This year, as we observe the tenth anniversary of the Atlanta Citizen Review Board (ACRB), we take great pride in the fact that thousands of our citizens who complained about police misconduct over a period of a decade have sought and found justice through the ACRB. We can look back and appreciate with pride the impact we have had in achieving the goal of providing a voice and a viable option for those who felt unheard and unprotected when involved in local police incidents.

I would be remiss if I did not thank the many citizens, elected officials, civic and clergy leaders who contributed in making our agency the vital and robust resource that it is for our community.

I would be even more remiss if I failed to acknowledge the ultimate cost and the single most significant incident of police misconduct in our city that led to our creation. Simply stated, without the death of Kathryn Johnston, the 92 year old grandmother killed by corrupt APD officers some 12 years ago, there would have never been an ACRB as we know it today. Sworn uniformed Atlanta police officers shot and killed Mother Johnston, as she was affectionately known, in her home.

Ten months later, after vigorous protest from an outraged community and groups of clergy, elected and appointed officials, businessmen and business women, the tragic incident resulted in the creation of the ACRB, unanimously passed by the Atlanta City Council. Born out of her tragic loss and nurtured by the commitment of dedicated Board members and staff, coupled with the continued financial support of city administrators, the agency continues to press for officer accountability, fairness, and transparency. Thanks in part to our ever-expanding outreach to community groups, transparency and cooperation with the ACRB by the APD, there are significant signs of improved relations. The dedication of the Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park by the City of Atlanta is proof positive that we do indeed live in a place that lives up to its unofficial motto: A City Too Busy to Hate.

ACRB Commemorates its Tenth Anniversary at the City Hall Atrium

Atlanta’s Police Chief Erika Shields joined current and former Board members, community supporters, staff and city workers who celebrated the 10 year anniversary of the Atlanta Citizen Review Board which began investigating complaint cases in September of 2008. They enjoyed refreshments and reminisced over historic ACRB photos that flashed over the Atrium monitor, as the agency prepares for the next ten years of service.

It was a tumultuous time for the APD ten years ago when ACRB opened its doors following the murder of Kathryn Johnston by corrupt Atlanta police officers. Given the outrage by citizens over the police shooting death of an innocent 92 year old grandmother, confidence in the police force was at an all time low and corruption within the force was rampant.

Atlanta’s police and the new independent citizen oversight force were at odds from the beginning.

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ACRB Commemorates its Ten Year Anniversary at the City Hall Atrium

(Continued from page 1)

Ten years later, Atlanta Police Department (APD) has weeded out a significant amount of corruption within its ranks. Now, when needed, the ACRB and APD collaborate to provide training and advisement on programs and matters that benefit the community, police and civilian oversight.

Chief Shields said “I would not have imagined this. With its inception it was such a rocky beginning. I’m so pleased that we’re in a space now where there is a professional working relationship between APD and the ACRB, and we all benefit from it. I’m very grateful to those of you who have been willing to donate their time and expertise to ACRB. It is essential for our police department.”

Maceo C. Fletcher, Former Board Member

“Bottom line is I think it’s (ACRB) is a gracious and gorgeous thing. It (civilian oversight of law enforcement) needs to be over the whole state...I’ve been trying to lobby for the rest of the state to adopt it because Atlanta is the only one with one. I can remember, back in the old days, when I was there, and the fact is it (ACRB) has improved a lot...”

William Harrison, Former ACRB Board Chair

My thought is we need to keep this (ACRB) going. We need to funnel more money into it, increase the budget, make sure we can do what we need to do for the community.”

City of Atlanta Dedicates Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park Near Her Former Home

It was on a bright sunny August 23, 2018 that elected and appointed officials from the City of Atlanta, led by Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, and citizens of the English Avenue community remembered and honored the life and death of 92 year old Kathryn Johnston by gathering at 870 Proctor Street to dedicate a new park in her name. “We have found an opportunity to do something positive, “ said Mayor Bottoms. “...to name a park in her honor that will allow generations to remember all that she was and the love and passion and joy she shared throughout the community.”

The Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park is located a few blocks from the Neal Street home where Ms. Johnston was killed in her living room by corrupt members of the Atlanta Police Department (APD) on November 21, 2006. The bill submitted by Atlanta City Councilmember Ivory Lee Young, Jr. envisions walking trails, gazebos, playgrounds, picnic areas and an urban garden. Development of the city-owned greenspace is being funded mostly by the Coca Cola Foundation. The U Haul Company of Georgia is a corporate sponsor with the Conservation Fund that is contributing landscaping and the training of local residents to assist in the creation of their park, according to U Haul’s marketing company president John Harrison.

