

Amory Simulation June 2021

Warning: Some statements in this exercise are offensive or uncomfortable. These statements are based on real quotes and are not designed to offend. Rather, they are designed to reflect reality.

General Instructions for All Participants

The city of Amory has a population of 600,000, with a total of 900,000 in the metropolitan area, located near the middle of Centerstate. The Amory population is diverse: roughly 55% non-Hispanic White; 30% Black or African American; and a variety of Asian, African and Hispanic backgrounds account for much of the remaining 15%. However, neighborhoods in Amory proper tend to be racially and socioeconomically segregated, as do the surrounding suburbs. In addition to Amory, four other cities make up the metropolitan area: Northburg, Eastburg, Southburg, and Westburg. *The facts of this case are based on actual controversies but names and other details have been changed to respect confidentiality. As a result, the facts – for example the name “Amory” – do not apply to any specific community.*

By Executive Order 13985, the President declared that the federal government should affirmatively advance equity, civil rights, racial justice, and equal opportunity for all.¹ The policy establishes plans to study existing federal agencies and determine best practices for equitable administration of government services. Federal resources will be reallocated to better support underserved communities and advance racial equity. Many cities see the new policy as an opportunity to advance their own racial justice programs. The major urban areas in Centerstate are working on policy changes that also include dramatic police reforms. However, many parts of the state are divided on the issue. The Mayor of Amory issued the attached Mayoral Directive concerning Amory’s position.

The following events have taken place during the past week:

1. Seven days ago, Darren Ward, a 23 year old Black man, was shot and killed by a police officer after a traffic stop on the north side of Amory. The officer’s body camera was not turned on, but the dashboard camera on their cruiser captured the encounter from a distance. Local activists in the Movement for Black Lives held a vigil downtown; started the social media hashtag #JusticeForDarren; and demanded the release of the dashcam footage. The Amory Police Chief declined to release the footage but assured the public that an internal investigation is underway. The officer who shot Ward was placed on paid administrative leave.
2. Six days ago, the Amory Monarchs, a professional indoor soccer team, played a home game in downtown Amory. The whole team linked arms and knelt during the National Anthem, and many players had “#JusticeForDarren” written in tape across their jerseys.

¹ The White House, *Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*, January 20, 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government/>

Centerstate State Representative Alan Parker, part-owner of the team, said after the Monarchs lost in overtime: “These guys need to get their heads back in the game. They are athletes, not social justice warriors, and they need to focus on what they’re paid to do.”

3. Five days ago, local TV reporter Macy Smith released a story she called “The *Real Truth* about Darren Ward.” The story featured an interview with a white woman named Eleanor Pruitt, a resident of Northburg. In the interview, Pruitt tells viewers that she had been driving behind Ward the prior evening and his car had been swerving dangerously and she thought the driver was intoxicated. She called 911 because, in her words, “This is exactly why we need police.” Smith and Pruitt called upon viewers to stand with the police officer, saying that he “heroically protected the hardworking taxpayers of Amory from a dangerous man who was behind the wheel while clearly intoxicated on some kind of substances.” The story was quickly picked up by national media outlets. Celebrity hip hop artist Amirah tweeted a clip of the interview with the comment, “This [expletive] KAREN got a young man KILLED. RIP Darren Ward #JusticeForDarren #DontCallthePolice.”
4. Four days ago, residents of Northburg held a rally in support of law enforcement officers. Northburg has had a visible pro-police presence since mid-2018, when two Northburg police officers were shot and killed while responding to a domestic violence call. Many homes and community buildings are decorated with “Blue Lives Matter” flags and signage. Northburg residents are resistant to the anti-police sentiment that has recently permeated the national consciousness. At the rally, Eleanor Pruitt is among the speakers who call upon the community to defend the reputation and hard work of their police force. Livestreamed videos and photos of Pruitt and the crowd were circulated widely on social media.

Although the day was largely peaceful, tensions rose when a small group of students from Northburg College showed up to protest the rally. Some of the videos and photos from the event show rally participants taunting and shoving the college students, who stood quietly holding homemade signs saying “Justice for Darren” and “All lives can’t matter until Black lives matter.” The Northburg police present at the rally did not intervene.



5. Three days ago, a Northburg teenager posted a video on TikTok of a group of white Northburg High School students bullying a Black genderqueer student. In the video, a white student grins at the camera and says “Let’s show this [*racist and homophobic epithet*] how to be a man.” One of the white students grabs the Black student’s handbag while others kick the Black student’s feet out from under them.² The white students taunt the Black student and laugh while playing keep-away with their handbag. At the end of the video, the camera zooms in on the Black student crying as the others can be heard laughing. The video immediately went viral and has garnered national attention.

