

Chronology of Our Work

- October 10, 2014: The ACLU, ACLU-NJ and the UCLA Civil Rights Project files a civil rights complaint against the South Orange-Maplewood School District with the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) alleging discriminatory practices leading to racial disparities in advanced-level and Advanced Placement (AP) courses and student discipline.
- October 28, 2014: The South Orange-Maplewood School District signs a Resolution Agreement with the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) committing to addressing racial disparities in advanced-level and Advanced Placement (AP) courses and student discipline.
- January 8, 2015: The Black Parents Workshop organizes a fact-finding trip to South Side High School in Rockville Centre, Long Island to examine its advanced-level course structure and academic support systems.
- August 29, 2015: Black Parents Workshop sends a letter to South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education President Wayne Eastman concerning the district's lack of progress in complying with the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) Resolution Agreement.
- September 2, 2015: The Black Parents Workshop sends a letter to South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education President Wayne Eastman criticizing his 'contract for choice' proposal as inadequate to address the historic and systemic exclusion of African-American students from advanced-level and Advanced Placement (AP) classes.
- November 15, 2015: The Black Parents Workshop sends a letter to South Orange-Maplewood School District Superintendent Dr. John Ramos on important priorities following the Education Summit.
- November 23, 2015: The Black Parents Workshop sends a letter to South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education President Wayne Eastman citing deficiencies in proposed Policy 2314 Academic Placement.
- February 2, 2016: The Black Parents Workshop sends a letter to the Compliance Team Investigator for the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) expressing concern that the South Orange-Maplewood School District was not complying with the terms of the Resolution Agreement.
- March 18, 2016: The Black Parents Workshop sends a letter to South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education President Elizabeth Baker on the need for a budgetary commitment to access and equity goals.

- June 7, 2016: The Black Parents Workshop organizes a meeting between South Orange-Maplewood School District Superintendent Dr. John Ramos and the NAACP Legal Defense Educational Fund to discuss the Fund's possible monitoring of the district's compliance with the OCR Resolution Agreement.
- July 5, 2016: Maplewood police arrest four youth (three from South Orange and one from Maplewood) following the township's Independence Day fireworks.
- July 6, 2016: Black youth reported to Columbia High School teacher Thomas Whitaker being harassed by the Maplewood police following the township's Independence Day fireworks and allege that they were forced by the police to walk toward the Irvington border despite informing officers they lived in the community.
- July 12, 2016: Not in Our Two Towns event is held at South Orange Middle School and the Maplewood police sign a pledge against racial profiling, but youth who initiated the idea for the event immediately feel shut out and silenced by adults behind the event.
- August 22, 2016: Columbia High School teacher Thomas Whitaker appeared before the South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education meeting and raises concerns over the events of July 5, 2016 and racial profiling in South Orange. Whitaker informed the Board that a young Black man had been racially profiled outside his home in South Orange on July 12, taken into custody for five hours and released after paying an unpaid ticket.
- August 30, 2016: Chief Robert Cimino announced that an internal investigation has been launched regarding the events of July 5, 2016.
- September 2016: Essex County Prosecutor launched an investigation into the events of July 5, 2016.
- September 12, 2016: Thomas Whitaker filed an Open Public Records Act (OPRA) request with the Maplewood Police Department for access to the audio and video recordings of the evening of July 5, 2016.
- September 15, 2016: The Village Green newspaper filed an Open Public Records Act (OPRA) request with the Maplewood Police Department for access to the audio and video recordings of the evening of July 5, 2016.
- September 19, 2016: Thomas Whitaker received notification that his OPRA request has been rejected.
- September 20, 2016: Thomas Whitaker called for an independent investigation of the police in regard to the events of July 5, 2016.

December 6, 2016 Maplewood Township Committee issued Resolution 225-16 requesting the Essex County Prosecutor’s Office conduct a “thorough, fair and transparent and timely investigation of alleged incidences.” The Township Committee appointed attorneys to represent Police Chief Robert Cimino and Captain Joshua Cummis in regard to the events of July 5, 2016.

April 4, 2017*: The Essex County Prosecutor’s Office announced it had concluded its investigation into the events of July 5, 2016 and concludes “there is insufficient credible evidence to warrant a prosecution of this matter.” The Essex County Prosecutor’s Office referred a portion of the investigation back to the Maplewood Police Department for an internal affairs investigation.

*The letter was read aloud at the Maplewood Township Committee meeting on April 4, 2017 by Township Administrator Joseph Manning. We are not certain of the specific date of the letter from the Essex County Prosecutor’s Office Professional Standards Bureau.

At this point, there is no active criminal investigation of the events of July 5, 2016. There was no justification for not releasing the audio and video recordings of that night, as was confirmed by a unanimous New Jersey Supreme Court case four months later.

April 5, 2017: The Village Green newspaper in an online article [“County Finds ‘Insufficient Credible Evidence’ in Alleged Racial Profiling by Maplewood Police”](#) reported that as of March 23, the township had spent \$1,975.00 on legal representation for Police Chief Robert Cimino and Captain Josh Cummis.

April 25, 2017: The Black Parents Workshop organizes a meeting between South Orange-Maplewood School District Assistant Superintendent Kevin Walston and the Morgan State University School of Education and Urban Studies in Baltimore to discuss creating a program to hire African-American teachers in the district.

June 20, 2017: The Black Parents Workshop sends a letter to New Jersey Attorney General Christopher S. Porrino detailing concerns over drinking water contaminated by lead in the South Orange-Maplewood public schools with a particular concern expressed over Seth Boyden Elementary School. Seth Boyden is the district’s most racially segregated K-5 school.

