



FAITH IN INDIANA



CO-GOVERNANCE REPORT

Indianapolis: An Unlikely Case Study in Co-Governance
March 2022

THE CHALLENGE

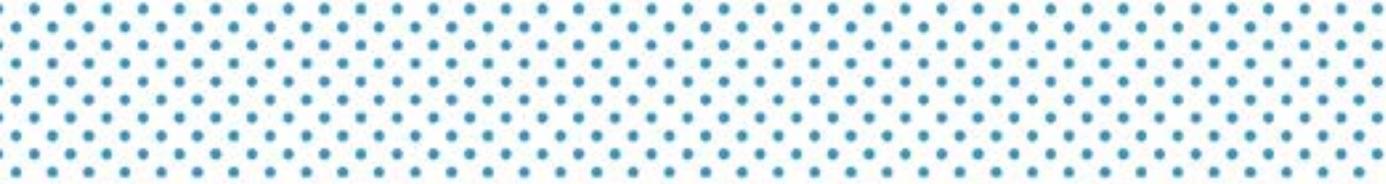
Progressive organizers have a policy problem. Left-leaning organizations often focus on electoral politics and are unable to support progressive action by lawmakers after election day. (U.S. Rep. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona is the country’s most dramatic example of the gap between electoral mobilization and policy advocacy.) But even when progressive advocates succeed in passing policy reforms, they frequently fail to ensure adequate implementation of those new laws. Policy victories by themselves don’t automatically improve lives for working people, low-income communities, and people of color: those material benefits depend on interpretation and implementation of laws by regulatory agencies and defense of laws in courtrooms. But movement organizations frequently lack the focus, resources, and knowledge to attend to implementation, and philanthropy often fails to invest in this work. As the Ford Foundation’s governance series concludes, “progressive organizing doesn’t invest adequate time and resources in the implementation of policy and practice of government.”



Community organizers are particularly prone to this error. Our organizations are often constructed with the idea that our role is outside agitation: if we bring enough power to city hall or the state capitol or Congress, our grassroots army can win the changes it seeks. A mass of angry constituents is our weapon of choice. When organizers succeed in electing progressive champions, we are sometimes baffled that their election doesn’t translate into meaningful change. At best, we fail to understand the constraints facing our would-be

champions in their public roles, so we remain confused about their lack of leadership on the issues we care about. At worst, we turn our newly elected allies into targets of the same sort of outside agitation we have practiced for years. It is the only tool in our belt.





THE CONCEPT OF PROGRESSIVE CO-GOVERNANCE

The idea of co-governance is designed as an antidote to this myopia. Co-governance – taking responsibility to create the conditions required to win, implement, defend, enforce, and sustain progressive policies and programs – relies on collaborative relationships of trust and mutual accountability with public officials and their staff. It demands a high level of sophistication. Co-governance requires that organizers not only advocate the policies we support but also create the conditions for public officials to enact those policies in ways that benefit our communities.

Just as conservative interests and business elites have invested substantial resources in educating agency leadership, appointees, public sector staff, and elected officials to ensure that policies benefit them, progressive organizers can too. But progressive co-governance looks rather different from the cozy relationship between corporate lobbyists and public officials.





FOR ORGANIZERS, CO-GOVERNANCE IS BUILT ON FOUR ELEMENTS:

1. THE POWER OF ORGANIZED PEOPLE. While well-heeled lobbyists

may be able to dangle campaign contributions and underwrite trips to Hawaii to influence decision-makers, community organizers rely on a radically different starting point for working collaboratively with elected representatives and public sector staff: a network of relationships grounded in community leadership. It's important to distinguish leadership development from mobilization. Mobilization is

IT'S IMPORTANT TO DISTINGUISH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FROM MOBILIZATION.

an activity that organizers undertake when they turn out hundreds of people for a demonstration, a committee hearing, or an election, but it is not the same as organizing. Organizing, in the words of ISAIAH's executive director Doran Schrantz, consists of "the culture, structures, and habits that make it possible to unleash human agency." What is unique about these activities is not that they persuade people to show up for events but that they develop leaders. Leaders don't just carry out organizing activities; they design them. They don't just attend events; they take responsibility

to recruit others. And they don't just sit in the audience; they are at the front of the room leading the meetings. The cultivation of leadership and agency among people who have been culturally schooled to be consumers and employees is a discipline with a distinct methodology, whose rules and principles are now beginning to be studied and codified. (Faith in Indiana is the subject of one the longest-running longitudinal studies of leadership development, forthcoming, which identifies the methods that are most effective at building long-term leadership.) This sort of leadership development is an essential piece of progressive co-governance, allowing a group of grassroots leaders, working together, to develop relationships and work in partnership with elected officials, the heads of agencies and commissions, and public sector staff. By developing relationships with decision-makers, leaders come to understand the constraints under which they act and take responsibility to help shift those constraints. Grassroots leadership is thus an essential ingredient in movement governance: without it, the best progressive organizations can hope for is to be public interest lobbyists. With it, they can transform the relationship between the governors and the governed.



