Part I. Introduction

Emily Sánchez: From the Newark Public Library, this is *Demanding Justice in New Jersey*.

[Introduction music - “Got To Have Freedom” by the Spirit of Life Ensemble]

This podcast is about local histories of community organizing in the state. I'm your host, Emily Sánchez.

We’re back with another episode about rebellions in Jersey City, and this time around, we’ll pick up where we left off last episode.

We’ll specifically examine how policies looked like on the ground post the summer of 1964 and how local community organizers in Jersey City challenged these policies and ongoing police brutality through the rebellions of 1970.

[Transition music - “Relaxed Vlog” by Danielyan-Composer]

To give you all a sense of what’s coming next: in the first part of this show, we’ll explore how federal officials reacted to the rebellions through policy decisions. As I share with you the different policies, try to keep track of them using the accompanying worksheet and keep in mind the following questions: 1) Are there any patterns present across the policies mentioned in terms of the logic used to justify them? 2) Are there any patterns with regard to their implementation on the ground? And lastly, to what extent do these policies relate to the grievances of rebellion participants?

The last section will turn it over to you so you can analyze Jersey City’s 1970 rebellions and draw your own conclusions about the policies. We’ll hear about the experiences of people who were in Jersey City during these policy changes and either themselves or had friends actively protest police brutality in 1970. While listening to their experiences and learning about the 1970 rebellions, some central questions to keep in mind are: What do the rebellions of 1970 tell us about how effective federal policies were at addressing the problems of police brutality and poverty? How did Jersey City residents take a stand against ongoing police violence? And last but certainly not least, what does this history teach us about what kind of change we can advocate for today?

With that, let’s get started with the show!

[Transition music - “Jazzy Abstract Beat” by Coma-Media]

Part II. Federal Policies Post-1964

One of the first reactions to the rebellions was the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act in August 1964.[1] Building upon the anti-poverty and anti-delinquency programs of the Kennedy administration, the Economic Opportunity Act funded many anti-poverty programs that targeted the individual behaviors of poor youth in low-income urban areas, many of whom were youth of color, rather than addressing the structural inequalities at the root of poverty.[2] In the specific case of Jersey City, funds from the act were used to create the Community and Neighborhood Development Office (or CAN DO for short). CAN DO mainly focused on job training, recreational activities, and educational opportunities, including tutoring for the youth.[3] Carlos Vazquez, a long-time Jersey City resident, remembers these local government-funded organizations from the 1960s:

Carlos Vazquez: The majority of the organizations, PACO, there was a couple of things, I forget what they're called exactly, but they were organizations set up by the government and by the powers that be to help us get the help that we needed so that we wouldn't have the problems that we had. But that doesn't make any sense. It doesn't make any sense. All they did was put all, to me, it was just a matter of monitoring. And now that they got your name and your address and then all of that stuff, then they can get more information on you. [...] I remember the neighborhood youth organizations, neighborhood this neighborhood that, and they all came from entities like the welfare, things like that. And they said counselors into the street to counsel us and to help us, which was all bogus, <laugh>, bogus, and full of nonsense. All they do, take you on bus trips. They'd take you to the beach, then you get to the park, things like that. They thought they'd have a street, the street party, things like that. And those things were all funded by the same people. And then around us the whole time with the police, those people like the sheriffs. So to me, it's like we're having a street scene, but you know, can't really. Nowadays they have the Puerto Rican Day Parade down on the street. Everybody parties has a great, at that time, you have to be careful what you do because everything can be misconstrued as something. And the cop would come over and start questioning you. And the next thing, something would happen. So there was a lot of bogus, bogus organizations. A lot of them were government funded and government organized in order to get whatever they could out of us."[4]

Emily: Knowing that residents had rebelled due to police violence, unemployment, underfunded schools, substandard housing, and after hearing from Carlos, do you think programs like CAN

[1] Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2005), 554.
[2] To learn more about the sociological theory that informed this emphasis on individual behavior see Elizabeth Hinton, *From The War On Poverty To The War On Crime : The Making of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 20.
[3] "Approved by US: CAN DO to get $335,920 for Jobs Corps - Whelan," *Jersey Journal,* July 17, 1965.
[4] Carlos Vazquez, interview by Emily Sánchez, March 2023 (Newark, NJ: New Jersey Hispanic Research Information Center (NJ HRIC), Podcast Interviews).

