The View of the Executive Director

In September of 2008, we at ACRB began taking citizen complaints following the case of Kathryn Johnston, the 92 year old grandmother, killed by corrupt Atlanta police officers. The initial relationship was confrontational and mired in distrust. Ten years later, Atlanta Police Department (APD) has eliminated a significant amount of corruption within its ranks, and, when needed, the ACRB and APD work together and share training and advice on programs and services that benefit the community, police and civilian oversight.

Looking ahead for 2019, I would like to see that relationship get even stronger for the benefit of our citizens, many of whom still harbor a level of antagonism against law enforcement in general and the APD in particular. One of our jobs is to help bridge that credibility gap between the officer and the citizen.

I foresee our agency developing a quicker response to our citizens and a stronger bond with them, thanks in part to our newly-issued mobile units.

We plan to call upon the vast resources of higher education in our city and engage those college/university criminology, sociology and political science students interested in civilian oversight of law enforcement.

Our current Board should be credited for taking a more active role in our community on behalf of their representative agencies, including Neighborhood Planning Units (NPU). We fully expect our Board members to continue in that regard.

Finally, as we look ahead to the start of this century’s third decade, we plan to increase our efforts to educate you, the citizen, about your rights and responsibilities if ever you confront law enforcement to ensure a peaceful outcome.

2018 Board Members
Cecilia Houston-Torrence, Chair
Tamara Orange, Vice Chair
Tracee McDaniel, Secretary
Sherry B. Williams
Shuntay Pitre
Michael Hopkins
Barbara Ward-Groves
Gloria Hawkins-Wynn
Trudy Boyce
Keith Hasson
James Hardy

Staff
Samuel Lee Reid II
Executive Director
Sheeno Robertson
Investigation Manager
Brian Fleming
Investigator, Senior
Tonya Richardson
Investigator, Senior
Ronald Jackson
Investigator, Senior
Myola Smith
Project Manager
Charles Curry
Outreach Specialist
Melisa Reese
Administrative Assistant

Citizens Take the ACRB Police Interaction Quiz & Win Prizes

“That’s interesting,” was Desktop Support Technician Corey Lindsey’s initial reaction after stopping by the ACRB table in Atlanta City Hall Atrium in January, taking and passing the first ACRB Police Interaction Quiz. The quiz is being taken throughout the city. The scores of contestants who took and passed the first set of quizzes have won swag bags of prizes. If they keep winning, they will be eligible to win a big colorful framed Atlanta Jazz Festival poster and other special gifts from the Atlanta’s Department of Cultural Affairs. Citizens from all over the Atlanta area have received their first swag bag of prizes in the mail or at City Hall. They are planning to earn more swag bags to qualify for the grand prize drawing in May. The array of facts in the quiz not only self-assesses understanding, but also comes in handy if having to decide what to do or say during a police incident. It expands discussions about the rights of a citizen during an incident with law enforcement. The goal is to educate and promote peaceful outcomes during a confrontation between a citizen and a sworn officer on duty.

(Continued on page 2)
ACRB Extends its Investigative Powers With the Newest Staffers

Thanks to the continued support from Mayor Bottoms and Atlanta City Council, the ACRB has extended its powers to investigate cases of alleged misconduct by Atlanta’s sworn police and corrections officers with the hiring of two additional senior investigators with extensive backgrounds in public service. They also bring a profound sense of purpose and passion to their new position.

Ronald Jackson joins the ACRB investigative team with 18 years of investigative experience with the State of Georgia where he served as an adjudicator, administrative law hearing officer, district director, field supervisor and investigative auditor. Mr. Jackson has over 14 years of regulatory enforcement experience handling labor law claims, compliance investigations, and appeal mediation tribunals. Mr. Jackson earned his Bachelors Degree from Georgia State University (G.S.U.) and a Lean Six Sigma Green Belt Certification from G.S.U.’s J. Mack Robinson College of Business.

Mr. Jackson and Tonya Richardson joined the Atlanta Citizen Review Board (ACRB) in November 2018. Prior to joining ACRB, Ms. Richardson was employed with the California Department of Corrections and was promoted to the Investigative Services Unit to work as a liaison with Office of Internal Affairs completing staff misconduct investigations. Ms. Richardson worked at the Georgia Bureau of Investigations (GBI) as a Coroner and Death Investigator for the Medical Examiner’s Office.

“ACRB investigative team members can look to their new position as sworn by, and an opportunity to be a facilitator in working that everyone sees a win-win situation.”

Citizens Take the ACRB Police Interaction Quiz & Win Prizes

(Continued from page 1)

“Scored a hundred on my first one (quiz), stuff I already knew,” said Adjoa Johnson as she proudly walked away with her yellow swag bag of gifts.

The six-month contest was only two months old in January 2019, but already, based on players’ responses to the first ten multiple choice questions, there were clearly some things that citizens already knew about police interaction and other things that they learned.

For example, 98 percent of quiz takers knew what to do if a police officer is violating their rights, what they should keep visible when interacting with police officers and why they should file a complaint if they think an Atlanta police or corrections officer has behaved inappropriately. However, only 45 percent knew specifically what “Know Your Rights” and “Exercise Your Rights” means in terms of police interactions. Just more than half, 53 percent, knew that they have six months from the time of an incident to file a complaint with the ACRB.