² They/them is a gender-neutral pronoun often preferred by nonbinary individuals: <https://www.them.us/story/coming-out-they-them-pronouns>

6. Two days ago, the Amory City Council met to discuss a budget proposal by the City Council President that would reallocate a portion of the police budget toward social programs that support underserved communities. In anticipation of the meeting, the Amory chapter of Back the Blue partnered with the Northburg chapter to organize a demonstration outside City Hall. A variety of other groups showed up to support the pro-police message, including Mothers Against Drunk Driving and Saint Michael's Catholic Church. As several hundred pro-police protesters gathered, a wave of counter-protesters marched to City Hall to confront them. Several local activist groups, alerted to the pro-police demonstration by a Facebook event, arrived by the hundreds. Soon, the Back the Blue demonstrators were surrounded by counter-protesters and pinned against City Hall. Several fights broke out and the on-duty police were severely outnumbered. The protest was so disruptive that the City Council meeting was shut down.

These events have caused multiple hostile fights on social media. Many said that the recent incidents in and around Amory are proof that racism is a public health crisis and the police cannot be trusted. While others have said that the city's lack of respect for police is shameful. The posts contain insulting, even hateful comments about Darren Ward, Black residents of Amory, law enforcement, and all the Northburg students involved in the viral TikTok video – some in support of the white students, others calling for their expulsion.

Although the Mayor's office has received no word yet of any police use of force against protestors over the past week, there will be a strong media focus on that issue if any occurs. At the end of last year, the local Fraternal Order of Police issued a public vote of no confidence in the Amory Mayor, City Council President, and Police Chief.

The Mayor has called together the city leaders to strategize for a press conference that will take place at the Near-North Recreation Center, in Amory—though near Northburg—two hours after the simulation begins! The press conference was announced three weeks ago in order for the Mayor to announce her commitment to advancing racial equity in Amory. The Mayor does not intend to cancel the press conference and must now consider how to address these emergent issues. The Mayor will also use the occasion to reiterate the attached Mayoral Directive.

Given recent events, the police have reported that we should expect protestors from both Amory and Northburg, and perhaps even national groups. The Mayor has requested that the group work together to create bullet points for a message that will be delivered at the press conference (see attached email from the Mayor). The Mayor would like the group's suggestions in 45 minutes, so the Mayor has time to prepare. In addition to Amory officials, the Mayor has invited the County Prosecutor, the Mayor and Police Chief of Northburg, the Superintendent of the Northburg City Schools, and the Northburg College Police Chief. Some invited participants will likely bring staff support. Support for the President's racial justice policies seems stronger among Amory residents than among suburban residents.

The Mayor knows that it will be difficult to hear from all of the interested parties in this situation so she is considering breaking the meeting up into task forces or bringing in members of the community to speak to the group once they finish giving their initial recommendations to the Mayor.

Concurrent to the Mayor's meeting, the Amory Department of Neighborhoods convened a group of leaders of community organizations who have been meeting regularly about division within Amory. The following community leaders were invited to this conversation:

- The Assistant Director of the Amory Department of Neighborhoods.
- The Amory Urban League President.
- The Executive Director of the Amory Bar Association.
- The Chair of the Amory Inter-Faith Coalition.
- The Amory United Way Executive Director.
- The President of the Amory Coalition for Black Lives.
- The President of BlackOut Amory, a queer intersectional activist group.
- The Executive Director of the Amory Chamber of Commerce.

If you would like to talk with persons not listed here, please ask the facilitators, and they will provide a role player any person requested.

Everyone will learn more in this simulation if you can stay in role. To facilitate this, when you need more facts, make up facts that are likely to be accurate in similar circumstances. Please treat this simulation as you would "improv" (improvisational comedy): go with what is being said and say things that would be consistent with the situation even if you do not have the specific facts in your background information. To help people remain in role, please do not break your role or refer to the simulation directions. If another person breaks role, please stay in yours.

