

Does Excessive Contact lead to Deadly Force?

The year of 2021 will be another major turning point for Policing in America. The perceptions of policing in America continues to operate in the blemishing shadow of previous police interactions with people of color, which has often ended in the use of deadly force. At the forefront of this national debate on policing and interactions with people of color, has been an ongoing discussion about Racial Profiling surrounding motor vehicle stops and urban gun crime reduction strategies like that of the NYPD's Stop-Frisk. This year already bears the burdens of an evolving pandemic, increased mental health ailment, increased records of substance abuse, food insecurity, economic uncertainty, increased violent crime rates and racially charged political frictions. Therefore, it will be imperative that both policy and law makers consider recommendations that have the highest probability of curtailing deadly interactions between police and minority communities. In doing so we can assure an immediate amendment to both municipal and state laws that will remove race and bias as a mainstay in the Police Culture, Police Practice, and Police Standard Operating Procedures.

The social trigger for immediate police reform has its most recent roots in the deadly police shooting of unarmed Mike Brown in 2012. The more recent highlighted case of such is the deadly shooting of unarmed Andre Maurice Hill at the close of the year in December 2020 (Belle, 2020). These tragic incidents, and others that are not named here, represent an ongoing reminder of the systematic breakdown of one of the most vital resources to every community in America-- personal safety.

Since 1998, I have examined the topic of community police relations and police use of force as it impacts communities of color; particularly Black, Hispanic, and Latino men. After 23 years of research, study and interviews with police and community members, I have concluded that the common factors that lead to many of the deadly encounters between police and the minority community are the result of excessive contact with police. American society has significantly shifted to hold police officers accountable for acts of abuse and use of force only thereafter. However, many official educators and legislators continue to grapple at delivering immediate relief to the affected community.

Many laws that encourage police contact were written over 50 years ago, and many of them have not been fully evaluated to determine if they are effective in changing social behavior. Based on the state that one resides, the language may differ; however, the policies that govern them will have the same effect and impact. My research and study in this area have identified these recommendations which are based on the implementation of actions aimed at moving policing away from "Conflict Spaces."

The first recommendation is to discontinue chase and pursuit of stolen vehicles by police, unless the vehicle is classified as *carjacking with weapon, or involved in a life-threatening crime*. A police officers' scope of duties should not include "Stolen Vehicle Recovery" for insurance agencies. The second recommendation is amending Motor Vehicle Statutes by removing all Equipment, Seat Belt, Tinted Window, and Registration violations, as well as Emission Expirations or Insurance inquiries, as cause for an enforcement or motor vehicle stop by an officer. As of 2015, the Connecticut Motor Vehicle Infraction Code had approximately 493 motor vehicle equipment violations listed as law which translates into 493 additional reasons that allow give police officers the right to stop a motorist. A police officers' scope of duties should not be to act as "Fee Collectors" for any State. Officers duties should have the focus of preventing, enforcing, and monitoring moving motor vehicle violations that put the public at immediate risk. The third recommendation is amending State Statutes for Public Drinking, Loitering, and Disorderly Conduct. These violations require and allow officers to *self-initiate* enforcement that has led and often continues to be used as racially implicit/bias policing tactics. This usually results in disproportional police contact and enforcement.

More cutting-edge reform could include creating a mandated Statewide Use of Force Policy and Procedures that must be adopted and implemented by all police departments, private detectives, and armed security agencies operating within that state. Such a policy should include, Use of Deadly Force, Use of Non-Lethal Force, De-escalation Procedures, Duty to Render First Aid, and Duty to Intervene. Next steps would include creating a Statewide Public Complaint/Reporting System that also must be adopted and implemented by all police departments, private detectives, and armed security agencies operating within a state. The State-Wide data bank could be useful to tracks complaints by city, departments, officers, or dates. Data banks could also be accessible to the public to enhance public trust. The data should show status of complaint and outcome regardless of whether an officer is terminated, prosecuted, reinstated, promoted, or transferred to another department or employer. The complaint site and system could serve as a quality control for a police certification, re-certification, intrastate hiring, and department lateral transfers. This transparency maintains accountability and retains trust.

Another community trust- building effort would include creating a Reporting System to capture racial, ethnic, gender, and religious data when conducting pedestrian stops (i.e., trespassing, loitering, disorderly conduct, breach of peace, and interfering with a police officer). This data should also be made public in an annual report.

Ultimately, we need to redefine the Police Scope of Duties, which is one of the most effective non-bureaucratic efforts out of all the previous recommendations. Get police out of performing non-policing matters! Discontinuing duties such as; responding to homeless calls, medical calls, MVA calls (no-injuries), noise complaints, civil investigations, fraud (credit card/bank/checks/identity theft/counterfeit bills), Building Code Enforcement, Loitering, Public Drinking,

Enforcing Legal Marijuana Card Verification and Receptacle Storage, will drastically remove police from the personal space of the public overwhelmed with social-economic challenge which police have not been trained to properly address.

As America continues to try and heal from a pandemic, all efforts were made to find preventative treatment in nine-months that normally takes five to ten years. We did it! And even during the pandemic, America has launched two missions to the moon. Now is the time that we start working on a cure that brings an end to these *avoidable* deadly encounters and excessive misuse of police force with the public. We know better. Let's do better.

---End---Published 1/12/2021 New Haven Independent:

https://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/police_problem_excessive_contact/

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