Mr. Lindsey said “Before then, I wouldn’t think to question the officer. It would seem antagonistic, at least where I’m from...You think it’s the appropriate way to respond, right? Then it (the quiz) tells you otherwise.”

So how much do you know about the Atlanta Citizen Review Board (ACRB), and how aware are you about what your rights are and how to exercise your rights if confronted by law enforcement? Test your knowledge, have fun and be eligible for prizes. Go to acrbgov.org/quiz. Score 90% or more, and win an ACRB swag bag. There are 10 simple multiple choice questions. If you score less than 90%, that’s okay. Fully detailed correct answers appear when you complete the quiz. Follow a link at the end of the test for more information on the website and feel free to take it until you win. You must score 90% or better on all three quizzes to be eligible for the grand prize drawing in May.
Testimonial: “When I think of ACRB...”

“The ACRB experience was fine...It served its purpose...”

Courtesy. Professionalism. Respect. These are the three standards that most, if not all local law enforcement departments pride themselves on providing to the citizens they are sworn to serve. But on March 19, 2018, Michael Brown had an encounter with Michael Monheim, later identified as a sworn officer with the Atlanta Police Department. When it was over, Brown walked away frustrated and feeling strongly that what happened to him was highly discourteous, unprofessional and disrespectful. He later filed a complaint with the ACRB.

Brown said he received a call from the ACRB after filing a complaint with the agency against the officer, alleging Monheim refused to do an incident report.

ACRB concluded its investigation in October of 2018. It determined the appropriate action required allegation related to Officer Monheim’s failure to complete a report should be sustained.

The Board recommended an oral admonishment as a penalty. But in terms of the officer failing to provide his supervisor’s name and refusing Brown’s request to contact a supervisor, the Board determined that the complaint of appropriate action required was unfounded. The failure to provide identification and the conduct allegations against Officer Monheim were also assigned a finding of unfounded.

Brown speculates the entire incident might have come down to an officer who was simply having a bad day.

About his thoughts on the ACRB, Brown concluded that he “…had nothing but good things. The ACRB experience was fine...It served its purpose...”

For more information regarding Mr. Brown’s case, other complaints and APD response to Board recommendations, please visit www.acrbgov.org/complaint-review/

ACRB is Issued Vehicles to Assure a Rapid Response to Citizen Complaints

Few if any civilian oversight agencies in the US have ever had vehicles to assure a rapid response to citizen complaints.

ACRB Project Manager Myola Smith, overseeing Community Outreach, expressed her excitement about two new vehicles that the City recently assigned to the agency. She said, The vehicles will allow us to freely interact and move about the city to meet the people.

With the use of these vehicles, we now have visibility in a way that has not been available to us since the agency opened its doors in 2008. Not only will the City of Atlanta’s name appear on the vehicles, the ACRB name and logo will be on them as well. Citizens will be able to recognize the agency by our logo and appreciate our presence in the community based on what we do. We do great work!

Our hope is whenever a citizen notices an ACRB vehicle in their neighborhood or sees one anywhere in the City, they will take pride in something that they demanded to be created. They will know that if they have a complaint, ACRB will work with them to address it. Our process is fair, they will be heard and they will be treated with respect. We stand by our work and we are proud of it. The new vehicles will help us do an even better job of providing services to citizens,” ACRB will soon be driving to a neighborhood near you.

We invite you to check out the vehicles and receive important information about your rights and the many resources available to you if you encounter local law enforcement misconduct.

You also might be asked to provide a video response about concerns you might have about your community in general and specifically about good and/or bad incidents you might have experienced with the Atlanta Police Department. Your regular feedback is important to us.
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 (NPLUs). Attend Public Safety meetings. Fill the chambers to capacity when Council votes to fund issues that matter to Citizens like you. Attend Atlanta City Council meetings and KNOW YOUR RIGHTS TRAINING WORKSHOPS.

Become a member of the ACRB Board. Currently there are two representative agency vacancies from the Gate City Bar Association and the Atlanta Business League. Contact ACRB for details. Thank you, Citizens of Atlanta, for your continued support.

Images: ACRB at Atlanta’s Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday March and Rally

Kudos to all the ACRB members, volunteers and supporters who braved the cold weather and marched the 1.1 mile parade route behind the ACRB banner in the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday March and Rally to the MLK Center on January 21, 2019. Led by the memory of Kathryn Johnston, the 92 year old grandmother slain by corrupt APD officers some 12 years ago, which resulted in its formation, the ACRB joined scores of schools, fraternal, union, civic groups and corporate sponsors to honor Dr. King who would have been 90 years old this year.

A special shout out goes to Board member Tamara Orange who saw to it that the ACRB, for the first time, would also have a presentation table located between the MLK National Park & Visitor’s Center and the King gravesite where she and her mother, Cleophas Orange, the widow of legendary civil rights leader James Orange, spent four hours in the cold greeting citizens/visitors and distributing ACRB materials on behalf of the agency. The late Mr. Orange served as the founder and general coordinator for the Martin Luther King, Jr. March Committee-Africa/African American Renaissance Committee, Inc., which coordinates commemorative events honoring Dr. King, including Atlanta’s annual march and rally.