From: Mayor, City of Amory
Sent: Yesterday at 5:00PM
To: <City Leaders Group>
Subject: Strategy Meeting

Hello All,

Good evening. I know the past few days have imposed a lot of pressure and coordination challenges on your offices. I would like to give everyone a chance to speak to each other before our press conference tomorrow afternoon. **We will meet tomorrow at 1:30 – the press conference is scheduled for 3pm eastern time.** Here is a proposed agenda:

1. Provide bullet points that my staff can use to write the statement the City will issue at the press conference. Who/what agencies should be present at the press conference?
**I know there are important differences in opinion about the federal policy present in the meeting. These issues do not need to be decided today. Instead, we need to decide as a city what our unified response will be while we consider what we will do.*
2. How can we correct the misinformation that is being circulated by radio and social media?

In order to prepare for the press conference, I would like to have your thoughts (in bullet-point form) on these **first two issues within the first 45 minutes**. Once we've settled on bullet-points for the press conference, I'll send these out for my staff to work on drafting. I'd like to address these issues as well:

3. Whether to call in additional experts and/or stakeholders to help Amory officials in this crisis.
4. Street policing decisions – how should our officers respond to the current climate in Amory? Especially during protests.
5. Based on experience in other cities, we can expect public records request for the police body-cam videos from all demonstrations. How should we handle these requests?
6. How to hold this week's city council meeting and preserve the peace.

We will also discuss who will join me at the press conference. Please consider who you think should attend and whether they should give a statement.

The Amory Department of Neighborhoods has convened a group of leaders of community organizations – constructive individuals who care about Amory and want to help the members of the Amory community work together in an atmosphere of trust. I hope that you will find out what they can do to help.

Thank you all for your help and dedication to the City. We appreciate all you do. Please let me know if you have any questions. I will see you at the meeting.

Sincerely, Mayor, City of Amory

MAYORAL DIRECTIVE³

Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis and Promoting Public Safety Reforms

February 3, 2021

Issued by Amory Mayor

WHEREAS, my tenure as mayor is marked by a commitment to advance an equity agenda for the safety and prosperity of every Amory resident regardless of race, gender identity, income or neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, racism is rooted in the foundation of America; much of the Black experience in America has been endured under slavery and Jim Crow which allowed preferential opportunities for some while subjecting people of color to hardships and disadvantages in every area of life; and

WHEREAS, systemic racism is a public health crisis in Amory, Centerstate, and nationwide; health disparities have existed for more than 400 years in America, and racism continues to negatively impact the lives of people of color in the City of Amory; and

WHEREAS, the City of Amory is engaging directly in a reform agenda for public safety, based on research and significant input from residents to fight racism wherever it is found within our systems, including recommendations to reform the Division of Police; and

WHEREAS, affirmatively advancing equity, civil rights, and racial justice is the responsibility of the whole of our Government.

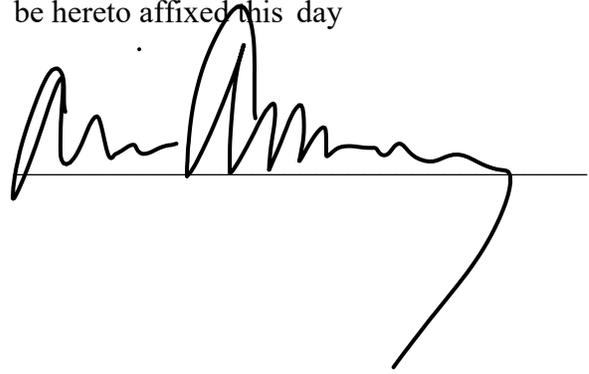
NOW, THEREFORE, I, Mayor of the City of Amory, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Centerstate Constitution, the Charter of the City of Amory, and Section 123.01 of the Amory City Code, do hereby order and direct:

1. The establishment of an Equity Committee to conduct a Study of Disparities in Health, Education, and Policing; to report findings to the Mayor and City Council of Amory; and to make recommendations for measures that will correct these disparities.
2. The establishment of an Independent Civilian Review Board to improve accountability and transparency, building trust between residents and our Division of Police.
3. The establishment of a Special Investigations Team to investigate use of force and other complaints against officers of the Division of Police.
4. The establishment of a Crisis Response Unit within the Division of Police, comprised of EMTs and mental health professionals, that will respond to mental health crises and train police officers in mental health crisis response techniques.

³ Based on Columbus City Council Resolution Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis in Columbus:
<https://www.columbus.gov/racismresolution/>

This order shall be in full force and effect after my signature is affixed to this document.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the
Mayor of the City of Amory, Centerstate, to
be hereto affixed this day

A handwritten signature in black ink, written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and appears to be the name 'M. Amory'. The line extends to the right of the signature and then curves downwards.