

Pre-Evaluation Report

February 1, 2021

Strengthening UMBC's Public Humanities: The Baltimore Field School



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Executive Summary

Baltimore Field School, a humanities-based training intensive, will create a framework for faculty and graduate students to collaborate with community organizations in developing methods for ethical research and teaching projects focused on public humanities in Baltimore. The project is supported by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

The guiding vision: Ethical principles for humanities research in Baltimore will emerge through collaborative work in the field with our local partners and honest discussions about humanities methods.

-www.BaltimoreFieldSchool.org

Principal Investigators

Kimberly Moffitt, Interim Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, professor of Language, Literacy & Culture, and affiliate professor of Africana Studies, University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC)

Nicole King, Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of American Studies, affiliate professor in the Language, Literacy, and Culture doctoral program, and director of the Orser Center for the Study of Place, Community, and Culture, UMBC

Community Partner Leaders

Curtis Eaddy II, Marketing and Communications Director, **Southwest Partnership**The Southwest Partnership (SWP) is a coalition of seven neighborhood associations and six anchor institutions in Southwest Baltimore.

Eric Jackson, founder and Servant-Director of **Black Yield Institute**<u>Black Yield Institute (BYI)</u> is a Pan-African power institution based in Baltimore,

Maryland, serving as a think tank and collective action network that addresses food apartheid.

Program Manager

Imani Spence, UMBC

Purpose. This **Pre-Evaluation Report** is the first report of the evaluation of Baltimore Field School, utilizing assessments that have taken place before selection of project participants. It has been composed to inform Baltimore Field School planning by illuminating community partners' stated objectives and goals, promoting transparency in the project processes, and providing valuable information for project participants and

Audience. This report is intended for varied audiences including Baltimore Field School leaders, stakeholders and participants, project funders at the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, internal audiences at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), and other interested parties. This report centers accountability to communities and elevation of community voices.

Method: Principal Investigators and Community Partners Pre-Assessment. The Baltimore Field School (BFS) Pre-Evaluation was conducted using qualitative data from four events:

Partners Meeting, March 4, 2020

other stakeholders.

- Joint interview, Eric Jackson and Curtis Eaddy, December 8, 2020
- Joint interview, Nicole King and Kimberly Moffitt, January 4, 2021
- Partners Meeting, January 14, 2021

Partners Meetings were attended by the Baltimore Field School Planning Team: Curtis Eaddy of Southwest Partnership; Eric Jackson of Black Yield Institute; Nicole King, Kimberly Moffitt, and Program Manager Imani Spence of UMBC; and Project Evaluator Tahira Mahdi. The project evaluator recorded detailed notes from all events. During joint interviews, respondents answered the following questions:

- What is your understanding of power in this university-community partnership?
- What is your perception of the unique characteristics of South/Southwest Baltimore, and how those involved in UMBC Field School consider these characteristics as they work and learn with the Baltimore Field School?

- What is your understanding of the humanities and how the Baltimore Field School is centering the humanities in its work?
- What is your perception of UMBC and its work with communities in Baltimore?

Raw data (detailed notes from the four data collection events) were analyzed to ascertain major themes that exemplified respondents' positions and perceptions.

Community Partner Leaders Curtis Eaddy and Eric Jackson were given the opportunity at both partner meetings and during their joint interview to state their goals for this project. Those goals have been analyzed for inclusion at the outset of the Findings in this report. The goals of the Baltimore Field School Principal Investigators have been explicated in preliminary documents and on the project website baltimorefieldschool.org.

Method: Baltimore Field School Planning Survey. The survey was emailed via Google Forms to public humanities scholars who would be potential project participants. Community Partner Leaders were also offered the opportunity to respond. There were twenty-three (23) respondents. The survey included questions regarding issues of interest, Field School format preferences, and opportunities to suggest speakers and program elements. There were six quantitative items, six items requiring write-in responses for speaker and programming suggestions, and two items requesting personal contact information and contact information for others who would be interested.

Summary of Findings. Principal Investigators and Community Partners Pre-Assessment

 Community Partner goals embrace historical reconciliation specifically regarding Black/majority-Black communities and neighborhoods and harms imposed upon them by Baltimore and Maryland institutional practices and government policies. Goals include actualization of true "service" to community needs and inclusion of neighborhood residents for participation in and to benefit from this project.