“Things are getting better,” said Councilmember Young. “Mother Kathryn Johnston’s death and her murder is a systemic root cause of some of the after effects of poverty where folks who have power take the license to abuse the least of these... What we have are rules i take the license to abuse the least of these... What we have are rules to protect the public...So we honor Mother Kathryn John- ston by never forgetting the atrocity that took place...but forever moving forward to remove the systemic root causes that are the consequence of poverty.”

M. Renee Tyner, Assistant to the President of the Urban League of Greater Atlanta

“We love it (ACRB). It’s much needed for the community. I don’t know where we would be unless we had the Atlanta Citizen Review Board who would stand up for the citizen. I appreciate you guys totally.”

Cecilia Houston-Torrence, Current Board Chair

“I’m happy to be here, happy to serve the citizens of the City of Atlanta as part of the Atlanta Citizen Review Board.”

Assistant to the President of the Urban League of Greater Atlanta
November 21, 2006: Ms. Kathryn Johnson, 92-year-old, killed by Atlanta police officers during an illegal raid at her home at 933 Neal Street.

2007: Councilmember H. Lamar Willis, C. T. Martin and Ivory L. Young, Jr. sponsor legislation creating the ACRB

2008: Hired its First Executive Director, and two Staffers

2008: ACRB Office Opened.

2010: Legislation Passed Granting the ACRB Subpoena Power

2012: Hired Second and Current Executive Director Lee Reid

2016: City Council Ordinance Expansion Authorizes ACRB To Investigate a Wider Range of Complaints

2017: Mediation Program Begins for Citizens and Atlanta Police

2018: Budget Expansion Continues With A Staff of Nine and ACRB Vehicles
KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AND BE HEARD!

The keyword in the Atlanta Citizen Review Board is CITIZEN. The agency is only as effective as the level of Citizen involvement. This is why ACRB urges all Citizens to regularly monitor, question and support its work. This is why ACRB urges all Citizens to know where your elected officials stand on civilian oversight of police and corrections. This is why it is so important for Citizens to be registered and vote. This is why Citizens need to join and be active in community groups. Get involved in Neighborhood Planning Units (NPUs). Attend Public Safety meetings, Atlanta City Council meetings and KNOW YOUR RIGHTS TRAINING WORKSHOPS. Become a member of the ACRB Board. Currently there are two vacancies. Contact ACRB for details. Fill the chambers to capacity when Council votes to fund issues that matter to Citizens like you.

Three New Members of the ACRB Bring Extensive Expertise to the Board

ACRB is pleased to welcome three new members whose extensive expertise is expected to further enhance the agency’s effectiveness as it embarks upon the next decade of service.

James Hardy was appointed by Atlanta Planning and Advisory Board (APAB) to represent Neighborhood Planning Units (NPU) A through F.

Locally, Mr. Hardy served for two years and chaired the NPU-F Public Safety Committee and was vice president of the Piedmont Heights Civic Association. He is also the former Protective Security Advisor for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, based in Atlanta, GA. Mr. Hardy brings to the Board almost a half century of experience in military counterintelligence, police investigations, insurance crime, security training, plans and procedures.

Mr. Hardy says he is “very much looking forward to working with the group.” How does he plan to apply his extensive background to the ACRB? “The primary way is basically going into anything with an open mind and listening to all sides of any individual issue,” said Mr. Hardy. “In my experience, with all the things that you mentioned, tells me that quite often, the truth is somewhere between the story that either side is giving.”

Trudy Boyce represents Council President Felicia A. Moore

Trudy Boyce is a 40 year resident of Atlanta. She was appointed by City Council President Felicia A. Moore who is responsible by law for bringing someone to the Board with a police background.

Ms. Boyce has some 30 years of local law enforcement experience as a retired officer with the Atlanta Police Department (APD), having worked through the ranks, from patrol officer, homicide detective, sergeant in the APD Special Victims Unit, to lieutenant and an APD Assistant Zone Commander in East Atlanta.

“This is my way of giving back,” Ms. Boyce explained. “I’m enthusiastic about being able to return some energy to the city because I have received so much from the city. So it makes me happy to be able to do this. And it’s kind of a unique fit for my skill-set and the Citizen Review Board.”

“I’m excited to get started,” exclaimed Keith Hasson after accepting the oath of office from Deputy City Clerk Foris Webb. Mr. Hasson was appointed to represent the Atlanta Bar Association.

“I’ve had the opportunity to see from both sides police officers who have been accused of wrongdoing or miscommunications or inappropriate behavior when they were not guilty of doing anything wrong. They were just trying to do their job. I’ve also seen instances where police have abused their power. And at times that’s led to their being criminally prosecuted for wrongdoing. So I think that those experiences will give me an opportunity to bring some objectivity to the Board and hopefully we’ll be making good decisions.”

Keith Hasson represents the Atlanta Bar Association