The View of the Executive Director

Consider this. There would never have been a successful civil rights movement of the sixties without a group of well-trained youth on the front lines. They bore the brunt of the violence, from beatings, dog bites to water hoses, yet maintained the discipline of non-violence. Some paid the ultimate price and lost their chance to grow old. They changed the world.

Even today, there would be no mass movements for positive change anywhere in the world without the energy and sacrifice of organized young people in the streets seeking justice. Unfortunately, far too often, young men of color find themselves languishing behind bars all across America, a wasted resource of talent, skill and ability. Unemployed, poverty-stricken, from broken homes and a lack of education, the odds are stacked against them. Yet, to their credit, many still manage to not only survive and thrive, but also reach back to help many who were like them at one time. So we applaud our young people who find a way to navigate through this highly complicated world. This special edition of our newsletter is therefore dedicated to the young people who have thankfully come forward to support the ACRB over the years and to this day. They have produced our videos. They have marched with us and attended events for us. They have braved the elements to distribute our material to citizens. ACRB is always looking for more just like them. So come join us! Contact the ACRB at 404-865-8622, email us at acrb@atlantaga.gov or check our website at acrb.gov.org.

A Final Farewell to a True ACRB Champion

Last time we saw District 3 Councilman Ivory Lee Young, he appeared happy, invigorated and optimistic. It was August 23, 2018 for the dedication of the Kathryn Johnston Memorial Park which he pushed through City Council for the Vine City community that he had represented since 2001. The park is in honor of the 92 year old grandmother whose death by corrupt APD officers 12 years earlier led to a bill that created the ACRB which Councilman Young co-authored. “Things are getting better,” Councilmember Young said on that day. “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 and guidance of accountability to those who enforce the law through the Atlanta Citizen Review Board which works hard to keep accountable those that have a sworn responsibility to uphold the law and to protect the public...So we honor Mother Kathryn Johnston by never forgetting the atrocity that took place...but forever moving forward to remove the systemic root causes that are the consequence of poverty.” Ivory Lee Young, Jr., one of the agency’s true champions, died on November 16, 2019 at the age of 56.
ACRB Thanks A/V Students at the Fulton Schools College and Career Academy

ACRB salutes and thanks the Fulton Schools College and Career Academy Film & Animation students who produced the agency’s videos of its 2019 Board members in the school’s state-of-the-art production studio. The Academy opened in August 2016 to 200 students from Westlake, Creekside, Langston Hughes, Tri-Cities, and Banneker High Schools. It offers a half-day of industry-specific instruction in four career pathways: Construction, Aviation, Film/Animation, and Culinary Arts. The facility is uniquely equipped with cutting edge hardware and technology, including, flight simulators and ultra modern restaurant kitchens, to give students a real world experience and provide industry employers who monitor the school a job-ready, well-trained employee. A number of students have initiated lucrative careers straight out of high school thanks to the academy.

ACRB first encountered the school during an open house in February 28, 2017. Student LaDasia Smith gave potential partners, industry leaders and ACRB a tour of its state-of-the-art audio/video equipment and technology. Now, some two years later, Ms. Smith says attending College and Career Academy gave her a head start for film school and allowed her to learn much about what goes into a project. She is now a first year film student at Clayton State University, currently on the Dean’s List and aspiring to work in the film industry upon graduation. To view the student’s work, visit our homepage at acrbgov.org.

Integrity Street Team (IST) at Super Bowl Weekend for the ACRB

The free outdoor activities for Superbowl LIII at Centennial Olympic Park drew tens of thousands of football fans, families and party people looking to be a part of the biggest spectacle of the year. They were treated to the Goodie Mob, Monica and a host of other great entertainers. The bitter cold did little to dampen their spirits.

Moving throughout the massive crowds was a group of Morehouse College students wearing ACRB’s STAY CALM, DON’T RUN tee shirts. While so many of their peers were partying, the Morehouse members of the agency’s Integrity Street Team (IST) were well-received as they chose instead to miss the festivities and brave the elements to pass out information about the services of the ACRB.