June 20, 2017: The Maplewood Township Committee hired Illinois based firm Hillard Heintz to complete the investigation into the events of July 5, 2016.

- June 21, 2017: Black Parents Workshop Chairman Walter Fields [called upon the Maplewood Township Committee to release the police audio and video recordings](#) of the evening of July 5, 2016.
- June 30, 2017: The Maplewood Township Committee [released a statement](#) that police audio and video recordings of the evening of July 5, 2016 cannot be released until the independent probe is completed in September.
- July 3, 2017: Black Parents Workshop Chairman Walter Fields called upon the Maplewood Township Committee to release the police audio and video recordings of the evening of July 5, 2016 in an [Op-Ed](#) in the Village Green newspaper
- July 3, 2017: Community groups, led by **MapS0 Freedom School** and **Black Parents Workshop**, and including **SOMA Justice**, **People’s Organization for Progress** and **Black Lives Matter – NJ**, and concerned residents, staged a protest in front of the Maplewood Police Headquarters demanding the release of police audio and video recordings of the evening of July 5, 2016. Protesters also called for the dismissal of Police Chief Robert Cimino and opposition to Assembly Bill A1114, sponsored by Assemblywoman Mila Jasey and Assemblywoman Sheila Oliver.
- July 11, 2017: The New Jersey Supreme Court issued a unanimous ruling in [North Jersey Media Group \(NJMG\) v. Lyndhurst](#), declaring police videos part of the public record and subject to the Open Public Records Act (OPRA).
- July 13, 2017: The Black Parents Workshop [issued a statement](#) calling upon the Maplewood Township Committee to release the police audio and video recordings of the evening of July 5, 2016 to parties (Thomas Whitaker and the Village Green newspaper) that had filed under OPRA. The Black Parents Workshop also called for the release of the recordings in 24 hours.
- July 18, 2017: Thomas Whitaker called for the release of police audio and video recordings of the evening of July 5, 2016 in an [Op-Ed](#) in the Village Green newspaper.
- July 18, 2017: The Maplewood Township Committee [voted 5-0](#) to release the police audio and video recordings of the evening of July 5, 2016 to the parties that had made requests under OPRA.
- July 25, 2017: The Maplewood Township Committee released the audio recordings of the evening of July 5, 2016 to the parties that filed to receive them under OPRA. The Village Green receives a copy.
- July 25, 2017: The Village Green newspaper reported in an online article [“Maplewood Chief Showed July 5 Tapes to Select Community Members While Public Waits for Release”](#) that Chief Robert Cimino showed the police video of

the evening of July 5, 2016 to “select” community members. (The paper later reported that three community members were shown the video but there is no indication of when or where the video was viewed) In response to an inquiry from the Village Green newspaper, Maplewood Mayor Vic De Luca stated he just learned on the morning of July 25 of Chief Cimino’s actions and that the chief acted “unilaterally.”

- July 26, 2017: Thomas Whitaker receives a copy of the audio recordings of the evening of July 5, 2016 per his request under OPRA.
- July 26, 2017: The Village Green newspaper published an online article [“July 5, 2016 Maplewood Police Audio Tapes: Get ‘Em Down Elmwood”](#) that gives the public its first opportunity to hear the police audio recordings of the evening of July 5, 2016. On the police radio transmissions, Chief Cimino is clearly heard barking, “Alright, we’re gonna send ‘em east!,” directing his officers to push the youth toward Irvington.
- July 28, 2017: The Maplewood Township Committee released the police video recordings of the evening of July 5, 2016 to parties that made requests under OPRA.
- July 28, 2017: The Maplewood Police Department issued a statement regarding disciplinary action taken against six police officers involved in the events of July 5, 2016 but does not disclose the identity of the officers.
- July 28, 2017: Thomas Whitaker and the Black Parents Workshop posted the police videos of the evening of July 5, 2016 on the MapSO Freedom School YouTube Channel and the Black Parents Workshop Facebook page and website, giving the public its first opportunity to view the videos.
- July 29, 2017: The Village Green newspaper published an online article [“Video Reveals Maplewood Police Kicking, Macing Teens; Some Call for Cimino to Resign”](#) that includes police video that has been edited to show incidents related to the headline.
- August 1, 2017: The Maplewood Township Council suspends Police Chief Robert Cimino and Captain Joshua Cummis, passed a no-confidence vote in the chief and requested the resignation of both officers. Five other officers face disciplinary charges over their roles in the July 5, 2016 incident.
- October 3, 2017: Maplewood Township Council announces that suspended Maplewood Police Chief Robert Cimino will retire effective January 1, 2018.
- October 16, 2017: The South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education releases data that reveals continued wide disparities in African-American student enrollment in advanced-Honors and Advanced Placement classes in Columbia High School. The data reveals racial disparities had worsened since the school

district signed a Resolution Agreement with the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR).

- February 13, 2018: The Black Parents Workshop organizes a fact-finding trip to James Hubert “Eubie” Blake High School in Silver Spring, Maryland.
- February 27, 2018: The Black Parents Workshop files a lawsuit in U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey alleging violations in state and federal civil rights laws by the South Orange-Maplewood School District resulting in discriminatory practices against African American students.
- April 25, 2018: The Black Parents Workshop sends a letter to New Jersey Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal expressing concerns over discriminatory practices in the South Orange-Maplewood School District, specifically racial disparities in student discipline and enrollment in advanced-level classes.
- February 7, 2019: The Black Parents Workshop organizes a fact-finding trip to P.S. 28 The Christa McAuliffe School in Jersey City to examine the school’s STEM program.
- July 13, 2020 The South Orange-Maplewood School District settles the federal lawsuit brought against the district by the Black Parents Workshop.