2. INSTITUTIONAL EXPERTISE. The realm of government is sometimes thought to be divided into arenas that are political – where ideological battles are fought – and those that are neutral or technocratic, where decisions made through the political process are enacted. Our experience, however, is that every step of making change is political, through and through. The actions taken by agencies to interpret laws, implement them, and enforce them are just as open to choices and decisions as the policy fights at a city council or state legislature, and those decisions are also sites of contestation around who benefits and who loses or around which values take priority, even if the battles within agencies don't make it into the news. In short, advocacy and influence are relevant at every level of governance. If disadvantaged communities are not present in the rooms where implementation and enforcement are decided, our voices are not heard. And that's why we need institutional expertise that goes beyond policy expertise: we need to marry smart policy with institutional sophistication. The day the law passes isn't the day of victory: we can't just pass the baton to the city council and then walk away. Instead, the signing of the bill is when our real work begins. And it is at this moment when relationships with agency staff, understanding of administrative processes, and deep experience in the many steps involved in turning a law into reality are critical capacities. This is even more true in a historical moment when local and state governments are under-resourced, under-staffed, and constrained by political and institutional limitations. Our public officials often lack the staffing, inspiration, and experience to do their work at a high level. Progressive co-governance provides trusted help, ideas, support, and expertise, working hand in hand with public officials to help them do their jobs.

WE NEED TO MARRY SMART POLICY WITH INSTITUTIONAL SOPHISTICATION.



3. PUBLIC WILL. Elected officials face real-world constraints, including the need to take actions that have broad public support. Progressive organizations are sometimes too ready to demonize public representatives for failing to act as progressive champions, without acknowledging that public sentiment limits their power. Instead, through partnership with these would-be champions, we can understand the obstacles they face and work together to dismantle them. We can take responsibility for helping people in positions of power navigate the politics of governance. By shaping the public conversation and building public support, organizers can make it possible for progressive elected officials to take bold stances. This is an interesting twist on the distinction between inside and outside strategies. Shaping public will is an outside strategy, but one that is designed in collaboration with progressive decision-makers – to support rather than bully them.



4. A LONG-TERM PLAN. Progressive governance requires that we think beyond individual campaigns to build strategic governing capacity on the ground. This demands a long-term agenda, a flexible alignment with other power organizations to support each other, and a strategic plan that sketches a long-term arc for building power. We should think about how local campaigns can build toward statewide campaigns, or how a fight we lose one year can set us up for a fight we win the next. Along the way, we need to move people from outside to inside – positioning grassroots leaders to take on the roles of elected officials, appointees, advisors, and public sector staff.





CO-GOVERNANCE IN INDIANAPOLIS

Faith in Indiana's work in Indianapolis is a shining example of co-governance in action and what it can achieve. Alongside our outsider tools of mobilization, we have increasingly developed and deployed an additional set of insider capacities to turn our people-power into meaningful change, in the context of partnerships with decision-makers, administrators, and public sector staff. These new tools include:

- Proposing innovative strategies for change
- Hosting webinars and information sessions to educate decision-makers about policy options
- Providing “shovel-ready” policy proposals
- Connecting lawmakers to national policy experts
- Connecting public officials to peers in other jurisdictions
- Building support for change across the branches of government
- Networking supportive public officials together
- Providing written resources for decision-makers, including talking points, information sheets, speeches, and op-eds
- Providing communications content for public officials to distribute and share
- Publicizing and celebrating actions taken by decision-makers
- Helping to draft job descriptions for new government posts
- Participating in job searches to identify candidates for government staff positions
- Coaching, training, and mentoring agency staff on policy implementation
- Providing continuity through changes in elected and appointed leadership and staffing
- Placing grassroots leaders in boards and commissions.

As we've expanded collaboration with public sector actors and built relationships of trust and mutual accountability with local governments, we've been able to win some extraordinary policy and system reforms. In the following pages, we describe two notable examples. But first, the context.





CRIME AND PUNISHMENT IN INDIANAPOLIS

Indianapolis is one of the most violent cities in the country, a fact that casts a long shadow over the city's Black community. Black neighborhoods suffer particularly high rates of crime. Our city has the ugly distinction of having the country's second highest homicide rate for African-Americans.

The city's response to crime and violence exacerbates the racial disparities that divide Indianapolis. Black residents of Indianapolis are subject to racial profiling and police brutality. Incarceration removes many young men of color from their communities, with devastating emotional and economic consequences. Marion County ranks number eight among metro regions for the proportion of residents incarcerated, and people of color are far more likely to end up behind bars. Black people in Indiana are imprisoned at a rate more than four times that of white people. Shockingly, almost 40% of Indiana's black men are behind bars. Imprisonment magnifies the poverty and discrimination facing communities of color: disadvantaged groups become further disadvantaged, robbed of social capital, and embedded at the bottom of the nation's social and economic hierarchy.

INTRODUCING FAITH IN INDIANA

Faith in Indiana is well placed to make change in Indianapolis. We are a multiracial, multi-faith network formed to revitalize democracy in Indiana and make change possible. To create a vehicle for grassroots communities to advance racial and economic justice. To make our democracy more fair, representative, and inclusive. And to develop the leadership of those who have been excluded from civil society, primarily Black people, people of color, low-income people, returning citizens, immigrants, religious minorities, women, and LGBTQ people.

In the decade since Faith in Indiana's founding, we've grown from a single city and a handful of congregations to 125 organizational members and 26,424 individual supporters. The six counties where we've built our constituency represent 40% of the state's electorate and the state's largest communities of color. As a result of this deep organizing, Faith in Indiana boasts a growing list of policy victories, including stopping ICE detentions in two counties, winning \$115 million in federal funds for violence reduction work in Indianapolis, and (with partners) ending the state's Medicaid work requirement.





