

831 Action Teams
P.O. Box 1475
Seaside, CA, 93955
CONTACT: Miriam Smith
(831) 643-5067
community831mc@gmail.com

831 Action Teams

SUMMARY OF PROGRAM

831 Action Teams is an organization comprising eight teams with special focuses, all with the goal of increasing public safety, ending police violence, and eradicating systemic and institutional racism. We are a Black-led, grassroots movement organically creating racial equity by building real community support for our neighborhoods and providing alternative public safety solutions to the police and carceral state.

Pause The Calls is our public safety initiative that aims to reduce the amount of calls made to armed law enforcement for non-violent situations, especially those that involve Black people and People of Color. The idea of Pause The Calls is to move in a more excellent way; favoring a conception of keeping ourselves safe as a society that is not only holistic and fair-minded but seeks to repair the harm that has been done.

831 Action Teams has observed the high rates of arrest for Black community members in Seaside (188% arrest rate v. pop). We propose an emergency pilot program that will reduce encounters with police officers and mitigate unnecessary criminalization and threat to life by employing non-violent crisis responders from the community to act as a public safety resource.

831 Action Teams will deploy a team of unarmed first responders to respond to non-violent calls instead of police, including but not limited to parking problems, loud music, and loitering. Funding will go towards public education on community-based conflict resolution, anti-racism and de-escalation training to reduce the need for calls to the police.

The solution to our current crisis is to Pause The Calls. Our emergency pilot program will make this solution available to Seaside by enlisting local people with a passion for public safety, from age sixteen and up, to serve their community through a program of on-the-job training that will allow them to bring non-violent resolution to everyday issues.

Background

It all started with Operation Care. Miriam Smith graduated from Seaside High, Class of 1976 with a passion. She had been allowed to graduate without having been taught to read or write. She decided that this must never happen to another child. In 1999, Miriam was searching for an after-school program to help her son who was not having his educational needs met at school and was struggling to read. Finding no existing avenues of help, she decided to start a program herself. She created "Operation Care" because she couldn't accept that there was no support available to her community for kids struggling with reading and for disabled students at the intersection of multiple socioeconomic oppressions. She spoke to teachers and was able to

recruit over 100 local educators and organize them into a schedule for weekly tutoring. Every Saturday, kids would come to the Oldemeyer Center and receive much needed help with homework and general learning skills. Miriam was the sole organizer but was able to move mountains, even bringing Naval Post-Graduate School students into Seaside for the first time to use their skills to tutor in our community. In a very short amount of time they were serving over 50 children, many of whom were sorely in need of the assistance and thrived in the program. Tragically, Operation Care lost access to its venue when Miriam came up against the same classist discrimination that led to her betrayal by the education system in the first place, the very betrayal of Black and disadvantaged students that she was striving to correct. It was decided by those providing resources that, because Miriam did not hold a degree, other programs led by “properly educated” people would be the recipient of their support and access instead.

Undeterred by this abrupt shuttering of her first community outreach project, Miriam continued to serve Seaside, next forming the now 20-plus-year-running program, **NoLack Book Club**. NoLack was conceived out of a desire for her community to feel NO LACK of resources, NO LACK of support, NO LACK of respect and NO LACK of freedom to live and thrive. Designed similarly to Operation Care, NoLack Book Club facilitates study and tutoring sessions where students can come after school to receive help of all kinds. Be it legal advocacy for marginalized parents, protective activism on behalf of unhoused people or engagement in the political process with an eye towards reducing harm and correcting the opportunity gap, Miriam knows what her community needs and consistently fights tirelessly to get it.

To this day, Miriam maintains a dedication to allowing true and equal organizing access to all people who seek to improve the condition of their community. We at 831 Action Teams do not believe in degree requirements. We know that diploma inflation is a barrier to entry; only 26% of Blacks have a bachelor’s or higher. The work of fighting for Black liberation and the freedom of all people requires a lot: wisdom, tenacity, bravery, compassion and awareness. But one thing advocating for yourself and your people should not require is a prohibitively expensive piece of paper. Miriam’s extensive background working with Seaside’s community combined with her understanding of police brutality makes her exceptionally qualified to lead emergency pilot program focused on saving Black lives. PTC initiative will save the city millions of dollars over time.