- Regarding power, questions and concerns persist as Principal Investigators and Community Partner Leaders set out to create a new culture of shared power in university-community partnerships. Respondents used the term "mutually beneficial" to describe the partnership they intend to create.
- Principal Investigators and Community Partner Leaders advise project participants to consider location-based issues such as the perception of diversity and racial makeup of neighborhoods, new and emerging collaborations and coalitions in South/Southwest Baltimore, and Baltimore residents' emotional bonds to places.
- All respondents perceive the centering of humanities to mean centering human voices and stories in order to support communities. Principal Investigators emphasized the need for academics and university personnel to challenge their own comfort zones in order to achieve the goal of truly centering the humanities to support communities.
- Community Partner Leaders discussed positive relationships with individuals at UMBC, as well as concerns about the university as an institution with the power to undermine this work. Principal Investigators expressed confidence in UMBC's flexibility and its support of community projects, but acknowledged that money is still a sensitive, fraught matter within the university and in the communities with which they work.

Baltimore Field School Planning Survey

- The top three issues potential participants would be interested in exploring are:
 - 1) Structural racism and racial justice in Baltimore and cities like it (87%)
 - 2) Neighborhood change, including gentrification and housing justice (56.5%)

- 3) Historical forces driving inequity, such as neighborhood segregation (43.5%)
- The top three personal goals of potential participants are:
 - 1) to develop a collaborative project (52.2%)
 - 2) to develop a public humanities course (30.4%)
 - 3) to develop a public humanities research project (21.7%)
- The top three aspects of humanities research methods potential participants want to explore are:
 - 1) Building trust in mutually beneficial partnerships (73.9%)
 - 2) Cultural documentation projects (photography, film, podcasts, etc. (65.2%)
 - 3) Social and cultural histories of local neighborhoods (65.2%)
- 54.5% of respondents would prefer the one-week Summer Institute to take place in June.
- Respondents were almost equally split on preference for the Summer Institute to be a three-day intensive or five days of shorter sessions of two to three hours.
- Of 22 respondents who answered the question, nine (9) would prefer the Summer Institute to be in-person, seven (7) would prefer hybrid of in-person and virtual, and six (6) would prefer virtual.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations. Project leaders are encouraged to focus on common themes from both the Principal Investigators and Partners Pre-Assessment and the Baltimore Field School Planning Survey, which are: structural racism and racial justice; building trust and mutually beneficial partnerships; and historical and cultural documentation. Based on qualitative data that identify race, money, and power as issues customarily avoided by institutions that initiate community partnerships, project leaders and participants are urged to create time for such discussions. Qualitative data indicate several lingering questions about power in this partnership that require attention as this project moves forward.

Findings

Organization of Findings. Themes identified from the **Principal Investigators and Partners Pre-Assessment** are categorized by interview question topics: *Goals; Understanding of power in this partnership; Location-based considerations; Baltimore Field School as humanities-centered work;* and *Perceptions of UMBC's work with Baltimore communities.* For *Location-based considerations* and *Perceptions of UMBC's work with Baltimore communities,* Curtis Eaddy's and Eric Jackson's ideas are organized by their names and their respective experiences.

Themes are supported by paraphrasing respondents' actual statements and including direct quotes.

Following the exploration of themes from the Principal Investigators and Partners Pre-Assessment are the first six questions from the **Baltimore Field School Planning Survey**, with graphs to illustrate response patterns. These are taken directly from the Google Form used for the survey.

Principal Investigators and Partners Pre-Assessment Themes

Community Partner Goals

Project to remain led by community partners.

"As the work is done in Black neighborhoods, with Black communities, the work should be led by Black people. We are still reconciling with history."

- Eric Jackson, BYI

Project to provide mutual benefit for university and community.

Partner leaders emphasized that beyond compensation, the project should be good for the community, where it is not only accountable to funders, but to "larger groups of people" and "those on the ground." If the project and participants' objective is "to serve," they are expected to be doing this work on behalf of and in service of the community—without it being an extractive relationship. Partner Leaders expect their participation to be bigger than producing products; they expect to build relationships and the institutional capacity of BYI, SWP, and any other participating community organizations. Eric Jackson prefers that relationships go beyond mere events and extend to speaking to and being in community with one another "in joy and pleasure."

"The building blocks of a movement are relationships." – Eric Jackson, BYI

Project participants to "serve" the community by actively working to achieve the partner organizations' current goals.

Both Black Yield Institute and Southwest Partnership utilize their own organizational programming to achieve practical community goals. The Partner Leaders intend for Baltimore Field School participants to contribute to the realization of these goals.

