

The 54th Mile Policing Project

In the summer of 2020, three police leaders, Chief Shon Barnes, Assistant Chief Tarrick McGuire, and Dr. Obed Magny, retraced the steps of the historic 54-mile civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. Documenting their experience in a powerful 17-minute film, these men used their journey to reflect on what it means to be Black men and law enforcement leaders in the United States. Titled the *54th Mile Policing Project*, this film provides a call for collective action to enhance police interactions and relationships with communities of color in the United States.

Inspiring a National Initiative

Building upon the powerful message from the *54th Mile Policing Project* documentary, the National Policing Institute (the Institute), with support from the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, is launching a national initiative to strengthen connections between the police and communities of color. In collaboration with the co-creators of the *54th Mile Policing Project* documentary and an Advisory Group of leading subject matter experts, the Institute will develop, pilot, and evaluate an innovative training program to assist police executives in engaging in difficult conversations on race and policing, enhancing community relationships, supporting their officers, and promoting diversity in the policing profession. A national outreach campaign and website will also be established to create a space to engage the policing field and share resources to support agencies in enhancing connections with their communities.



More information about the scope of work under this Initiative can be found [here](#). To learn more about the origins of the *54th Mile Policing Project*, access the [Justice Today podcast episode](#) and related [blog post](#).

Why Walk 54 Miles?

On February 18, 1965, Alabama State Troopers fatally shot an unarmed African American civil rights activist, Jimmie Lee Jackson. A champion for equal voting rights, Jackson died protecting his mother, who was attacked by police during a demonstration in Marion, AL. In response to Jackson's death, local civil rights leaders organized a 54-mile march from Selma to Montgomery – intending to take their cause directly to Governor George Wallace in the state's capital.

Led by 25-year-old activist John Lewis, on March 7, 1965, over 600 demonstrators began this march through Selma's downtown but were blocked by state troopers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. When the marchers refused to yield, the troopers brutally attacked demonstrators using tear gas, nightsticks, and other means of violence. Television cameras captured the confrontation, giving Americans a front-row seat to "Bloody Sunday." Marchers, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., were again blocked by police two days later as they crossed the bridge. It wasn't until March 25th, 1965, that Dr. King and the 25,000 marchers with him could complete their march to the Alabama State Capitol Building and Governor Wallace's office. These events spurred the passing of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The Edmund Pettus Bridge remains a powerful landmark for the Civil Rights Movement.

About the Founders of the 54th Mile Policing Project

Tarrick McGuire, DPA, is the Assistant Chief of the Arlington (TX) Police Department and a leading authority on community-police relations, evidence-based policing, police reform, and public policy.

Shon Barnes, Ph.D., is the Chief of the Madison (WI) Police Department and a nationally recognized leader in crime reduction and community-police relations.



Obed Magny, Ed.D., a former Sacramento police officer with nearly two decades of experience, is now CEO of Magny Leadership, helping police agencies focus on increasing officer retention by enhancing their employees' morale and job satisfaction.

About the National Policing Institute



Incorporated in 1970 as the Police Foundation, the [National Policing Institute](#) is a nationally known non-profit, non-partisan, and non-membership-driven organization dedicated to enhancing police practice through innovation and science. The Institute supports collaboration between police and communities to build mutual trust and implement evidence-informed best practices to create safe, healthy, and economically thriving communities.

About the Bureau of Justice Assistance

The [Bureau of Justice Assistance](#) provides leadership and services in grant administration and criminal justice policy development to support local, state, and tribal justice strategies to achieve safer communities. BJA works with communities, governments, and non-profit organizations to reduce crime, recidivism, and unnecessary confinement and promote a safe and fair criminal justice system.

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