Need for Program

The criminal justice system disproportionately disadvantages the Black community throughout the process at every step of the way, from arrest to sentencing. In the US, 1 in 1,000 Black men can be expected to be killed by the police, a number equivalent to deaths by the measles. California leads the nation in police killings and excessive use of force. Studies have found that Black people are significantly more likely to be stopped by police officers, detained pretrial, charged with more serious crimes, and sentenced more harshly than white people. While Black people make up only 8.4% of the population of Seaside, they make up 18% of arrests and comprise 37% of Monterey County Jail detainees. The discriminatory practices and policies of the police force work to criminalize Black community members and pose a direct threat to their livelihood through generational trauma, broken families, and the constant threat of imprisonment or murder.

Unfortunately, we have an archive of hundreds of names of innocent people and children of color who have been killed by police officers following a non-emergency 911 call: wearing a ski mask (Elijah McClain), playing with a toy on the playground (Tamir Rice), leaving her front door open

at night (Atatiana Jefferson)—even when the intent of the call is to check on the well-being of the person, the result is harm and even murder. This was tragically proven in the City of Seaside in 1998 when [Charles Vaughn](#), a 60-year-old Black man in crisis, was shot to death. In 2014, Seaside’s Officer Fernandez shot and killed [Nestor Cruz](#), and then after being cleared of all charges, shot and paralyzed [Brandon Virtue](#) in 2018, who later died. Most recently, [Francis Davi](#) was trying to commit suicide by cop in Monterey when he was shot at and arrested by police. [Brenda Rodriguez](#) was a young woman experiencing a mental health crisis in Salinas when she was shot and killed by police. If mental health calls were handled by trained unarmed professionals, both of these violent encounters could have been avoided. Thus, there is a need for community-based, unarmed substitutes, and Pause the Calls offers us this alternative.

831 Action Teams is an organic, grassroots, Black-led organization promoting Pause the Calls, a public safety initiative that aims to reduce the amount of calls made to armed law enforcement for non-violent situations, especially those that involve Black people or people of color.

Moreover, when looking at the data on calls to the Seaside PD, the majority of calls are non-violent issues that should not be handled by officers with weapons. Of the 59,117 calls made to the police from January 2018 to July 2020, only 5,516 were classified as “violent.” Further, many of these calls weren’t even necessarily violent, the classification just entails that there was a risk of violence associated with the crime. For example, “hit and run” or “burglary” are not necessarily always violent, but they fall under this classification. Among the leading causes for calls to the police are as follows: peace disturbance (3,676 calls), parking problems (2,001 calls), welfare checks (1,955 calls), suspicious persons (1,828 calls), loud music (1,642 calls), and fireworks (1,477 calls), all of which, and more, could and should be handled by alternatives to armed forces.

Pause the Calls gives us a solution that enables a more excellent way to public safety, reduces harm, and ultimately, saves lives. As we reduce reliance on armed police officers for parking disputes, wellness checks, and petty complaints (many of which are racially-motivated to harass or harm Black residents), we will naturally create space in the city budget for trained and unarmed professionals who provide equitable service to the entire community in times of need.

