Meet the Panelists

Chief Marcus Jones

Chief Marcus Jones has served on the Montgomery County Police Department for more than 30 years. He was appointed Chief of Police in November, 2019. Some of his main initiatives include increasing diversity among sworn officers, improving ways the force handles complaints, pedestrian safety and addressing mental health.

Dave Thomas

David R Thomas is going on his 34th year of providing training and technical assistance to law enforcement at the state, local, national, and international levels. Mr. Thomas retired from the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) in 2000 on after 15 years of service.

During his law enforcement career Mr. Thomas taught at the Police Training Academy, served on the S.W.A.T. team, was a Hostage Negotiator, and a member of the Domestic Violence Unit. In addition to helping create the Domestic Violence Unit, he was responsible for the department's curriculum development in domestic violence training, as well as the policy development on domestic violence related issues. At the time of his retirement, he was honored to have been the 2nd highest decorated officer in the department's history receiving numerous awards including the silver medal of valor, the bronze medal of valor, policeman of the year, and the Women's Alliance of MD Domestic Violence Advocacy Award to name a few.
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Cherri Branson

Cherri Branson served as the Director of the Montgomery County Office of Procurement from June 2015 until December 2018. She was appointed to that position by Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett. During her time as Director, she ushered in the highest level of contract awards to small and minority owned businesses in the County's history. Prior to her service as Director of Procurement, she served on the Montgomery County Council, representing District 5. Branson spearheaded efforts such as "Ban the Box" legislation and inclusion of historical African American communities on the MNCPP website.

Always active in local civic activities, she is currently third Vice President of the Montgomery County NAACP. She was also a Member of the Charter Review Commission, the Redistricting Committee and a founding member and past president of the Montgomery County African-American Democratic Club.

Dr. Rashawn Ray

Moderator

Dr. Rashawn Ray is a David M. Rubenstein Fellow at The Brookings Institution. He is also a Professor of Sociology and Executive Director of the Lab for Applied Social Science Research (LASSR) at the University of Maryland, College Park. He is one of the co-editors of Contexts Magazine: Sociology for the Public. Formerly, Ray was a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Health Policy Research Scholar at the University of California, Berkeley and he currently serves on the National Advisory Committee for the RWJF Health Policy Research Scholars Program.

Ray's research addresses the mechanisms that manufacture and maintain racial and social inequality with a particular focus on police-civilian relations and men's treatment of women. His work also speaks to ways that inequality may be attenuated through racial uplift activism and social policy. Ray has published over 50 books, articles, and book chapters, and 15 op-eds. Ray has written for New York Times, The Guardian, Huffington Post, NBC News, The Conversation, and Public Radio International.

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