DO coincided with the demands of residents? What fundamental changes do you think might have been needed instead to address poverty and the demands of rebellion participants on a more structural and radical level? And by radical, I mean getting at the root of the issues.

[Transition music - "Chill Abstract" by Coma-Media]

While residents saw programs that aimed to address individual behavior, not structural inequalities, they also heard local and national officials undermine their acts of resistance. Media outlets and elected government officials, including President Lyndon B. Johnson, described the rebellions as outbreaks of senseless violence. He specifically framed the rebellions as acts of "criminality" tied to the behavior of individuals living in low-income urban areas.[5] As discussed in our last episode, this type of logic informed future policy.

In March 1965 — about seven months after the rebellions in Jersey City and Harlem — Johnson officially declared a War on Crime and introduced the Law Enforcement Assistance Act to Congress in an effort to preserve "law and order."[6] This act was the first of **3 major pieces** of legislation passed under the Johnson administration that poured funding into police departments, especially within poor, working-class communities of color.[7] **The Law Enforcement Assistance Act** codified into law in September 1965, created the Office of Law Enforcement Assistance, or OLEA for short. The OLEA grew the weaponry of individual police departments all over the country, especially in low-income urban areas. This office specifically distributed funds to city authorities so they could add items such as rifles, riot gear, tanks, walkie-talkies and bullet proof vests to their arsenals.[8] About three years later, in 1968, Congress passed the **Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act**. This act invested $400 million dollars in the War on Crime (over $3 billion in today's dollars) and ultimately helped to further militarize local police departments and increase the presence of police officers within low-income urban communities of color.[9]

With this funding, police departments created mini-police stations in ordinary parts of neighborhoods, like storefronts, health clinics, and housing projects. Some also created youth recreational centers with pool tables, record players, libraries, and supervising police officers.[10] So if you didn't encounter a police officer in your home, you encountered them when you went to a nearby grocery store to buy bread or while going to your doctor's appointment. The police became even more ubiquitous than before.

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[5] Elizabeth Hinton, *America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion Since the 1960s*, First Edition (New York, NY: Liveright, 2021), 4-5.
[6] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime,* 1-8.
[7] Note for teachers: The bold font can help students identify key pieces of legislation mentioned in the accompanying worksheet.
[8] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime,* 89.
[9] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime,* 2; "Inflation Calculator," US Inflation Calculator: A CoinNews Media Company, accessed June 2023, https://www.usinflationcalculator.com/.
[10] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime,* 113-114.

[Transition music - “Relaxed Vlog” by Danielyan-Composer]

As the presence of police grew within low-income urban spaces, police officers began to provide social services to low-income residents. They basically took the place of previous War on Poverty programs. For example, in Los Angeles, California, the LAPD collaborated with local agencies to provide job training, counseling, and remedial education classes. The focus on youth of these social programs also continued — many police departments created Youth Service Bureau programs.[11]

What were the exact purposes of these programs, you might be wondering?

Let’s look at some examples to answer this question: The Youth Service Bureau program in Fairmont Heights, Maryland, a segregated Black municipality, created training programs that (in their own words) directed “juveniles toward acceptable standards of social conduct.” In Jackson, Mississippi, the Youth Service Bureau aimed to (again, in their own words) “teach delinquents good grooming habits, effective use of language, and respect for others.” Although federal policymakers and program coordinators labeled program participants as “delinquent,” most of the youth who attended Youth Service Bureau programs did not have any sort of criminal record. Federal policymakers saw them as “pre-delinquent” or in “danger of becoming delinquent” because of their racial background and economic status.[12]

After learning a little more about the Youth Service Bureau programs, in your own words, what were their main purpose? How does the language used to describe their aims remind you of the goals of War on Poverty programs that targeted youth?

[Transition music - “Abstract Style” by QubeSounds]

As some of you might have noted, the program goals were connected to racist ideas about poverty and crime, many of which were promoted by famous social scientists like Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Caught up in these ideas, officials created another policy that addressed individual behavior through a punitive lens: **The Juvenile Delinquency Prevention and Control Act of 1968**.[13] This act required all states to create specific programs that addressed the issue of youth crime and held up Youth Service Bureaus as model programs.[14] After the act’s passage, Youth Service Bureaus began to pop up in several parts of the United States.