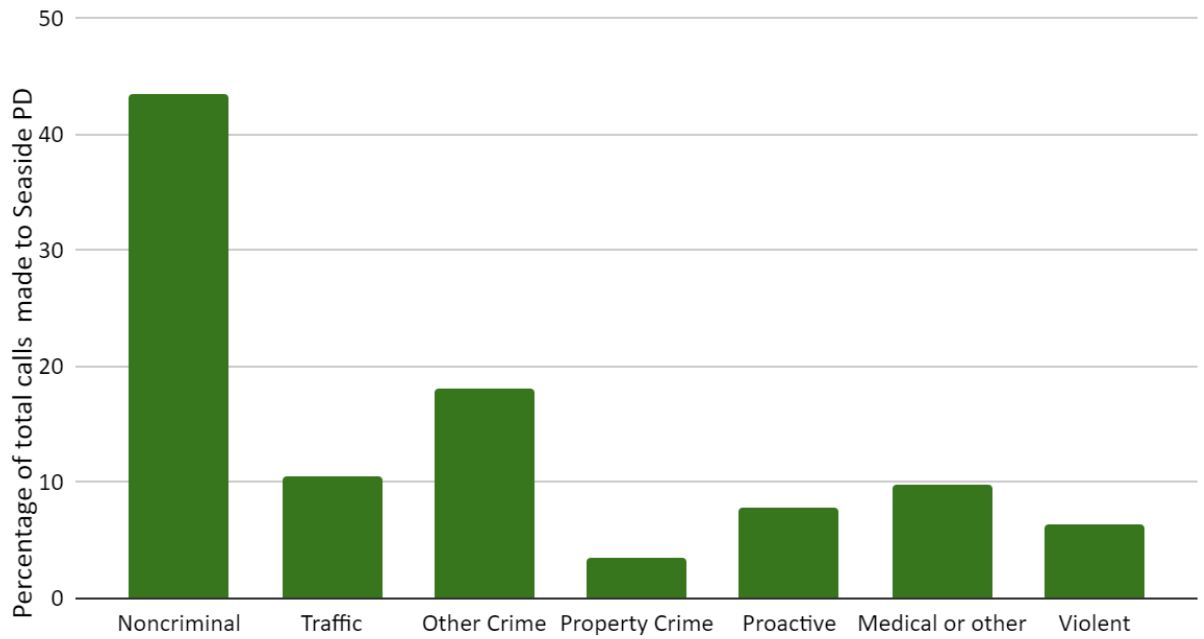


Figure 1. Percentage of calls by type to Seaside PD, 2018-2020.

<https://www.davisvanguard.org/2020/08/racial-justice-act-passes-california-senate-public-safety-committee/>

--End of Cover Sheet

Body

Pause the Calls Goals and Objectives:

- A. Reduce the amount of violent and/or deadly police-involved encounters.
- B. Lower the rate of arrest and incarceration in Seaside, especially for Black and Latinx community members
- C. Create training program for volunteers and staff members to learn how to respond to calls using de-escalation tactics and crisis response training
- D. Provide much-needed jobs and experience to youth right out of high school with no degree needed
- E. Public education on community conflict resolution

We plan for the program to run 24 months to demonstrate the effectiveness of our method and that it will save the city \$2-4 million dollars.

Evidence For Success of Community-Based Programs:

There has been undoubtable evidence for the success of community-based programs in addressing community concerns within the nation at large and moreover, within the city of Seaside specifically. In [Olympia, WA](#), community liaisons and service workers show up to address issues of drug abuse, mental health, and homelessness. Since the murder of George Floyd, other cities around the nation have adopted similar practices into their budget. [San Francisco](#), for example, has committed to disbanding their police force and reallocating funds into alternative first responders and community programs. [Berkeley](#) recently passed a proposal that will eliminate armed officers from making traffic stops and instead, employ unarmed city civilian workers to address traffic concerns. They have also moved to cut their police budget by 50%.

Locally in Seaside, the [Blue Ribbon Task Force](#), a community-based initiative co-founded by Miriam Smith in 2014, brought together residents to combat gang-related violence. The group wrote a proposal, received city funds, and successfully reduced violent crime in response to the high rates of homicide in 2011-2013. This is evidence that community-based practices are realistic and effective methods of responding to local offenses. Pause the Calls aims to address the needs of our community through a similar strategy that empowers our community members to collaborate from a place of compassion. We work to minimize calls to armed police officers, provide emergency response alternatives, and ultimately create a safer and healthier Seaside for all of its residents.

Proposed Activities

- A. competency, as well as sensitivity training and de-escalation tactics.
- B. Response: Members from our team will respond to non-emergency 911 calls such as mental health crises, domestic disturbances, homelessness, and substance abuse issues.
- C. Purchase of Supplies: We will need a vehicle, cell phones, radios and computers.
- D. Mental health guidance for volunteers and staff