BYI can use participant support in achieving community control of land owned by Baltimore City that has been unoccupied for 20 years. This is expected to lead to the larger goal of food and land sovereignty in the Cherry Hill neighborhood of Baltimore. Such participant support may include:

- archival research that can illuminate the past, present, and future of the land sites;
- collecting stories about residents' relationship to the land;
- navigating barriers of bureaucracy to determine correct courses of action in gaining control of the land for food production;
- assisting in creating a zine and/or banners;
- supporting the creation of a Cherry Hill Food Tour;

"...to help literally materialize land sovereignty." – Eric Jackson, BYI

SWP can use participant support in placemaking and preserving culture. This includes:

- studying how this has been previously done in Baltimore;
- collecting oral stories for 12 identified sites;
- contributing to other ways to preserve stories and cultural history as development happens;
- planning a Walk of Fame;
- making stories accessible through a database;
- presenting the stories back to the community with a planned event.

Project participants to help collect, disseminate, and leverage valuable data and information so that the City and State become partners with the organizations, in support of community goals.

Collection and dissemination of data is encompassed in the BYI's and SWP's practical goals, mentioned above. However, the organizations' far-reaching goals of ensuring the cooperation of City and State government should not be overlooked.

Cherry Hill and Poppleton neighborhood residents to be engaged with the learning and community-building opportunities in this project.

Community Partner Leaders expressed the desire for Baltimore Field School participants to help with efforts to gain more resident participation in and benefit from this project. Eric Jackson wants to get residents (and others) excited about the goal of food and land sovereignty through the creation of banners and a zine. Curtis Eaddy would like residents to have opportunities for skill building through training or a course. The goals of resident participation include the telling of lived experience for the preservation of history and culture.

"Connect residents with this opportunity." - Curtis Eaddy, SWP

Understanding of power in this university-community partnership **Community Partner Leaders**

Relationships thus far established in this partnership are between individuals—not with UMBC as an institution.

Both Community Partner Leaders have previously worked with Principal Investigator Nicole King in university-community projects. Eric Jackson has previously worked with Project Evaluator Tahira Mahdi. Partner Leaders wish to continue their positive experiences and interactions, and do not want to replicate any previous negative interactions they have had with university personnel.

"We are asking people [in our communities] to be vulnerable. They trust the individuals, not organizations." - Curtis Eaddy, SWP "UMBC is an institution. I like y'all as people." – Eric Jackson, BYI

Partners' intention in this project is shared power.

This involves allowing residents and stakeholders to have input, share information, outcomes, and products. It also involves having the conversation to establish what ownership of the data looks like and who has the right to disseminate information, beyond a Memorandum of Understanding. Partners clarified that this is not just a UMBC project, but a collaborative project to serve communities. Partners say that institutions are used to being able to "swoop in" and do work, thereby infiltrating community processes without knowing. As stated in Goals above, UMBC is expected to act as an agent of the organizations' agendas to build power in their communities.

"If this project is NOT doing that, then we can be done now." - Eric Jackson, BYI

At this point in the project, questions linger.

The following are questions that Community Partner Leaders raised in response to this question of their understanding of power.

What power do we have? How do we use this real power?

What leverage do we have?

What is the mutual benefit?

How do we utilize the data? How can what we produce [with the Baltimore Field School project] help us?

How can we disseminate [results, information] as quickly as possible so that residents feel like "This is mine too," not just "a project with" [UMBC]?

There is still concern about Baltimore City and UMBC as institutions exerting their power and their own plans over the mutually established goals and intentions of this project.

"The City has its own plan. We may bump up against their plan." - Curtis Eaddy, SWP "If UMBC can halt what y'all are doing, what can they do to community partners?" - Eric Jackson, BYI

Principal Investigators

We [from the university] need to be transparent about power and decide how it is shared.

Principal Investigators confirm that power is usually not discussed in universitycommunity partnerships. They insist that university personnel need to be honest and reflective about the role of power, how it works, and what 'community' means.

"What power is reified the most? If the parties do not understand power as shared, it will impact what happens in the project as we go forward. We have to figure out how to work without having to take credit—and how to take credit."

- Kimberly Moffit, UMBC

We need to determine what we mean by doing this "for the public good."

Principal Investigators acknowledge the institutional assumption that their community partnerships and projects are "for the public good." However, universities bring fiscal and other structures of power established for the institution. The questions that need to be asked are: Who benefits in this partnership? Is this equal and equitable? What is "public"? What is "good"? What is the "public good"?