REINVENTING PUBLIC SAFETY

Since our founding, Faith in Indiana has advocated an alternate community-based response to crime and violence. We support a public health approach that focuses on prevention and treatment, relying on police as the tool of last resort for ensuring public safety and wellbeing. Whenever possible, emergencies involving addiction, domestic violence, mental health, and homelessness should be handled without the use of force, and the same is certainly true of traffic control and many business violations. A robust crisis response system should divert people suffering from mental illness and drug use into treatment and care so they don't end behind bars. We imagine a city in which social workers, health professionals, and other experts handle the intractable problems of homelessness, poverty, mental illness, and drug use, leaving our armed law enforcement officers free to focus on the issues that require their specialized skills.

We've been carrying out this work for a decade in Indianapolis, where we have developed an unusually collaborative partnership with Mayor Joe Hogsett and transformed the city's approach to public safety. Faith in Indiana organizer Rev. Juard Barnes, who had first-hand experience with the justice system, built a mass movement of returning citizens in Indianapolis (mostly men of color, like himself). They generated enough public pressure to shut down a misguided \$1.75 billion plan for a bigger jail.

Then, as a new mayor took office, [our justice reform agenda](#) quickly emerged as his top priority. Thanks to the work of our grassroots leadership, Indianapolis became a model for decarceration, adopting a series of reforms to divert people from jail to treatment, address the root causes of crime, and build community resilience. Shortly before the pandemic hit, we learned that incarceration in Marion County had fallen 30% over three years as a result of these changes and the rate of violent crime had fallen (slightly!) for the first time in seven years. Since the coronavirus outbreak, thanks to Faith in Indiana's sustained advocacy, the jail population fell to 50% below its previous peak. Here's how we're shifting the city's approach to crime and violence.

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CASE STUDY 1: GUN VIOLENCE REDUCTION

In a city where gun violence, incarceration, poverty, and racism are deeply entangled, Faith in Indiana has been building support for Gun Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS), a research-backed strategy that identifies the small number of individuals most likely to be perpetrators of gun homicides, surrounds them with social support, and offers them an honorable exit from street crime. GVRS has been successful in a number of cities around the country, which have seen gun violence fall by 50% or more.

BUILDING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Starting in 2015, Faith in Indiana waged a campaign to build community will for a different approach to crime. The Black community knew that “lock ‘em up and throw away the key” wasn’t working: violence was growing steadily, year after year, while more and more young men languished behind bars and police power grew. But we didn’t know what else could be done. As early as 2012, the organization had brought hundreds of people of faith together for large public prayer vigils to call for an end to the violence. ¹⁵ We realized that the solution had to come from us. Organizers met with pastors and grassroots residents of Indianapolis to explore strategies available for responding to urban violence. Pastor Michael McBride, an Oakland pastor who ran Faith in Action’s national Live Free campaign (a peacemaking movement led by people of faith), visited the city three times to share his experiences in public forums and small-group conversations. Faith in Indiana’s leaders began to converge around GVRS as an approach to crime that built community capital and strengthened resilience, rather than tearing families apart and turning underserved neighborhoods into battle zones. The organization hosted several all-day workshops in local churches, where people of faith could learn more about the strategy and develop tools for advocating it in Indianapolis. In October 2015, at a massive forum at New Direction Church, with hundreds of people in attendance, grassroots leaders and senior staff of the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence shared how their work with GVRS led to a 30% reduction in homicides in 18 months.



CREATING A VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP TEAM



Faith in Indiana built a core team of grassroots leaders to drive the work. Organizers held 15 to 20 outreach conversations a week to build, inspire, train, and mobilize grassroots community leaders. While the majority of leaders came from the Black community, Rev. Barnes built a diverse constituency calling for action on crime, all directly impacted by violence, policing, or incarceration. “We went after people,” said Barnes. “Poor people, broke people, 35-year-old single white mothers with the same issues...” In 2015, for example, Faith in Indiana held an action with 450 Spanish-speaking immigrants calling for action on community violence. Outsiders might have assumed the top concern of the Latinx community was immigration policy, but the Latinx people we engaged wanted to talk about violence in their

neighborhood. A team of 20 to 25 people began meeting monthly (and still does) to set goals, develop strategy, determine tactics and activities, and carry out the work. The work on GVRS is “20% staff, 80% leaders,” said Rosie Bryant, who took over as Faith in Indiana’s Indianapolis organizer after Barnes left. The volunteer leaders “are meeting with the mayor and his staff. They are hosting meetings, putting them together, developing agendas. We own the meetings. Our leaders and clergy have relationships” with city councilors, the mayor, and their staff.

Faith in Indiana’s grassroots leaders are deeply committed to the mission and the vision, so it is they – not staff – who drive the program. It is they – not staff – who have relationships with the mayor, city councilors, the sheriff’s office, and city and county staff. During the last seven years, these community advocates have grown in their leadership. One of the early leaders now sits on the school board. Another works on gun violence for another Indiana city.





EDUCATING DECISION-MAKERS

As community leaders came to cohere around GVRS as a strategy, they turned their focus outward, to educating decision-makers. They held a series of meetings with experts and public officials (these are the meetings organizers call “research actions”), conversations designed to build relationships with people in power, educate them about GVRS, identify areas of convergence, advocate our approach, identify opportunities to make change, and create relationships of accountability.

The mayor’s office was intrigued by GVRS, but not convinced. Faith in Indiana organized a trip to Oakland and then to Los Angeles for the mayor’s staff and some of our community leaders, where they could see first-hand what GVRS looked like and how it worked. Participants attended meetings with peers and workshops with experts.

