

D’Nyah Jefferson - Philmore

PITCH #1:

TOPIC:

George Floyd Killing, Protests, & Police Reform: D.C Residents’ trust in Policing

Title:

Trying to Erase History: Remembering George Floyd and the Lost Black Lives Matter Plaza

Background Info:

According to *Newsweek*, Black people in the United States are nearly three times more likely than White people to be killed by police, even when unarmed. This long-standing reality came sharply into focus on May 25, 2020, when George Floyd was murdered in Minneapolis after a police officer knelt on his neck during an arrest over a counterfeit \$20 bill. His death sparked nationwide outrage and grief, igniting protests across the country as people demanded accountability, justice, and systemic change. Washington, D.C. became one of the central locations for these demonstrations, with residents and activists flooding the streets to speak out against police brutality and racial injustice.

In response to the sustained protests near the White House, the city renamed a section of 16th Street Black Lives Matter Plaza and painted the words “Black Lives Matter” in bold yellow letters across the roadway. The plaza quickly became a powerful symbol of resistance, remembrance, and collective voice, representing both the pain felt by Black communities and their demand to be seen and protected. Alongside this symbolic action, D.C. implemented policy changes such as expanded use of body cameras, revised use-of-force guidelines, and increased civilian oversight of police conduct. Together, Black Lives Matter Plaza and these reforms reflect the city’s attempt to acknowledge the public outcry and move toward safer, more equitable policing, while also reminding the nation that the fight for justice is far from over.

Why is this story relevant:

Black Lives Matter Plaza is more than painted letters on a street—it represents a moment when public grief, anger, and hope collided and demanded national attention. It stands as a physical reminder of the lives lost to police violence and the voices that refused to be ignored. While D.C. implemented reforms like body cameras and updated use-of-force policies, the plaza forces an ongoing question: have symbolic gestures and policy changes actually led to safer, fairer treatment for Black residents, or do they simply mark a moment in history without long-term accountability? Understanding the meaning and impact of this space matters because it reflects how cities respond to racial injustice—and whether those responses result in real change.

This story also matters because it asks us to examine how public spaces shape memory, activism, and political pressure. Black Lives Matter Plaza continues to be a gathering place for protest, reflection, and dialogue, especially for Black communities who have long experienced disproportionate harm at the hands of law enforcement. As conversations around policing, justice, and racial equity continue, the plaza raises critical questions about whose voices are heard, how progress is measured, and what justice truly looks like beyond symbolism.

In May 2025, part of the Black Lives Matter street mural at the plaza was removed, sparking debate and concern in the city. Many community members and activists saw this as a symbolic erasure of the movement's presence in D.C., while city officials cited threats to federal funding as the reason for the partial removal. This event highlights ongoing tensions between activism, public space, and government priorities, making the plaza's role in D.C. an even more important story to cover.

Potential Interviews:

I plan to interview residents in Washington, D.C. who attended the 2020 protests or have spent time at Black Lives Matter Plaza before it was removed. I want to hear from them about what the plaza means to them personally, how it reflects the movement for racial justice, and how they feel about policing and public safety in the city today.

I would also like to speak with local activists or organizers who were involved in the Black Lives Matter movement in D.C. They can explain the significance of the plaza as a public space for protest, how it has kept attention on police accountability, and what ongoing activism looks like nearly five years later.

I would like to include the perspective of a spokesperson from the Metropolitan Police Department about reforms, oversight, and changes in police practices since 2020. Their insight will help viewers understand how the city has responded to calls for accountability.

Finally, I plan to speak with a local professor or expert in criminal justice, African American studies, or urban policy. They can provide context on how public spaces like Black Lives Matter Plaza influence activism, community engagement, and ongoing discussions about justice and equity in D.C.

Supporting Elements:

Footage of Black Lives Matter Plaza, showing the wide street mural, visitors walking through the space, and signs or artwork left at the site. Archival images and videos from the 2020 D.C. protests will provide context about how the plaza came to be and why it is significant.

Scenes of police and National Guard presence in busy areas like U Street can highlight ongoing safety measures and public concern. Timeline graphics will show key events from George Floyd's death to the creation of the plaza and local policy changes in D.C., helping viewers follow the story's history.

Research Sources:

<https://prisonjournalismproject.org>

<https://www.telf.org/black-lives-matter-plaza>

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/workers-remove-dc-black-lives-matter-plaza-mural-avoid-funding-cuts-2025-03-11/?>

PITCH #2

TOPIC:

January 6th Attack on the Capitol

Title:

Blocked Streets, Busy Lives: How January 6 Security Measures Changed Small Businesses in D.C

Background Info:

As reported by ABC News, in 2025 the White House created a webpage describing the January 6, 2021, protesters as “peaceful” and “orderly,” while claiming that police escalated tensions. The timeline mischaracterized some of the day’s events and falsely suggested that the 2020 election was stolen.

On January 6, 2021, a violent mob stormed the U.S. Capitol while Congress was certifying the presidential election results. The attack shocked the nation and left a lasting impact on Washington, D.C. Since that day, security in and around the Capitol has been dramatically increased. Barricades, checkpoints, and restricted access have become a permanent part of the streetscape, and law enforcement and federal agencies have worked closely to protect the area.