Location-Based Considerations

Community Partner Leaders

The following are paraphrases and quotes by Community Partner Leaders, detailing what they would want Baltimore Field School participants to know regarding their area/neighborhood. Curtis Eaddy spoke about Southwest Baltimore and Eric Jackson offered insights about Cherry Hill.

Southwest Baltimore

- West Baltimore is rich with information and has been historically more well-off than East Baltimore in terms of access to transportation (including the railroad and its cultural influence) and jobs.
- People want to live where they work.
- Many people go out of the community to shop and are not necessarily participating in the [economic] community of their neighborhoods.
- Southwest Baltimore is "diverse," but the diversity is shown in leadership. "Who do you see in leadership?"
- The community is not really as diverse; its racial makeup may surprise you.

Cherry Hill

- Being rooted to and connected to history as a Black community is an important feature that gives people of Cherry Hill a lot of pride. There is a deep sense of ownership, that "This is ours; you can't take it from us."
- There is community-specific vernacular (for example, R.I.C.H. means Raised in Cherry Hill).
- Cherry Hill generally operates by the one-drop rule: if you are connected through grandparents, parents, and other family members, you are of Cherry Hill.
- It is like a village: word of mouth is still the best way to disseminate information.
- Cherry Hill has a city-country feel, is open and green, and there is a lot of interaction and engagement with wildlife. Residents participate in fishing and crabbing, and the goal of water restoration includes infusion of oysters.
- It is geographically isolated, which presents both challenges and opportunities.
- The previous use of the land still impacts the community.

Principal Investigators

It is challenging to do this type of work in Baltimore when you are not originally from Baltimore.

Principal Investigators discussed how people who have lived in Baltimore all of their lives have a strong attachment to places. One interesting note is that even if a person has lived and worked in Baltimore for many years, they may be viewed as lacking Baltimore roots if they did not attend high school in Baltimore.

South Baltimore is often easily forgotten.

Principal Investigators discussed the fact that East and West Baltimore have a clear delineation and are referenced most often in terms of "the City." Drs. King and Moffitt reflected on South Baltimore being an afterthought, disconnected geographically and otherwise.

There are neighborhoods collaborating for collective power in South Baltimore.

Nicole King mentioned that there is a lot of development in South Baltimore, and that neighborhood partnerships are happening that we do not normally see. For example, the South Baltimore Six Coalition (SB6) reached an unprecedented community benefits agreement (CBA) with Sagamore Development, the entity behind Port Covington

planning. SB6 has become SB7 with the Sagamore Partnership, and there are millions of dollars involved in this agreement.

Race and social location must be considered.

Nicole King stressed the importance of working with Black Yield Institute, as they are very intentional and up front about discussing race.

"We have to be able to talk about race and what it means in these contexts. Curtis Bay and Brooklyn are 'diverse' but not majority-Black. UMBC is 'diverse' but a predominantly white institution (PWI)." - Nicole King, UMBC

Baltimore Field School as humanities-centered work

Community Partner Leaders

The humanities are about understanding the lived experience.

The humanities were understood by both Partner Leaders to represent history, particularly the linking of past, present, and future. Curtis Eaddy also highlighted the "intricacies of people and understanding behavior."

"Sociology on steroids" – Curtis Eaddy, SWP

The humanities have the ability to support community.

Partner Leaders see the humanities as expressive arts that allow people to share stories for placemaking and community cohesion. They believe that the humanities can serve the community by helping to understand the people who live in a place and why the place is the way it is now.

"Available to people as a utility" – Eric Jackson, BYI

Principal Investigators

We are focused on the human; stories and voices are important.

"In humanities, we let people's lived experience be what guides us—not numbers that say what something is... Voices say this is how we live, engage, and support." - Kimberly Moffitt, UMBC

"Data is useless unless it tells a story. That same data can tell two different stories." That equals ideology." - Nicole King, UMBC

Academics have to mentally and physically leave a comfortable space to do the necessary work.

The Principal Investigators believe that academics can only demonstrate that their work is "for the greater good" by working with communities and understanding different types of knowledge. Otherwise, they say, academics believe that they are the purveyors of knowledge, but their work may mean nothing to communities or society. What is the output that will matter?

Referring to the Toni Morrison quote regarding "the human project—which is to remain human and to block the dehumanization of others," Nicole King notes that, "In institutions, we forget the first part."