Even as Faith in Indiana built a strategic partnership with the mayor to embrace GVRS, we also worked with the city council and the police to build a team of stakeholders who felt invested in the program. “We made sure the mayor didn’t own it. We made sure the police didn’t own it,” Rev. Barnes explained.

INDIANAPOLIS LAUNCHES GVRS

In 2018, after years of public pressure and private meetings, Indianapolis launched a GVRS pilot. “We brought so much power to the table that the mayor’s office had to listen to us,” reported Barnes. This was a major victory, but as we were to learn, it was the beginning, not the end, of our work. The new GVRS director – officially known as the Community Violence Reduction Team director – launched a flurry of programs like giving grants to community organizations, running gun buy-backs, and creating safe summertime activities for youth. She employed seven staff as peacemakers or resource coordinators. But this wasn’t GVRS, and it didn’t make a dent in the city’s crime rate. Compared to many smaller cities, the financial investment in Indianapolis’ violence reduction program was minimal. Indianapolis was spending less than a million dollars a year on violence reduction. Oakland, California, by contrast, with a population half the size of Indianapolis’, was spending \$10 million annually on similar programs. It was clear the city needed to sharpen and scale up its program.

“The biggest challenge,” says Rosie Bryant, “is implementation of the strategy. You win big policy things and then people go away, but the fight is not over.” The fight was definitely not over.





IMPLEMENTATION: BRINGING IN THE EXPERTS

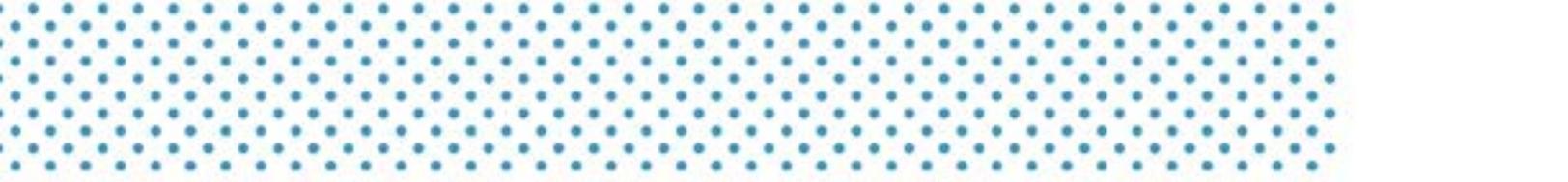
So in October 2019, Faith in Indiana held a public action with more than 300 people in attendance, at which leaders called on the mayor to hire a national expert to guide the program and follow best-practice recommendations. The mayor agreed to contract with one of the nation's premier GVRs experts, David Muhammad, and his [National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform](#) (NICJR). We kept up public pressure as the mayor met with Muhammad, signed a contract, and found the funding to pay the NICJR.

Our next challenge was to make sure Muhammad met with the right people. Faith in Indiana leaders and Muhammad held two briefings with public officials and three trainings for staff outreach workers. As part of his research, he met with city officials and more than 90 Indianapolis organizations between November 2019 and March 2020. His [assessment of Indianapolis' work on gun violence](#), released in May 2020, identified major flaws in the city's GVRs program and made eight recommendations:

1. Conduct a gun violence assessment.
2. Hire a full-time gun violence reduction strategy manager.
3. Conduct weekly reviews of all shootings in the city to identify possibilities of retaliation and take action.
4. Hold coordination meetings to align stakeholders.
5. Revamp call-ins and custom notifications.
6. Hire dedicated life coaches and outreach workers to reach the highest-risk individuals.
7. Improve IMPD's focused enforcement on violence.
8. Increase and improve IMPD's data collection and coordination.

Faith in Indiana went to work getting them enacted.





IMPLEMENTATION: BUILDING SUPPORT TO GET IT RIGHT

Our organizers and grassroots leaders began to spend hours each week coaching city staff and elected leaders about how to do their jobs – from navigating federal rules for ARPA spending, to hiring practices, to navigating the politics of their own agency. Staff changed at the mayor’s office, so we had to rebuild our relationships and educate a new group of staff. In the words of Rosie Bryant, “we mentored city staff members who were new to their jobs and turned them into people who know how to get things done.” We checked in with Muhammad every six weeks to find out how the process was going from his perspective and identify places where we needed to apply pressure.

Faith in Indiana took advantage of national events to power our work. The murder of George Floyd and the uprising that followed took place shortly after Muhammad released his report. Faith in Indiana’s negotiations with the mayor (detailed in the second case study) leveraged the power of public protest to win swift agreement.

With a solid partnership in place among community leaders, city officials, and a national expert, things began to change. Indianapolis finally got serious about GVRs. In 2021, the city took the following steps:

Launched a comprehensive gun violence assessment.

Hired a full-time gun violence reduction strategy manager. Faith in Indiana’s grassroots leaders were involved in writing the job description, identifying candidates for the position, and reviewing applications.

Employed seven more dedicated service providers – the violence interrupters who will be in charge of reaching out to people identified as possible victims or agents of gun violence.

Used IMPD data to begin the process of identifying the handful of people actually engaged in shooting.

Contracted with David Mohammad and the National Institute of Criminal Justice Reform to support the program for the next three years.



SECURING FEDERAL FUNDS

An exciting opportunity arose when Congress passed the American Rescue Plan. Faith in Indiana held a press conference at the capitol and then a series of meetings with the mayor's staff to advocate ways to spend the \$419 million that was headed to Indianapolis. Given our ongoing relationship, this process was smooth and rapid. In the end, Indianapolis dedicated \$151 million to anti-violence work that closely tracked Faith in Indiana's agenda. The new funds hired more peacemakers for the program (bringing the total to 50), improved the city's new Crisis Assessment and Intervention Center (built in response to earlier advocacy from Faith in Indiana), and expanded mental health services.

