

Remarks to the New Mayor

For  
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Good Morning Mayor Brady/Evans/Fattah/Knox/Nutter/Taubenburger. Yes sir, everything is fine at Temple. Dawn Staley is a pretty exciting coach and we're all thrilled about the third straight Big Five Women's Basketball crown. Thanks for asking.

I know you're extremely busy; I did see Bill O'Reilly's and Steven Colbert's film crews in the outer office, so I will be brief. As you develop your comprehensive anti-violence initiatives for this city I am going to talk most about policing related issues, and ask you to consider three points:

1. You Already Know A Lot
2. Recruit Local Talent
3. Communities Are Co-Producers

You already know a lot

When I say you already know a lot I am referring to scientific knowledge about what has been done in this city already to reduce violence and about what has worked.

Focusing specifically on police, in recent years there have been evaluations of Operation Sunrise in Kensington, Operation Safe Streets, and most recently Operation Safer Streets. Each of these evaluations showed, using rigorous scientific analyses, that planned initiatives demonstrated positive impacts in line with program goals.

They also in some cases pointed out unanticipated side effects, and spurred thinking about how to deal with those side effects. You can learn, even with a fairly short performance window, how something new is working out.

Please don't prematurely conclude that everything already tried has failed so it is time for something totally new. Please build on what you already know about successful innovations in the past, from all areas of violence prevention, even though they may lack the "new and improved" logo.

Hopefully in the long run Philadelphia's citizens and leaders care more about demonstrated results than slogans.

### Recruit Local Talent

What I mean by "recruit local talent" is build local research partnerships you can trust. Each of these evaluations mentioned above – Operation Sunrise,<sup>1</sup> Operation Safe Streets,<sup>2</sup> Operation Safer Streets<sup>3</sup> – involved university researchers. Although they all happened to be from Temple University, and in one case had their results sadly twisted by a local reporter, they could have been from any local university. There is a lot of social science talent in this town. Outside involvement in assessment is critical. Although the Police Department has excellent research and analysis capabilities, as do other agencies involved in anti-violence programs, assessment partners must be from outside and must make independent findings.

I strongly encourage you to hammer out agreements creating such partnerships. Yes, it will take time to grow the trust needed between city agencies and local researchers. And, yes, you will need to be perfectly clear about how you expect the partners to behave responsibly with confidential data.

But, again, like with the actual interventions, there are models from which you can learn. In the 1990s the National Institute of Justice funded a number of Locally Initiated Research Partnerships around policing research.<sup>4</sup> In short, they worked. What is currently known locally, and what can be learned from those earlier examples, whether the relevant agencies involve the police or other city agencies, helps create blueprints for the future.

Careful, un-biased assessment by knowledgeable, responsible outside researchers working closely with program planners and program service staff will be the only way you can assess how you

are doing and what can be done to make it more effective. Again, hopefully, the issue in the long run is not political mileage, it is results.

### Communities are co-producers

Community residents and leaders are co-producers of public safety. Community residents, leaders and the police partner together to shape crime prevention priorities and initiatives. This can work well, has worked well in Philadelphia in the past<sup>5</sup> and can help build trust between the community and the police.<sup>6</sup> Other speaker(s) have/will address this issue. Let me make just two points here. First, there is room for improvement. A fall 2003 Temple University survey in Philadelphia found generally positive views about the police and how they do their job. But one in five did not think police respected their basic rights; one in four did not think police treated people equally; one in three thought police stopped people without good reason. Elsewhere in the country and, sadly, and here in Philadelphia as well, these concerns break out along racial lines.<sup>7</sup>

Second, if citizens are going to work to co-produce public safety they must not only feel safe, they also must feel respected by the police. A large volume of empirical work on procedural justice shows that respect based policing increases the public's trust in police.<sup>8</sup> Think about that here. Consult that work, and community leaders, and citizens, and generate ideas.

Police are prickly – and there are many good reasons for why they are – about working with outsiders. Not everyone in town is ever going to be happy about what the police are doing. Nor should they. Nonetheless there have been numerous successful community crime prevention initiatives in this city and elsewhere and, again, we know a lot about what works.

In closing, there was a time, in the 1950s and early 1960s, when the Philadelphia Police Department was “probably the best in the country.”<sup>9</sup> Commissioners like Thomas Gibbons, Albert Brown, and Howard Leary were so good they sometimes got hired away to New York City’s Police Department, rather than the reverse, which has been happening the last few years. Philadelphia can be there again.

If Philadelphia’s agencies responsible for public safety, public health, and prevention can commit themselves to ongoing and independent assessment through strong and responsible local research partnerships, and – here comes the tricky part – if that can be funded and – here comes another tricky part – you and other leaders are willing to be informed by and alter direction based on the results that emerge – progress and prevention are possible.

I see three of your cell phones are buzzing on your desk. Congratulations again on the recent election victory. I hope you believe that if you build on what has worked in the past rather than try to innovate just to do something new, and that if you commit yourself to carefully gauging how things are working with good evidence examined by impartial outsiders teamed with agencies, you will be better off at the polls next time. And, Philadelphia will be a better place to live. I guess that’s win-win. Thanks again for your time.

## Footnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Goldkamp, John S., Moore, James, & Harris, M. K. (2000) Law Enforcement and Jail Capacity (II): Impact of Targeted Drug Enforcement in Philadelphia. Philadelphia: Crime and Justice Research Institute.
- <sup>2</sup> Lawton, B. A., Taylor, R. B., and Luongo, A. (2005) Police Officers on Drug Corners in Philadelphia, Drug Crime and Violent Crime: Intended, Diffusion, and Displacement Impacts. *Justice Quarterly* 22(4) 427-451. Available online at: [www.rbtaylor.net/pub\\_lawtonetal\\_jq\\_2005.pdf](http://www.rbtaylor.net/pub_lawtonetal_jq_2005.pdf)
- <sup>3</sup> Ratcliffe, J.R. and Breen, C. (2007). Evaluation of Operation Safer Streets. Unpublished Manuscript. Temple University, Department of Criminal Justice.
- <sup>4</sup> McEwen, T. (2003). Evaluation of the Locally Initiated Research Partnership Program. Institute for Law and Justice. [ONLINE: [http://www.ilj.org/publications/Rev\\_Final\\_Report\\_Sept2003.pdf](http://www.ilj.org/publications/Rev_Final_Report_Sept2003.pdf). Accessed 2/15/07]
- <sup>5</sup> Greene, J. R., & McLaughlin, E. (1993). Facilitating communities through police work: Drug problem solving and neighborhood involvement in Philadelphia. In R. C. Davis, A. Lurigio & D. P. Rosenbaum (Eds.), *Drugs and the community* (pp. 141-161). Springfield, IL: Charles Thomas.
- <sup>6</sup> Taylor, R. B. (2005). Incivilities reduction policing, zero tolerance, and the retreat from coproduction: weak foundations and strong pressures. In D. Weisburd and A. Braga (Eds.). *Policing Innovations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- <sup>7</sup> Philadelphia Area Survey 2003. Unpublished Data. Department of Criminal Justice, Temple University; Brown, B., & Benedict, W. R. (2002). Perceptions of the police - Past findings, methodological issues, conceptual issues and policy implications. *Policing-an International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, 25(3), 543-580.
- <sup>8</sup> Tyler, T. R. (2004). Enhancing police legitimacy. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 593, 84-99.
- <sup>9</sup> Clark, J.S., Jr., and Clark, D.J. (1982). Rally and Relapse. In R. Weigley (ed.) *Philadelphia: A 300 Year History*. New York: Norton. p. 659