"Our significance in this society depends on how what we do is significant to greater society."- Kimberly Moffitt, UMBC

Perceptions of UMBC's work with Baltimore communities

Community Partner Leaders

Curtis Eaddy spoke of previous work with UMBC through Charm City Connections. He believes that students who work with Nicole King get a real-world experience of Baltimore that reduces stigma and makes people think about why things are the way they are.

"I love the fact that UMBC is bridging the gap between county and city." - Curtis Eaddy, SWP

Eric Jackson believes that there are people at UMBC who are trying to reconcile with the history of UMBC, in which relationships between university personnel and community have been largely transactional. He has worked with persons from UMBC and participated in UMBC programs as a child.

"This project seeks to go beyond liberalism, to shift power in the [universitycommunity] relationship, and to use that power to support [the community]."

- Eric Jackson, BYI

Principal Investigators

UMBC is "nimble."

Principal Investigators used the word "nimble" to describe the flexibility of UMBC when it comes to community-based projects. They appreciate that the university is young and therefore does not have to follow long-held criteria. They believe that UMBC draws a certain type of scholar not necessarily seen at other schools and that UMBC personnel can find deeper ways to do this work, not just by getting grants. UMBC academics, they say, can work across departments, but need to figure out how to make this type of work cross-institutional. In general, they believe that UMBC is very supportive of this work.

Money and tokenization are subjects still fraught with uncertainty and tension.

Kimberly Moffitt explained that sometimes offering honoraria offends people, but other times, it is offensive to not offer honoraria. She says that there is still an idea of extracting from communities and tokenizing certain groups when it comes to universities in Baltimore.

Engaging the humanity within an institution can be a protective force against the violence of bureaucracy.

Nicole King talked about the cliché that "Institutions don't love you back." She maintains that when individuals working in community-university partnerships face bureaucracy, they need to connect to humanity by sharing capacity and resources.

> "If you get to the people in an institution, they can love you back." - Nicole King, UMBC

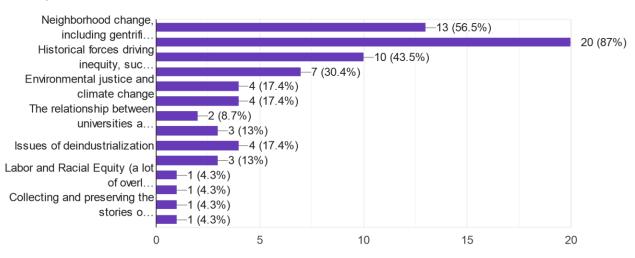
We [at the university] don't talk about failures.

Principal Investigators hope that Baltimore Field School will be "a seed planted for new scholars." However, Nicole King wants those new scholars to know that in taking the work in different directions, failures will be part of that work. Kimberly Moffitt explained that she is actively considering potential problems in this situation that need to be addressed up front.

Baltimore Field School: Planning Survey Responses

What are the main issues you would be interested in exploring as part of the Baltimore Field School project (please select the top three):

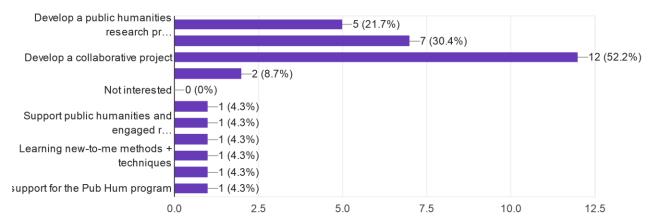
23 responses



Response options:

- Structural racism and racial justice in Baltimore and cities like it (87%)
- Neighborhood change, including gentrification and housing justice (56.5%)
- Historical forces driving inequity, such as neighborhood segregation (43.5%)
- Issues of land and food apartheid and justice (community farms, gardens, and land trusts)
- Environmental justice and climate change
- The Right to the City and social justice
- The relationship between universities and local neighborhoods
- Neoliberalism and its effects on cities and universities
- Issues of deindustrialization
- Redevelopment and city planning

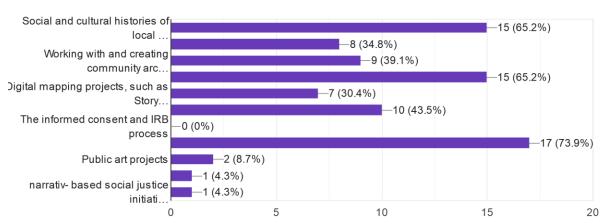
What is your main personal goal in participating in the field school? 23 responses



Response options:

- **Develop a collaborative project (52.2%)**
- Develop a public humanities course (30.4%)
- Develop a public humanities research project (21.7%)
- Develop a manifesto on ethical research practices
- Not interested
- Other (write-in)

What aspects of humanities research methods are you most interested in discussing: 23 responses

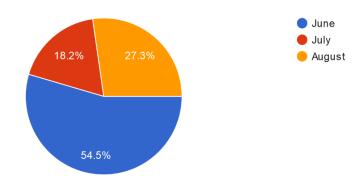


Response options:

Building trust and mutually beneficial partnerships (73.9%)

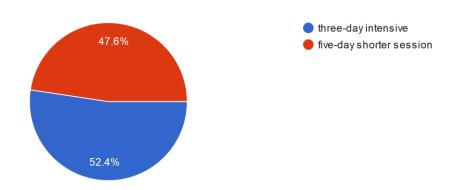
- Cultural documentation projects (photography, film, podcasts, etc.) (65.2%)
- Social and cultural histories of local neighborhoods (65.2%)
- Interview techniques and ethics from oral history to ethnography
- Working with and creating community archives
- Digital mapping projects, such as StoryMap or GIS
- Ethics and shared authority/ownership of research projects
- The informed consent and IRB process
- Public art projects

Would you prefer the summer institute to be a week in June, July, or August? 22 responses



Would you prefer a three-day intensive 10am - 4pm or five days of shorter sessions of two to three hours?

21 responses



Conclusions and Recommendations

Responses to the Baltimore Field School Planning Survey indicate that the most selected option for study was Structural racism and racial justice in Baltimore and cities like it. This is a good fit with the Community Partner Goal for the Baltimore Field School project to remain led by the Black communities in which the work will be done. The position that race must be addressed was mentioned by both Partner Leaders and Principal Investigators, as seen in themes under **Location-based considerations**.

Building trust in mutually beneficial partnerships was the most selected option in the Planning Survey for research methods potential participants would like to explore. This fits well with the Partner Leaders' and Principal Investigators' intentions for this project to be mutually beneficial, with shared power, reconciling with history (the role academics have played in harms inflicted upon Baltimore's Black communities), and confronting topics such as **power**, **race**, **and money**.

The other two highest endorsed research methods from the Planning Survey were Cultural documentation projects (photography, film, podcasts, etc.) and Social and cultural histories of local neighborhoods. These aims are an excellent match with Black Yield Institute's and Southwest Partnership's practical goals of collecting oral histories and finding ways to preserve cultural history.

Community Partner Leaders and Principal Investigators identified power, race, and money as topics that are rarely, if ever, discussed or addressed in relation to community-university projects. This shared perspective puts these project leaders at an advantage for demonstrating how to confront these issues, thereby improving project transparency and truly achieving shared power with mutually beneficial processes and outcomes.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on ideas and perspectives discussed by Principal Investigators and Community Partner Leaders. These take their recommendations and desires for this project into account, and address the lingering guestions listed in the Findings.

- 1) Thoroughly consider the long-term, far-reaching intentions of Black Yield Institute and Southwest Partnership to establish cooperative relationships with Baltimore City and the State of Maryland that will generate policies and practices to repair and heal their historically disenfranchised communities.
- 2) Center non-academic, non-university voices and perspectives to balance power and repair historically oppressive relationships between universities and Baltimore's Black/majority-Black neighborhoods.
- 3) Have individuals and teams working with this project collaborate to answer the lingering questions included among these findings, including those regarding "the public good."
- 4) Reflect on perceptions of community and institutional "diversity" and how that notion affects power dynamics in this partnership.
- 5) Make room to address the differences in the community organizing approaches of Black Yield Institute and the SB7 Coalition, as they both involve the Cherry Hill neighborhood.

In Closing

Baltimore Field School Principal Investigators and Community Partner Leaders are prepared to meet the objective of creating "a framework for faculty and graduate students to collaborate with community organizations in developing methods for ethical research and teaching projects focused on public humanities in Baltimore." Though all

parties have lingering questions regarding power, data, output, and the giving and taking of credit, they share compatible views and critiques of traditional universitycommunity partnerships and are not shying away from issues that have been avoided by academic institutions in the past. The leaders demonstrate great respect for one another and for one another's work in Baltimore. Through close reflection of the perspectives herein, they are poised to be trailblazers in the training of humanity scholars for ethical practices in university-community partnerships. Future assessments will focus on processes and outcomes and include participants and project consultants.