what occurred, apologize for the tragedy, and assure community leaders that a full investigation would take place. Evans and the Mayor did their best to make sure that the tension within the black community did not build up. They spent the entire weekend in meetings with community leaders. They both attended Rev. Williams’ funeral and were warmly greeted by his widow who told them that she knew they were “trying hard.”⁸⁵

Many black leaders were not totally convinced of the validity of the police’s actions in the case. Noted African American *Boston Globe* columnist Derrick Jackson gave Police Commissioner Evans and Mayor Flynn credit for immediately apologizing to the community, but compared the police’s seemingly racist and overly aggressive tactics to those used in the Charles Stuart case under Mayor Flynn:

Evans is to be credited with at least apologizing, an act neither former Police Chief Mickey Roache nor ex-Mayor Ray Flynn were humble enough to utter after the frisks of the Stuart case... But the way they apparently messed-up demands as much attention as the police behavior during the Carol Stuart murder case. That scenario defies any sense of humanity on the part of the police. The police said they thought Williams was a lookout for drug dealers. Have you met any 75-year-old drug lookouts, couriers or dealers lately? Are SWAT teams so brainwashed that not one of the 13 officers had a neuron in reserve to shout, "Hey, look at this guy; you've gotta be kidding?"... (Accelynne Williams) was a man who surrounded himself with the Bible and kept the kind of apartment that should have disarmed the police the moment they entered.⁸⁶

Similar to the Stuart Case, the Accelynne Williams incident forced the black community and the police to reevaluate their tactics designed to combat the rise in crime. In the Williams case, the Boston Police Department’s “no-knock” tactic of smashing into homes to disarm criminals and secure evidence was widely popular with police across the country fighting the war on drugs. But after the Williams case these tactics, so vulnerable to human error, came into question. Long-time Roxbury-based community activist, Ben Haith, who had been a supporter of the “no-knock” policy, said, “Rev. Williams’ death in Dorchester...caused him to reassess his views.”⁸⁷

The ‘Boston Miracle’ Takes Shape

After the Williams shooting, Mayor Menino, Evans, and the ministers began to form an even stronger partnership. The three key elements of the police community strategy were: collaboration with community partners, strict enforcement of laws, and targeted interventions with juvenile offenders.⁸⁸ Menino and Evans realized that the department couldn't just arrest its way out of the problem of youth violence or into better working relationships with black leaders. The ministers pushed community responsibility, encouraging members of the black community to work with the police to put youth who were causing trouble behind bars. The ministers also made it clear that they would not give the police a pass for any type of abuse and misconduct when dealing with potential youth offenders.⁸⁹ For Menino and Evans, the ministers' message that the black community should take more responsibility for the rise in youth violence was music to their ears. As trusted members of the black community, the ministers were able to say things about black-on-black crime that would have been political suicide for a white politician.⁹⁰

This new partnership between the police and the clergy spawned several Boston Police Department programs that became known as the "Boston Model." Those programs included: the "Summer of Opportunity," a partnership with police and corporations to provide jobs as a way to draw youths from gangs; "Operation Nightlight," a program in which law enforcement officers and clergy made evening home visits to youths on probation or at risk of gang activity to discuss preventive next-steps with their parents in a non-confrontation manner; and "Operation Street Smarts," a holistic approach that included a basketball league for gang members called "Peace League" and a "Gun Buyback/Amnesty Program" in which the police would buy back guns with no questions asked in exchange for cash or gift certificates,⁹¹ and "Operation Cease-Fire" in which the police, social service agencies, and Ten Point ministers would meet with active gang members offering them various social, educational, and employment services, but warning of the severe consequences if they continued with their gang-banging.⁹² These programs were examples of monumental changes in the department's relationship with the black community two decades earlier. By 1996, these strategies were also starting to have positive results in homicide reduction and improved race relations.⁹³ For a 29-month period in the late 1990s, Boston had not one youth homicide. The work of the Ten Point Coalition, the mayor and the police is widely considered an effective national model for community policing that has been replicated in cities throughout the U.S.⁹⁴

Carol Stuart II?