Frank Cisneros, Morehouse Class of ‘20

“‘To make sure to give everybody awareness and make sure they know they have an option out here. They’re able to speak out and let their voice be heard.’”

Tyler Phipps, Morehouse Class of ‘21

“It’s important to get this out about the Atlanta Citizen Review Board. I feel it’s really important because police misconduct is serious and we should take it seriously.”
A Your Story Testimonial Update

The ACRB is committed to fairness and transparency for citizens and officers. For many years, we have presented personal experiences of people who have contacted the ACRB. We have encouraged citizens and officers to share their stories, experiences, thoughts and concerns so that we can inform, educate, and learn.

From time to time, this column will also revisit a story to provide an update on the chief’s action to a complaint, highlight a citizen’s post-complaint experience, or reveal the outcome of a legal proceeding associated with an ACRB complaint.

In our Winter 2018 Newsletter, we highlighted an incident of one of our complainants, Raymond Washington, with APD Officer David Holleman. Mr. Washington filed a complaint against Officer Holleman, alleging false arrest and excessive force. The ACRB sustained both allegations. The APD chief exonerated Officer Holleman of the allegations. Subsequently, Mr. Washington filed a pro se complaint against the City of Atlanta, Officer Holleman and others in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, alleging Section 1983 violations of his constitutional rights under the color of law among other claims.

The U.S. District Court ruled in Officer Holleman’s favor that his actions did not constitute excessive force and that the detention of Mr. Washington was legal. The Court dismissed the complaint against Officer Holleman and the City of Atlanta.

If you ever have a complaint or concern against an Atlanta police or corrections officer, contact the ACRB at 404-865-8622.

Keith Strickland, Making the Transition for the Nation’s Wayward Youth

Keith Strickland is a national advocate for young men abandoned by society. Once a 13 year old drug dealer who by age 25 had 50 incarcerations, he got a break from a judge, earned his college degree and made a dramatic transition. He now spends his life telling kids who hear his story that they too can turn their lives around regardless of their situation. The Atlanta native has dedicated his life touring the nation and bringing hope to poor kids, underserved students and incarcerated young men. He founded Making The Transition, a national organization that he says, thanks to donors, has provided services to more than 100,000 youth by creating highly successful programs for dozens of high risk schools, partnering court systems, and corrections departments to provide direct services to several communities. “I had a conversation with our Governor (Brian Kemp below) about what happens in our community when we do not have programs, resources and empower organizations who are doing work every single day,” said Mr. Strickland. We thank Mr. Strickland for using his connections with local public school drama students to have them produce ACRB’s DON’T RUN video (below) which can be seen on the homepage of the ACRB website, acrb.gov.org.

Women of Achievement

Congratulations to Atlanta’s top cop. The YWCA officially inducted APD Chief Erika Shields into the YWCA Academy of Women Achievers during the 36th Annual Salute to Women of Achievement dinner at the Atlanta Marriott Marquis.
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. 

ACRB Profiles “Captains Integrity”
Derrick Robertson & Tyler Phipps

It was in the summer of 2018 that hundreds of youngsters and some adults across Metro Atlanta met Derrick Robertson (above) as ACRB’s Captain Integrity. This year he is joined by Tyler Phipps, Morehouse Class of ’21 (below), who recruited a number of Morehouse students to join ACRB’s Integrity Street Team (IST), an outreach component of the agency. Mr. Robertson, a recent graduate of Clark Atlanta University (CAU), was a member of the famed CAU Players and landed the title role in the troupe’s adaptation of Macbeth. “Our main job is to bring light of the arts to the university,” he explained. “…It’s a space and it’s an organization or club for students to come and express themselves through art.

Both Robertson and Phipps are natives of Los Angeles. They have a passion for kids and been involved with drama productions for youngsters. Our youngest citizens adore ACRB’s superhero who is a human lie detector. His message to them is clear: remember what you see, remember what you hear and always tell the truth to someone you trust if you ever notice an Atlanta police officer behaving badly. He cannot be everywhere, so The Captain recruits our youngest citizens to be his eyes and ears on the street.