Over the course of seven years, our work on GVRS created opportunities for Faith in Indiana to work closely with the city of Indianapolis. We brought the mayor and city council shovel-ready policy ideas, guided them to consultants who could help execute the program, built support among decision-makers for the required investments, and remained actively involved in every step of implementation. Our work has transformed the city's approach to crime.





CASE STUDY 2: POLICE OVERSIGHT

The Indianapolis police department has a long and ugly history of racial profiling and a notorious lack of accountability. In 2017, Indianapolis police killed an unarmed black motorist, Aaron Bailey, after a traffic stop. In May of 2020, officers shot and killed two young black men, 21-year-old Dreasjon Reed and 19-year-old McHale Rose, in two separate incidents. After each of these deaths, community members filled the streets and called for police reform, and Faith in Indiana led advocacy to demand change, but it wasn't until the national uprising over the murder of George Floyd that there was sufficient momentum to turn suggestions into law.

RESPONDING TO POLICE MURDERS

When police killed Aaron Bailey at a traffic stop in Indianapolis in 2017, Faith in Indiana's top leaders and organizers were in California, attending a week of intensive organizer training alongside organizers from across the country and Rev. Michael McBride, national leader of Faith in Action's Live Free campaign. They followed the one-sided media coverage that came out, which discussed Bailey's criminal record and portrayed him as a potential threat to officers. (Early coverage referred to Bailey as a "suspect.") And as a group, they decided to intervene to challenge the public narrative.

Within six hours of the story breaking, Faith in Indiana held a press conference and used social media to tell a different story about the event – a murder of an unarmed man by two men in uniform. Aaron Bailey was someone's father and someone's child. His death was a tragedy. "We gave the community permission to be mad," said Shoshanna Spector, executive director of Faith in Indiana. Other organizations like the NAACP rapidly joined in. Within 24 hours, the public conversation had shifted: Faith in Indiana moved the media to cover it as an incident of police violence, not the predictable death of a shady criminal.

Faith in Indiana's press conference issued public demands. Press charges. Prosecute the police officers to the full extent of the law. Appoint an independent prosecutor to oversee the matter. The city complied with all these demands – rapidly – in an effort to forestall a greater upwelling of public anger. (In the end, the officers were fired but not charged with a crime. They left the force but kept their pensions.) Community leaders also demanded structural changes: they called for bias training, a new use of force policy, and a citizen oversight board to exert democratic authority over the Indianapolis police. Those demands languished.





SHARPENING OUR POLICY DEMANDS

Faith in Indiana had another opportunity to develop our response to police violence, when officers in South Bend shot Eric Logan in 2019. Mayor Pete Buttigieg was running for the Democratic presidential nomination, so the incident quickly became a national story. Faith in Indiana held a 500-person action to push the mayor to take action. Once again we made demands designed not just to punish but also to curb police brutality, including a strict use of force policy with violence as the last resort and a progressive discipline matrix so that bad apples on the force could be identified early and educated or removed. In the glare of the national media spotlight, Mayor Pete moved quickly to pass reforms. Our grassroots leaders and organizing staff worked in partnership with the city to craft the new use of force policy. As we advocated for changes to prevent future police killings, our leadership built their issue and policy expertise.

MANAGING AN ERUPTION

In May 2020, police officers killed two young Black men in Indianapolis, Dreasjon Reed and McHale Rose, in separate incidents. Faith in Indiana brought together our Black clergy, who sprang into action. Protesters were already taking to the streets, and our clergy leaders accompanied them, both to lend their moral authority to the popular anger and to keep the peace. Clergy organized a public response on Zoom and planned a larger public action to put pressure on the mayor. But before the action could take place, George Floyd was shot in Minneapolis, and Indianapolis blew up.

Because this was early in the COVID-19 pandemic, most of our responses to the Reed and Rose shootings had been virtual. But we knew the pandemic would not constrain the street protests after Floyd's murder. The weekend would be dominated by rage and grief, and the best thing we could do was try to channel some of that energy to make meaningful change. Organizer Rosie Bryant met with church leaders and planned a faith [processional for Sunday afternoon](#). Thirty of the most prominent Black clergy led the march, which we publicized entirely through churches. Typically, to bring hundreds of people to a public event, organizers and leaders must implement an elaborate and time-consuming turnout plan, mobilize a network of people to issue invitations, track potential participants, and remind those who have committed to attend. In this case, we did no turnout. 1,500 people joined the march. The newspaper reported that "Friday and Saturday belonged to protesters and police, [but] Sunday morning and afternoon belonged to faith."





The Faith Processional for Racial Justice was a powerful event. “We created a container for the faith community, so that people who wouldn’t come out in the evening could express themselves,” said Spector. 1,500 people marched peacefully to the steps of the state capitol, where speakers called on the mayor to take action. The organization created a list of demands for the mayor, including a strong use of force policy, progressive discipline, police training in de-escalation and procedural justice, and the implementation of NICJR’s GVRS recommendations, which had been released weeks earlier. More than 1,100 people emailed the mayor urging him to meet with us and deliver on our demands.