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[11] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime,* 114-115.
[12] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime,* 121.
[13] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime,* 123.
[14] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime,* 119.

In 1969, President Richard Nixon further nourished the seeds of Johnson's War on Crime through his War on Drugs. His administration introduced the DC Court Reform and Criminal Procedure Bill, which Congress passed in 1970.[15] Due to this act, people could face time in prison because they were caught with drugs. People who sold drugs could also face longer and harsher sentences. Youth aged 16 and older could also be charged as adults if found guilty for the intent of committing certain offenses.[16] Lastly, this act made possible "no knock" search and arrest warrants, which allowed police officers to enter premises, including people's private homes, without any warning or permission.[17] Although based in DC, the act inspired state and local governments all over the country to endorse similarly punitive policies.[18] As food for thought, I challenge you all to think about how these policies set up the issues we continue to face today, including ongoing police brutality within low-income communities of color and mass incarceration?

[Transition music - "Circle" by Coma- Media]

Now that we have a bit of the federal context covered, we're going to zoom back into Jersey City: Between 1969 and 1970, the Jersey City Police Department had received special funding from the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act that ultimately supported police surveillance of and presence within low-income areas. These funds were distributed by New Jersey's State Law Enforcement Planning Agency, or SLEPA for short. In 1969, SLEPA awarded the Jersey City Police department over $27,000 (which is about over 233,000 in today's dollars) just for the purchase of electronic surveillance equipment.[19] Among other items, this equipment consisted of small microphones, which police placed in stores where they thought were most susceptible to burglaries.[20] And, in early 1970, SLEPA gave the police department over $31,600 for the creation of a Teen Post Center at 350 Bergen Ave. This center aimed to "improve police-juvenile relationships" and was modeled after the Teen Post Center in Los Angeles. The staff included a PE teacher, a guidance counselor, and several policemen — as

[15] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime*, 157.
[16] Narcotic drugs, such as heroin, were specifically targeted. Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime,* 156-158; "Congress Clears Controversial D.C. Crime Control Bill," CQ Press Online Edition, accessed June 2023, https://library.cqpress.com/cqalmanac/document.php?id=cqal70-1292937; "An Act to reorganize the courts of the District of Columbia, to revise the procedures for handling juveniles in the District of Columbia," Public Law 91-358, 84 Stat. 473 (1970), https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-84/pdf/STATUTE-84-Pg473.pdf.
[17] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime,* 158; "Congress Clears Controversial D.C. Crime Control Bill," CQ Press Online Edition, accessed June 2023, https://library.cqpress.com/cqalmanac/document.php?id=cqal70-1292937.
[18] Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime,* 158.
[19] *New Jersey Plan for Criminal Justice*, State Law Enforcement Planning Agency, Trenton, NJ, 1970, 167, held at the New Jersey State Library.
[20] "Jersey City Police Eye New Scooter Patrol," *Jersey Journal,* February 3, 1970; *New Jersey Plan for Criminal Justice*, State Law Enforcement Planning Agency, Trenton, NJ, 1970, 167, held at the New Jersey State Library.

mentioned before, police officers replaced the social workers seen in earlier manifestations of anti-poverty programs.[21]

[Transition music - Slow Suspense by Danielyn-Composer]
With these new policy changes, the problems of police surveillance and police brutality remained. As the following anecdotes will demonstrate to us, the influx of money at the federal and state level did not eradicate the problem of police brutality.

Part III. Stories of Rebellion in Jersey City, 1970

In 1970, a Jersey City police officer pushed a Puerto Rican man through a plate glass window of a hospital. That same year, an off-duty police officer struck a Puerto Rican man with his car, injuring the man's arm. This man was later refused medical attention. In response to these two events of police violence in Jersey City, the Young Puerto Ricans Society and the People's Voice of the Downtown held a demonstration in front of City Hall on June 10th, 1970.[22] Sigfredo Carrion, who was not a resident of Jersey City but of Paterson at the time, remembers this demonstration. He and a group of friends were in New York City (NYC), picking up newspapers from the Young Lords Party and El Movimiento Independista to distribute in Paterson. On their way back home,