In the midst of their success, Mayor Menino and Police Commissioner Evans were hit with another major crisis that would challenge the legitimacy of community policing and the newfound partnerships between the clergy and the police. On September 25, 1995, just six years after the Carol Stuart murder, a white veteran state prosecutor, who specialized in gang prosecutions, was shot to

death execution-style while sitting in his car in a commuter rail parking lot in a Boston suburb. Paul McLaughlin, 42, was a well-known Assistant Attorney General from a prominent Boston family.⁹⁵ Those in the area where the shooting took place could only make out a young black male wearing a hooded sweat suit running away from McLaughlin's car. The description of the shooter being a "young black male in a hooded sweat suit" sent chills through the black community, still reeling from the police's antagonism of black youth during the Carol Stuart case.⁹⁶

Mayor Menino realized the McLaughlin murder was a racially charged issue that could set the city's racial developments back 20 years. Menino and Evans were committed to not playing the race card, but instead addressing the issue head-on as a crime that needed to be solved like any other crime.⁹⁷ Black leaders were quite concerned about the reaction by police in their search for McLaughlin's killer, whose description was extremely similar to the one Charles Stuart gave police six years prior, that of a black teenager, 14 to 15, 5 feet 7 inches, hooded sweatshirt, and baggy jeans. Ten Point leader Rev. Eugene Rivers decried, "There is concern that there will be an open season on young black males."⁹⁸ In response to these concerns, Police Commissioner Evans publicly acknowledged Rev. Rivers' and others' concerns about "the potential for this limited description to become division." To further allay fears, Evans went on local urban radio stations in the city and promised young adult listener that he would deliver a "professional investigation."

Mayor Menino also used the McLaughlin shooting to address big-picture concerns about the increased "availability of handguns" in the black community. In addition to Evans' and Menino's efforts to keep things calm, Suffolk County District Attorney Ralph Martin, an African American who was not the DA during the Stuart Case, but was angered by the police harassment of black males, made it clear that under his leadership his office would respond differently. "We remember the mistakes and we do not intend to duplicate them," said Martin.⁹⁹ Law enforcement's less aggressive and more open response in this case even received praise from black City Councilors Charles Yancey and Gareth Saunders, who were often critical of the police.¹⁰⁰

Menino and Evans also held frequent briefing sessions with black ministers as the case progressed.¹⁰¹ The Ten Point ministers served as advisors on the case to the mayor and Evans.¹⁰² The ministers also held a press conference condemning the killing, while affirming their faith in the mayor's and the police chief's ability to appropriately solve the case. During the press conference, the Ten Point ministers recalled the Charles Stuart case as an example of how irrational or unfounded accusations can fuel racial tensions in a community. Ten Point leader Rev. Ray Hammond stated, "We have to ask the city as a whole to step back and not allow their conscious or unconscious fears to drive what happens. This is a time for the City of Boston to come together and to make it clear that we will not be held hostage by either perpetrators of violence or by those who would exploit the fear of violence to promote more racial division."¹⁰³ The response of Menino and Evans was an indication that relations between the police and the black community had improved since the days of the Carol Stuart murder.

In spite of their efforts, the McLaughlin shooting was still extremely difficult to solve. The lead suspect, Jeffrey Bly, was a powerful gang leader who used fear and violence to intimidate potential witnesses and hinder the investigation. Members of the black community took a great risk in testifying against Bly, who was eventually convicted.¹⁰⁴ It was later uncovered that Bly had planned to assassinate Prosecutor McLaughlin, who was on the verge of sending Bly to jail for a carjacking case.¹⁰⁵ Bly's vendetta against McLaughlin was intense. He had been stalking McLaughlin, and just days before the shooting, Bly had stared down McLaughlin in a Boston court room in an attempt to intimidate the prosecutor from going forward with the case against him.¹⁰⁶

EXHIBITS

Time Line of Key Events

June 1963	NAACP challenges Boston School Committee on school desegregation
June 21, 1974	Judge Garrity's school busing ruling
1974-1976	Major protests against school busing
November 1977	Hicks and Kerrigan defeated in reelection bid to City Council
Summer 1989	Judge Mather, stop-and-frisk decisions
January 2, 1984	Raymond Flynn succeeds Kevin White as mayor
October 23, 1989	Carol Stuart murder
January 14, 1992	St. Clair Commission report
May 14, 1992	Morning Star Baptist Church incident
October, 1992	Boston Ten Point Coalition is formed
June 29, 1993	William Bratton succeeds Mickey Roache as Police Commissioner
March 17, 1993	Flynn becomes ambassador to Rome. Menino becomes Acting Mayor
February 14, 1994	Paul Evans appointed Police Commissioner
March 24, 1994	Rev. Accelynne Williams incident
September 25, 1995	Paul McLaughlin murder