PRESSURE ON THE MAYOR

The following day, with a curfew in place, the city on lockdown, and tear gas wafting through the streets of Indianapolis, the mayor’s chief of staff met with our clergy leaders. The mayor himself refused to meet. On Tuesday, our leaders told the mayor we would hold a press conference on Friday to go public with our demands. While still refusing to meet, Mayor Hogsett asked his staff to work with us during those two days so he could make firm commitments. He then held a press conference before ours, named Faith in Indiana as a partner, and committed in front of the media to meet our demands. In his public response, he gave Faith in Indiana a [rare kind of acknowledgment](#):

“I have met with Faith in Indiana for many years, and they have been invaluable partners in pushing our administration to make meaningful change for the betterment of police-community relationships and in furtherance of peace on our streets. That is why I am thankful that their recent engagement has led to our commitment that in the budget I intend to submit this August, our office will propose additional funding for the expansion of our Group Violence Intervention strategy. This funding will bring additional staff and resources to bear in an effort to interrupt the cycle of hopelessness and violence that has gripped far too many of our young people.” - Mayor Joe Hogsett, Indianapolis





THE USE OF FORCE POLICY

In responding to public pressure, the mayor wanted to take action quickly. So Faith in Action senior staff and David Muhammad collaborated to write a use of force policy based on best practice from around the country. The policy previously enacted in Camden NJ was our starting point. We shared the draft with our leaders, sought feedback, and identified our top priorities, which included de-escalation. We provided the draft to the mayor's office, and then spent the weekend in negotiation with the mayor, the police chief, and the legal team over details. Then we went back to our leadership to win their approval. In July, after several rounds of revisions and negotiations, the police adopted the [new use of force policy](#), which called for de-escalation in moments of crisis.

AN OBSTACLE EMERGES

As we developed the use of force policy, we learned that any change in police procedure needed to be approved by the General Orders Board, a panel that set policy for Indianapolis law enforcement. The General Orders Board (or GO Board) had three members, all appointed by the police.

The need to win their approval forced us to give up some of our priorities as we revised the use of force.

The power of the GO Board unveiled something the city's Black community had long understood. Police in Indianapolis were a law unto themselves, with no civilian oversight. Under Jim Crow-era policies, law enforcement in Indianapolis was excluded from the government guidance required of other municipal agencies. In the words of Bishop Clive Posely, one of Faith in Indiana's clergy leaders, policy-making at the Indianapolis Police Department had been "conducted by three of the police brass, in secret, for over a hundred years. These procedures gave officers the cloak, opportunity, and instruction to conduct business that was deadly for Black people."





REVISING THE GO BOARD

The mayor's staff encouraged us to take on the Board's power and alerted us to an upcoming deadline: the Board's public mandate was coming up for renewal. So Faith in Indiana went to the president of the city council to discuss what would be required to revise the Board's structure; we learned that a city ordinance – passed by the council, signed by the mayor – was sufficient to change the law. Two city councilors seized the opportunity and proposed adding civilians to the powerful Board. Faith in Indiana set about to win approval.

Faith in Indiana's leaders pursued a two-pronged strategy. As insiders, we held dozens of meetings with officials and won the support of the mayor and many of the city councilors. As Black Lives Matter protests continued to roil the nation, we urged the mayor and city council to send a clear message to people of color in Indianapolis that their voices were as important as those of the police. The mayor publicly stated his support for the idea. As outsiders, we also turned up the heat, generating more than 5,000 emails from constituents to city councilors and urging them to add a layer of democratic accountability to law enforcement.

PUTTING THE “PUBLIC” BACK INTO PUBLIC SAFETY

Finally, change came to the Indianapolis Police Force. On October 12, 2020, the city council voted 19 to 6 to expand civilian authority to the city's law enforcement. The new law added four community members to the General Orders Board, making it a seven-member panel, which oversees all policy decisions of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department. Community members now held a majority position.

With this decision, Indianapolis became the city with the nation's strongest civilian oversight over law enforcement.

City Council member Keith Potts, one of the sponsors of the proposal, underlined its importance. “Our goal from the beginning has been to prioritize the ‘public’ in ‘public safety’ ... Months of dialogue with Faith in Indiana and others in the community have resulted in a new ordinance that will create safer conditions for officers and the public.”





NEW BOARD MEMBERS TAKE THEIR SEATS

According to the new regulations, the mayor appointed two members and the city council appointed two members to the new GO Board. The vetting and confirmation process was extensive. Bishop Posely, appointed to the board by Mayor Hogsett, was grilled by city councilors over social media posts he had made about police reform. It was, he reflected later, “backlash at the idea of a Black man being in such a powerful position.” He was elected by a vote of 13 to 4, while the three other community members (all women of color) were elected unanimously. When the board was seated, board members elected him chair. The police members of the Board are all white men, so the division between police and community is drawn along stark racial lines.

POLICY REFORMS BY THE GO BOARD

Beginning January 2021, the new Board members underwent several months of training before their policy-making work began, including reading and absorbing a thousand-page book of police policies and learning procedures for reconciling proposals with state and federal guidelines. Since then, the Board has initiated (and in some cases completed) several changes to police policy, including revising the foot pursuit rules to reduce the risk of violence, making changes to respond appropriately to hearing-impaired people, and reforming transportation policy. In the coming year, the Board’s community members are looking for opportunities to improve police handling of people suffering from mental illness, trauma, and substance use.

The community members of the GO Board rely on Faith in Indiana to suggest policy reforms that have community support. They work closely with the NICJR to learn about potential reforms and draft them so they are enforceable.