II. Background (page 1)

- **Statement of the Problem to be addressed**
 - Danger to BIPOC from the police, through trauma, murder, imprisonment, broken families, etc. and the need for a community-based, unarmed alternatives
 - Actual percentages of calls responded to. “Black men are over eight times more likely to be incarcerated than white men.” Racial Justice Act AB2542 As evidenced by the arrest data in Seaside from 2018 to 2020, Black people are arrested at twice the rate they exist in the population, while the arrest rate for white people is slightly more than half.
- **Why is the proposed project needed?**
 - In the City of Seaside, California, Black community members and other people of color have been disproportionately harmed by a lack of community services that address mental health, homelessness, and addiction. Many have been criminalized and jailed for their struggles, and some have even been killed. Policing and incarceration do not remedy any of these problems, as evidenced by the high recidivism rates in California for those imprisoned reported by the Public Policy Institute of California in 2019. Furthermore, benign and non-violent situations like traffic stops by armed law enforcement officers too often turn deadly. Given the mounting archives of lost lives, forward-thinking cities like Los Angeles, Berkeley, Oakland, and others are listening to their communities and taking action to deliver more robust community services that address mental health, homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction, and non-violent concerns like traffic. Sensibly, they are achieving these goals by unbundling these services from police officer duties. Allowing police to focus on the violent crimes that they are trained to handle and having alternative response teams answer all other calls for assistance, can save millions of dollars in public safety spending each year. The current pandemic and economic recession have increased the urgency for these programs as the rates of mental health crises, addiction, and homelessness rise while city funds simultaneously atrophy.
- **What problems does it address?**
 -
 - Policing as we know it today is on a continuum that began in slave patrols and has never at any point been an equitable institution. From its foundation, modern policing has represented a force of oppression and violence directed at Black people, from the pursuit and re-kidnapping of escaped enslaved people, to

Body

enforcing Jim Crow laws, to waging the racist War on Drugs, to facilitating mass incarceration. Slavery has mutated into the police and carceral state and police officers act as the main facilitators of this hyper criminalization and imprisonment. Solitary confinement is torture as defined by ACLU, and these tortuous techniques continue under the guise of justice (Fernandez, 2020). We have been made to believe that we need militarized police to “keep the peace” and protect our freedom, when Black communities experience of police is one of terrorisation. The militarized might paired with qualified immunity keeps us afraid of challenging the status quo, targeting and minimizing those demanding real change while rewarding those who conform to this system. We are told that we need these police to protect “us” from “them”. We cannot continue accepting the division of our communities into “us” and “them”, “people” and “criminals”. Even the word “criminal” serves to dehumanize people, making it easier to justify using excessive force or disappearing them into the prison industrial complex. When someone commits a crime, they do not deserve to be treated as less than human. The vast majority of arrests made in Seaside are for non-violent crimes and armed police officers terrorize and traumatize our community without addressing the reasons that people commit crimes in the first place. We are so numb to the constant threat of police violence that we actually accept it as a natural mechanism of life, indifferent to the far reaching harm police violence causes in our communities. When we propose reforming the police, what we are actually asking for is the dismantlement of the oppressive system that by the very nature of its existence and the intent of its foundation, targets and harms specific groups of people. Rather than pouring money into a system that actively works to harm Black people; protestors and activists are advocating for change on the heels of Black-led grassroots organizations calling for a reallocation of funding away from police departments and into institutions, resources, and services that help our communities grow and flourish. We want to build something up, rather than tear communities down, which is what policing has done to communities throughout history.

Budget

Line Item	City Funds	Other Funds	In Kind Match	Total
1. Salaries and benefits				

Body

Full-time employee supervisor/Shift lead				
- \$24/hr, 40 hrs/wk	\$50,000			
-Benefits (1/4 salary)	\$12,500			
2 Part-time Responders				
- \$20/hr, 20 hrs/wk	\$44,000			
-Benefits (1/4 salary)	\$11,000			
2 High School Interns				
- \$15/hr, 20 hrs/wk	\$20,800			
-Benefits (1/4 salary)	\$5,200			
Volunteers (number?)				
-900hrs @ \$20/hr			18,000	
2. Services and supplies				
Training				
-For supervisor	\$1,000			
-For part-time responders	\$1,000			
Medical Supplies	\$1,000			
3. Equipment				
Car/van	\$40,000			
<u>Computers</u>				
-Desktop x 2	\$2,000			
-Laptops x 2	\$1,200			
<u>Cell phones x 4</u>	\$4,000			
<u>2-way radios x 4</u>	\$200.00			
4. Other				
Total	\$193,900		\$19,390	\$213,290

Body