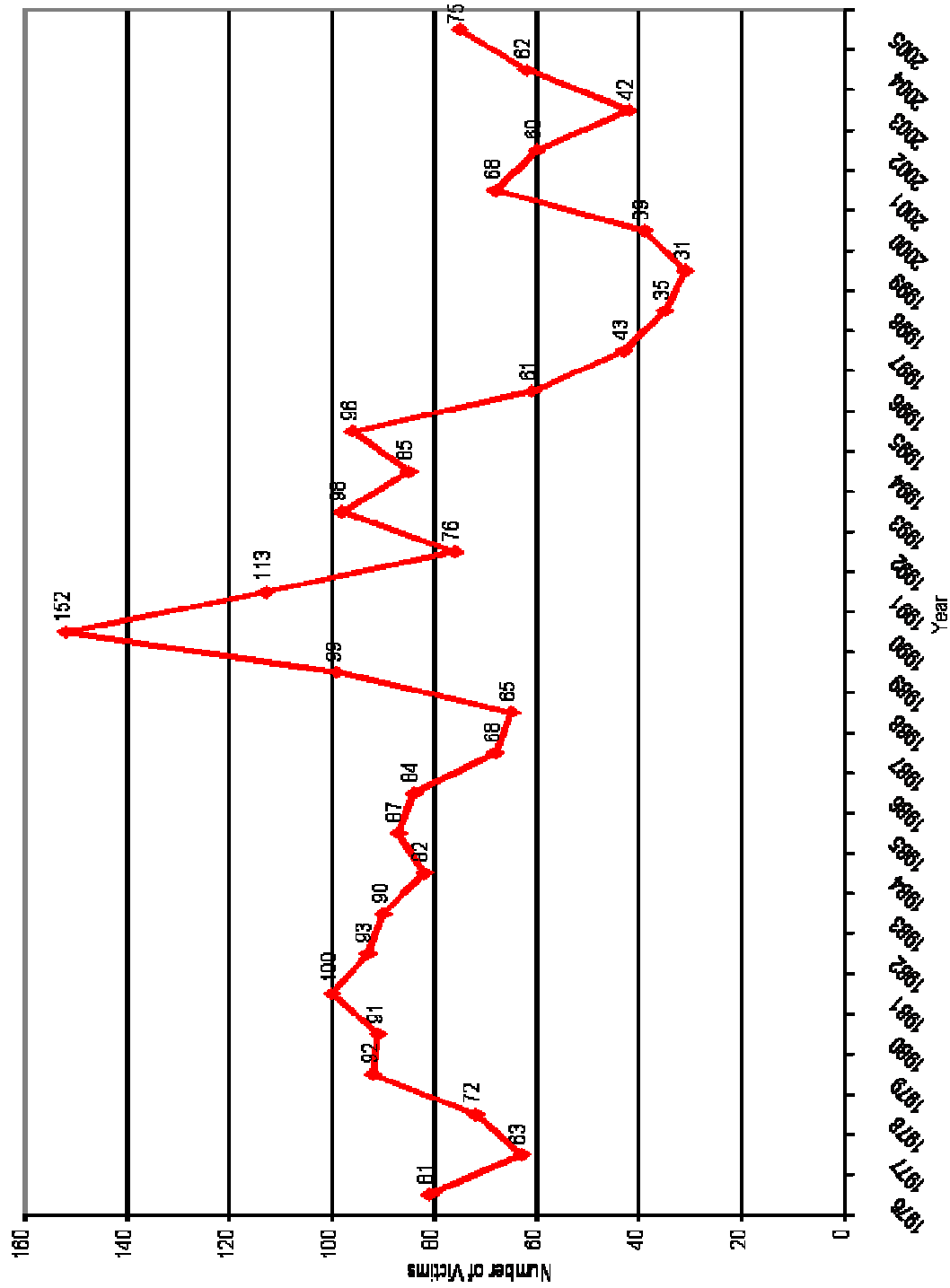
The Ten Point Plan

The Ten Point Plan calls upon churches and faith-based agencies of Boston to work collaboratively to develop the following action plan aimed at reducing violence and helping youth to develop more positive and productive lifestyles:

1. Adopting youth gangs.
2. Sending mediators and mentors for black and Latino juveniles into the local courts, schools, juvenile detention facilities, and the streets.
3. Commissioning youth workers to do street-level work with drug dealers and gang leaders.
4. Developing concrete and specific economic alternatives to the drug economy.
5. Building linkages between downtown and suburban churches, and inner-city churches and ministries.
6. Initiating and supporting neighborhood crime watches.
7. Developing partnerships between churches and community health centers that would, for example, facilitate counseling for families and individuals under stress, offer abstinence-oriented prevention programs for sexually transmitted diseases, or provide substance abuse prevention and recovery programs.
8. Establishing brotherhoods and sisterhoods as a rational alternative to violent gang life.
9. Establishing rape crisis drop-in centers, services for battered women, and counseling for abusive men.
10. Developing a black and Latino curriculum with an additional focus on the struggles of women and poor people as a means of increasing literacy and enhancing self-esteem in young people.

<http://www.bostontenpoint.org/tenpointplan.html>

Boston Homicides, 1976 - 2005



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