THE LIMITS TO POWER

Community members on the GO Board feel that they are structurally in opposition to the police. “The police on the board don’t want me there,” reported Bishop Posely, who finds it a challenging thing to be the only Black man on the board. The police chief has never attended a meeting since the board was expanded. Although decisions have mostly been unanimous since the community members joined, the seven-zero votes can be misleading. In some cases the reformers are limited by federal guidelines; attorneys block their ambitions. In other cases, the reformers have the votes and the police know it. But no proposals come to a vote before weeks or sometimes months of negotiations.

Most significantly, however, are new structural limits to the GO Board’s power. During the interregnum between the city council vote to expand the Board in October and the installation of the new members in January, the three-member GO Board stripped itself of authority to make disciplinary decisions or oversee officers’ disciplinary files. For people like Bishop Posely, who took the position on the Board because he hoped to be able to remove rogue officers or set up disciplinary procedures that could weed out renegades, this is deeply frustrating, if not particularly surprising. “They lost the fight over the Board, so they took the teeth out of it.”





LESSONS LEARNED

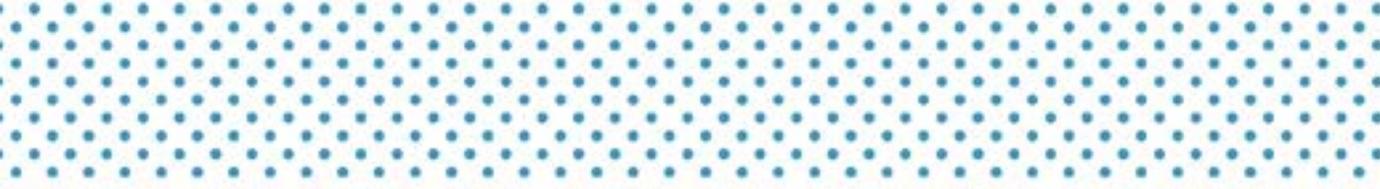
We've all heard the quote from Frederick Douglass: "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, and it never will." Faith in Action's experience with co-governance underlines this insight and extends it: power is in operation in every aspect of governance, including implementation and enforcement of policies, so those demands never cease. As the implementation of GVRs and the expansion of the GO Board reveal, competition and power politics don't end when laws pass; they merely shift to different arenas.

**"POWER CONCEDES
NOTHING WITHOUT
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-FREDERICK DOUGLASS

The experience of Faith in Indiana is a lesson in the long game. Central to co-governance, as we understand it, is lining up small reforms as part of a strategic, long-term agenda for change. We aim to build permanent infrastructure that will support progressive lawmakers and win transformative changes. To win these structural changes, an implementation campaign must be part of a larger architecture – a long-term strategy to shift governing power. Our experience tells a story about what is possible and how hard and long we need to keep fighting for change.

It's also a story about the effectiveness of organizing as a craft. How did Faith in Indiana create the will to win the changes we accomplished in Indianapolis? Rev. Barnes and Rosie Bryant and their grassroots leaders followed the classic game plan of community organizing: educate the community, host public forums, organize demonstrations, and hold research visits with elected officials. But while some groups that call themselves organizers "say they do it, they don't actually do it," in the words of Rev. Barnes. "They don't invest in the process. They don't invest in the one-on-one conversations to create a core group of leaders in churches. Without that work, change won't happen." With this deep leadership building as a foundation, Faith in Indiana was able to take advantage of the Black Lives Protests in the summer of 2020. Again, Rev. Barnes provides the background: "We would ask pastors who the community leaders are, but the pastors won't get it right. So then we would find the right people and do house meetings and build a discipline around twenty leaders. When something happens, we could call all those leaders and ask them what are they thinking? We could gather them, have them talk to their people, and galvanize the city."



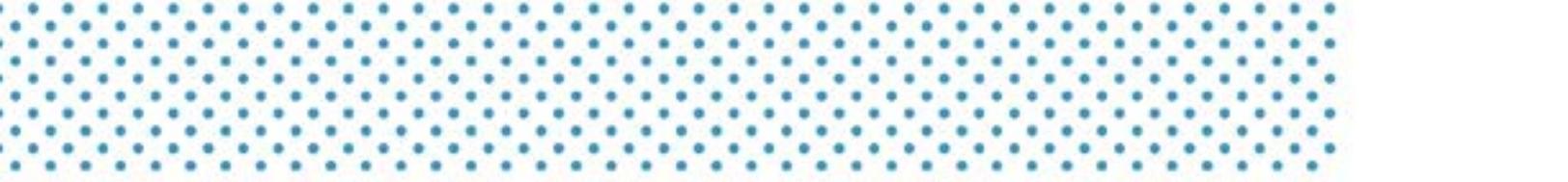
LESSONS LEARNED (CONTINUED)

The craft of organizing and the development of grassroots leadership are long, slow processes. But when they are in place, community leaders can turn crises to their own advantage – using the death of George Floyd to win reforms that had been gathering dust, using the pandemic to reduce incarceration rates, and using ARPA funds to support innovative gun violence reduction programs. A well organized leadership can turn on a dime when new opportunities present themselves.

TODAY'S OPPORTUNITY

The billions of dollars that have come to states and cities thanks to the American Rescue Plan and the billions more that will be delivered after completion of the Biden administration's Infrastructure Plan and (some form of) Build Back Better represent historic opportunities to win investments in disadvantaged communities and build infrastructure for long-term change. We haven't seen such a large influx of federal money into local communities since the New Deal. With the right resources, progressive organizations can make use of this moment to leverage structural changes and win tangible improvements for those who are hurting the most. But implementation will be a huge part of the battle. We will need insider savvy to understand the opportunities that lie before us, and we'll need to direct our strength not just to winning commitments from elected officials but also to turning those commitments into programs and investments that make a meaningful difference. To do that, we need to understand how city and state budgets work, how agencies implement policy changes, what steps can lay the foundations for future reforms, and what scaffolding is needed to implement reforms effectively. We need to identify the obstacles standing in our way and pursue strategies for removing those obstacles. We need to get smarter and better at co-governance.