These security measures continue today. National Guard troops are still stationed near the White House and the Capitol, especially on busy weekends or during special events, and access to certain streets and entrances remains limited. These ongoing changes have altered how residents, workers, and visitors experience the city, making daily life around Capitol Hill different from what it was before the attack

Why is this story relevant:

The January 6th attack wasn’t just a national story — it happened in the heart of Washington, D.C., and its effects are still being felt, especially by small business owners near the White House and Capitol. Since that day, security measures like permanent fences, checkpoints, cameras, restricted streets, and National Guard patrols have changed how people get around and how businesses operate. Now that President Trump is back in office, access to the White House is even more limited, and owners have to navigate heavy security while trying to keep their businesses open.

Even five years later, many residents and business owners feel like the event and its consequences have been overlooked or erased. Business owners may wonder if these restrictions make their customers feel safe or drive them away. Do streets blocked for security affect daily traffic and delivery schedules? How do owners feel about the continued National Guard presence near their shops? By asking these questions, this story will show how a major national event continues to shape the daily life, economy, and public spaces of D.C., keeping local communities connected to a story that is still unfolding.

Potential Interviews:

I would like to interview a small business owner near Capitol Hill to hear how the security changes, fences and National Guard presence have affected their daily operations and customer traffic. This will

give a perspective on how residents and workers have to adjust to the new restrictions compared to before 2021.

I also plan to speak with a resident living close to the White House or Capitol to understand how these permanent security measures impact their sense of safety, freedom and everyday life. Their perspective will show how the city feels to the people who live there.

Additionally, I hope to interview a security expert or community liaison from the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department or a federal agency. They can explain why these security measures are still in place, what they mean for residents, and how the city balances safety with accessibility

Supporting Elements:

The package will include B-roll footage of Capitol security checkpoints, fences, and National Guard troops patrolling key areas. I will also capture pedestrians, traffic, and streets near the White House and Capitol that are blocked or restricted.

On-screen graphics will show a timeline of security changes from January 6, 2021, to the present day. This will help viewers understand how the city has changed over time.

Interviews and footage will be combined to show both visible and everyday impacts on residents, workers, and business owners, highlighting how a national event continues to shape local life and public spaces.

Research Sources:

<https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-white-house-attempts-rewrite-history-jan-6/story?id=128953694>

<https://www.uscp.gov/media-center/press-releases>

PITCH #3:

#METOO CASES (I.E., R. KELLY & BILL COSBY)

Title:

Finding a Voice: How House of Ruth Supports #MeToo Survivors in D.C.

Background Info:

As reported by House of Ruth Maryland, the organization has been a leader in helping survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault since it was founded in 1977. It started as a small crisis shelter in Baltimore with one staff member and a volunteer Board of Directors, providing women and their children a safe place to escape abuse. Today, House of Ruth offers an 84-bed shelter, transitional housing, and holistic programs including on-site health care and counseling. Over the years, it has become one of the nation's most comprehensive domestic violence centers, providing the services survivors need to rebuild their lives safely and free from fear.

The #MeToo movement brought national attention to sexual assault and accountability, but for many survivors in Washington, D.C., the real impact is local. Organizations like House of Ruth provide counseling, legal support, and advocacy programs for survivors right in the community, turning the movement from headlines into real help. Local survivors can access safe spaces, support groups, and resources to report abuse or start the healing process. This story highlights how a national movement has shaped support systems in the D.C. area, showing that the fight against sexual violence is not just national — it happens in neighborhoods, offices, and homes across the capital.

Why is this story relevant:

This story is relevant because it shows how the national #MeToo movement has real, tangible effects for survivors in Washington, D.C. While high-profile cases make headlines, many survivors face challenges close to home, and organizations like House of Ruth provide the critical support they need. Questions this story could explore include: Are survivors aware of local resources like House of Ruth? How effective are counseling, advocacy, and legal services at helping them heal and pursue justice? How has the movement changed the way D.C. supports survivors, and what challenges remain?

By focusing on a local organization, this story makes the impact of #MeToo personal and visible in the community. It highlights how survivors in the city access safe spaces, legal guidance, and emotional support, turning national awareness into local action. This package would help viewers understand that the fight against sexual violence isn't only a headline story — it happens in their neighborhoods, workplaces, and communities every day.

Potential Interviews:

I would like to interview a representative from House of Ruth D.C. who can discuss the programs they offer, how they support survivors of sexual assault, and how the #MeToo movement has influenced their

work in the city. This could include information on counseling, legal advocacy, and outreach efforts that directly help local survivors.

I would also like to speak with a licensed counselor or advocate who works with survivors at House of Ruth. They could explain common challenges survivors face, how they access resources, and the types of support that are most effective in helping survivors heal and navigate the legal system.

If possible, I would interview an anonymous survivor who has utilized House of Ruth's services. Hearing a firsthand perspective would provide a human element to the story, showing how local survivors experience support and empowerment, and how the movement has affected their ability to seek help and justice.

Supporting Elements:

The package will include B-roll of House of Ruth's offices, counseling rooms, and signage to show viewers where survivors can access help. Close-ups of pamphlets, hotline numbers, and resource guides will provide practical information for those in need. On-screen graphics can highlight local support resources, legal services, and ways to report abuse in D.C. This story could also feature images or footage from community workshops or support groups to give viewers a sense of the services available and the people behind them.

Research Sources:

<https://hruth.org/about-us/>

https://ovsjg.dc.gov/?utm_source