Sigfredo Carrion: We heard on the radio that there was a rebellion of Puerto Ricans and Jersey City. So we decided, well, let's go see what's happening in Jersey City. And we went to Jersey City. None of us knew our way around Jersey City at all but we had just a vague idea where the Puerto Rican neighborhood was. And we went there and sure enough, we were going down the street and there are all these PRs (Puerto Ricans), just like in Paterson a lot of people on the street. And so we are going by and we're sticking out our fists and waving our flag, and that's it. We're riding down the street and behind us, we didn't realize it was a police car who was following us.[23]

Emily: He also remembers the police violence:

Sigfredo Carrion: And then as we passed, the people would throw rocks and bottles at the police car and we continued along. And then at some point we are getting off that street since I had no idea. I didn't know the area firsthand: I turned down a one way street and it was blocked

[21] *New Jersey Plan for Criminal Justice*, State Law Enforcement Planning Agency, Trenton, NJ, 1970, 143, held at the New Jersey State Library; "Police Youth Program Starts in July," *Jersey Journal,* June 11, 1970.
[22] "Gangs Roam Jersey City," *The Herald-News,* June 12, 1970; "A Long Hot Night, 17 Arrested, Many Hurt," *Jersey Journal,* June 13, 1970.
[23] Sigfredo Carrion, interview by Emily Sánchez, January 2023 (Newark, NJ: NJ HRIC, Podcast Interviews).

by the police. So the police had blocked us off. And then we had a police car in front of us, police behind us. And so they stopped us. They dragged us out of the car physically and beat us. All of us were beat with, with Billy clubs. We were handcuffed first behind our backs and then beaten with Billy clubs. And then a Paddy wagon showed up. The paddy wagon and they threw us into the paddy wagon. And as they did, they beat us with sticks. So we were all beaten up, all six of us. The worst of it was a minor, who was the last one. He was on top of the pile and he was probably beaten the worst. His injuries were more serious than ours. So anyway, they arrested us and took us to the precinct, put us in jail, charged us with inciting to riot and assault on a police officer.

Now, the other thing that I can tell you from my discussion with people who were in jail from Jersey City is that it was the same issue. That it was the spark of the issue in Jersey City, which was police brutality. So you can see a pattern.

Emily: Two years earlier, Sigfredo had participated in the 1968 Rebellion of Paterson, which was also sparked by police violence.[24]

One of the local leaders of the Jersey City demonstration in front of City Hall was Jaime Vazquez, brother of Carlos Vazquez, who we heard from earlier. He had just returned from Vietnam and learned how to organize on the issues of policing and accessibility to safe and affordable housing back home.

Carlos Vazquez: Jamie would go door to door, he'd knock on the door. He'd have a piece of paper. He told people, listen, everybody got the same speech: Listen my name is Jamie Vasquez. I'm here to help you with this problem with your landlord. Tell me your name. Then he start that. And then he'd get in the house, sit down, and then he'd get the amount of people who were there, who are they, were there anybody there who might cause problems and stuff like that. And he'd go every apartment, to every apartment. And we'd go with him. They'd serve us coffee in some places, we got juice. And we'd sit there and we'd talk and we'd get everybody's information. And then we'd come in, we'd set up, we'd set, we'd tell them we'd be back within a certain amount of time and that this is what's going on. And then he'd organize the actual action, whatever the action was.[25]

Jaime used these organizing skills to gather the crowd in front of City Hall that June. The crowd was there with signs and energy to call attention to the problem of police violence. During this demonstration, police officers began violently arresting people, supposedly because someone had

[24] Sigfredo Carrion, interview by Emily Sánchez, January 2023 (Newark, NJ: NJ HRIC, Podcast Interviews).
[25] Carlos Vazquez, interview by Emily Sánchez, March 2023 (Newark, NJ: NJ HRIC, Podcast Interviews).

thrown a bottle at an officer.[26] Despite the risk of violent arrest and even death, people continued to stay on the streets to protest police violence for the next three nights.[27]

Working-class residents of color rebelled again in August due to another incident of police violence. In this case, both working-class Puerto Rican and African American residents rebelled on the streets to protest the continued police brutality.[28]

Part IV. Conclusion

In the end, the Jersey City rebellions did lead towards some change. With time the police force became more diverse and had more police officers of color, but having more officers of color did not solve the problem of police violence.