SUGGESTIONS FOR FUNDERS

Visionary funders with a long-term perspective have begun to support progressive governance work. We offer these suggestions humbly, from the perspective of one state, in the spirit of partnership. We are hopeful that philanthropy will support progressive co-governance strategies by considering the following guidelines:

**FUND LONG-TERM
STATE POWER
PLANS.**

**INVEST IN HUMAN
TALENT.**

**DISTINGUISH
ORGANIZING FROM
MOBILIZATION.**

**FUND ORGANIZING,
POLICY, AND
IMPLEMENTATION
TOGETHER.**

FUND IN STATES

- 1. FUND LONG-TERM STATE POWER PLANS.** Indiana has built the coalition architecture that will develop governing capacity at the local, county, and state level. We have a power plan that includes multiple elements of the governing ecosystem: electoral, legislative, corporate, people, policy, administrative, etc. We appreciate funder support for the work of base-building organizations to construct this larger institutional structure for power.
- 2. INVEST IN HUMAN TALENT.** Training organizers and building skilled grassroots leaders take years. This can't happen rapidly: it takes five years to become a seasoned community organizer, and there are no graduate programs that teach this skill. The number of people in the country who know how to use grassroots campaigns to cultivate human agency and build governing power is actually quite small: we should invest in them and create more opportunities for others to develop these capacities. Focusing on short-term victories can derail these efforts for fledgling organizations by pushing the wrong metrics of success.
- 3. DISTINGUISH ORGANIZING FROM MOBILIZATION.** It seems like today, every progressive organization claims that it is engaged in organizing. But true organizing – in the sense of developing grassroots leadership and inviting regular people to claim their public agency – is relatively rare. Many of the groups who





claim to be organizers primarily *mobilize* grassroots participants through public events, phone banks, and online campaigns. They sometimes adopt some of the tactics of organizers (like one-on-ones) but lack the single-minded focus on cultivating the power and agency of grassroots individuals. While true leaders operate like volunteer organizers – planning strategy, shaping organization values and vision, responding to current events, designing and implementing activities, and bringing their own followers to events – organizations that just mobilize their supporters rely on paid staff to do every piece of the work. They miss the transformational element of organizing. There is nothing wrong with mobilization, which is a vital tactic for progressive advocacy, but we hope funders are able to distinguish it from true leadership development.

4. **FUND ORGANIZING, POLICY, AND IMPLEMENTATION TOGETHER.**

Policy institutes are most valuable for fueling change when they work hand in hand with organizers who are embedded in the local context. Faith in Indiana’s collaboration with NICJR exemplifies this sort of fruitful alliance. We would encourage funders to fund partnerships between experts and practitioners. Implementation should also be an integral part of advocacy campaigns: we know policy victories are sexy and implementation is dry, but in order to have the kind of impact we are capable of, progressive organizations need more capacity for implementation and enforcement.

5. **FUND IN STATES.** Some funders prefer to fund national groups instead of state-based organizations, allowing national intermediaries to dole out small amounts to local affiliates. We think this is a perilous preference. Deep investment by the GOP in state power starting in 2010 has allowed the right wing to seize control of a majority of state legislatures, exacerbating the anti-majoritarian effects of the Senate and electoral college. The only way to reverse this trend is with direct, deep, long-term investment in red and purple states.





CONCLUSION

Faith in Indiana's work in Indianapolis has sparked a transformation in the city. Instead of a new county jail, we now have a crisis center that meets the needs of people suffering from substance use or mental illness. Incarceration is down 50%. Community members have a voice in how law enforcement operates. New policies are beginning to weed out bad cops. And after the first few months of full implementation of GVRS, we're hearing that gun violence is down 25% compared to a year earlier. These are the benefits delivered by a focus on governing power paired with deep community organizing.

Building on this foundation, Faith in Indiana is pursuing a path to statewide multi-racial governing power. We're now organizing in six counties around the state. In order to create the conditions for progressive governance, we've built a set of new statewide vehicles: a donor table (Indiana Democracy Collaborative), a political coalition ([Indiana Votes](#)), a progressive advocacy coalition ([Indiana Voices](#)), a cohort of progressive elected officials, and most recently a candidate training pipeline that has already launched [200 Black and brown leaders into campaigns for public office](#). These efforts will help Faith in Indiana accomplish on a state level what we have achieved at the municipal and county level.

At the national level, progressives can't win (let alone govern) without figuring out how to build power in states like Indiana. Our co-governance in Indianapolis offers a framework for organizers and progressive advocates to compete for governing power in contested political terrain. The key ingredients of people, politics, and policy can't be achieved once and then hoarded like a precious resource: they need to be maintained through constant engagement and ongoing organizing. Fortunately, this is a project we know how to accomplish. We've gotten this far with a modest budget and a shoestring staff. With appropriate resources, we have the savvy and experience to turn one of the nation's most politically reactionary states into a place where every family can thrive (and send members to Congress and the Senate with a mandate to do the same). All we're lacking are the resources to realize our vision.





FAITH IN INDIANA

Lead Author Judith Barish

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FORD FOUNDATION