This was the case in many parts of New Jersey.[29] In Jersey City, in 2016, a police officer violently punched a man for no reason while walking his dog. In 2021, police officers killed Carl Dorsey in Newark, NJ.[30] In Paterson, in February 2022, Felix DeJesus disappeared under police custody — he has yet to be found.[31] And, more recently, in 2023, in March, Paterson police officers killed Najee Seabrooks in his home. Seabrooks was a community leader in Paterson who had called the police himself because he wanted support during his mental health crisis.[32] Residents in cities all over New Jersey are still advocating for justice and an end to police violence today. We'll get to hear from some folks who are on the ground in another episode. But in the meantime, I have a couple [of] questions for you all: what do you all think we need to move towards now? If the police, time and time again, have shown themselves to harm low-

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[26] "The Seeds of Discontent Rooted Deep in Downtown," *Jersey Journal,* June 11, 1970.
[27] "Tense Calm Reigns in Jersey City," *Courier-Post,* June 15, 1970.
[28] "300 Police Try to Keep Peace in Jersey City," *Courier-Post,* August 11, 1970; "4 in Jersey City Arrested, 7 Hurt," *Asbury Park Press,* August 10, 1970; "Uneasy Calm Follows Rampage in Downtown Jersey City," *Jersey Journal,* August 10, 1970.
[29] Mariano Vega, interview by Emily Sánchez, February 2023 (Newark, NJ: NJ HRIC, Podcast Interviews); Omar Barbour, interview by Emily Sánchez, January 2023 (Newark, NJ: NJ HRIC, Podcast Interviews). "Police Aid Minorities to Join the Force," *Morning Call,* July 16, 1968, 6; Gabriella Dragone, "Paterson Welcomes One of the Most Diverse Classes of Police Recruits, The 'Clean 18'," *TAPinto Paterson,* January 19,2023, https://www.tapinto.net/towns/paterson/sections/police-and-fire/articles/paterson-welcomes-one-of-the-most-diverse-classes-of-police-recruits-the-clean18; Jillian Risberg, "Newark Police Swear-In 55 More Officers," *TAPinto Newar,* January 5, 2023, https://www.tapinto.net/towns/newark/sections/law-and-justice/articles/newark-police-swear-in-55-more-officers.
[30] Ron Zeitlinger, "Jersey City to settle 2016 police lawsuit for $300K," *Jersey Journal,* January 9, 2023, https://www.nj.com/hudson/2023/01/jersey-city-to-settle-2016-police-brutality-lawsuit-for-300k.html.
[31] Sophie Nieto-Muñoz, "Family of man killed by Newark police officer wants federal probe," *New Jersey Monitor,* January 31, 2023, https://newjerseymonitor.com/2023/01/31/family-of-man-killed-by-newark-police-officer-wants-federal-probe/.
[32] Alicia Reid, "Some Paterson residents call for Mayor Andre Sayegh to step down in wake of community activist Najee Seabrooks' death," *CBS New York,* March 29, 2023, https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/paterson-city-council-meeting-protest-mayor-andre-sayegh-najee-seabrooks/. "Body of camera video released in deadly shooting of Paterson community activists," *ABC Eyewitness News,* March 17, 2023.

income communities of color, can they even be reformed? As Keeanga-Yamattha Taylor says in her book *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, there has been no "golden age of policing." What does this history point us towards?

[Transition music - "Powerful Beat" by Coma-Media]

Everybody, thanks for listening! If you'd like to learn more about the sources I used for this podcast, check out my footnotes at the bottom of each page of the transcript — all episode transcripts are located on the Newark Public Library (NPL) website. For educators, you can also access accompanying lesson plans, including worksheets and in-class activities, at the NPL website as well. And to all listeners out there, if you liked what you heard and would like to share this podcast — please do. It is available on all major streaming platforms.

Our theme music is "Got to Have Freedom" by the Spirit of Life Ensemble. Our transition music is from Pixabay.

Thank you to everyone who made this series possible – everyone part of the HRIC staff, all educators who gave me their time, the staff at the MakerSpace at the Newark Public Library, and the ReachOut Fellowship program. And for today's episode, I send special thank you's to the Community Awareness Series and the Biblioteca Criolla in Jersey City.

Also, before I forget: If you liked listening to this episode, make sure to tune in next time! We'll be hearing from two Jersey City residents who are currently organizing around the issue of gentrification. Until then!

This is Emily Sánchez, your host for *Demanding Justice in New Jersey*.