

Strengthening the Relationship between Law Enforcement and Communities of Color



Developing an Agenda for Action



COPS

Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice

References to specific agencies, companies, products, or services should not be considered an endorsement by the U.S. Department of Justice. Rather, the references are illustrations to supplement discussion of the issues.

The Internet references cited in this publication were valid as of the date of publication. Given that URLs and websites are in constant flux, the COPS Office cannot vouch for their current validity.

Recommended citation: Palladian Partners, Inc. 2014. Strengthening the Relationships between Law Enforcement and Communities of Color: Developing an Agenda for Action. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. Published 2014

Background

On April 4, 2014, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) hosted a conference with law enforcement officials, civil rights activists, academic experts, community leaders, and policymakers at the Ford Foundation offices in New York City. This forum was the first in a series of forums focusing on building trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

The meeting built on the findings of an earlier conference—held on January 12, 2012, and hosted by the COPS Office in conjunction with the National Network for Safe Communities (NNSC)—that addressed “Racial Reconciliation, Truth-Telling, and Police Legitimacy.” At that meeting, **Professor David Kennedy**, co-chair and founder of the NNSC, summarized the two competing and destructive narratives that have emerged between police and communities of color:

Many in the African-American community feel that most cops are dishonest and out to get them, that the CIA is behind the drug epidemic, and it’s all a conspiracy to lock up more and more African-American men. On the other hand, the cops will say the community is complicit, that “nobody cares,” “no one is raising their kids,” “everybody is living off of drug money,” and “the only thing we can do is occupy them.”

This meeting focused on identifying an “agenda for action” to provide a concrete plan for confronting this profound misunderstanding and breaking the cycle of mistrust and cynicism that for too long has fractured the relationship between the police and communities of color and subverted the power of their mutual cooperation.

Shaping the Discussion

Prior to the roundtable discussions, the panelists heard from distinguished speakers who provided perspective and insight to inform the meeting’s ambitious agenda.

Loretta Lynch, U.S. attorney, Eastern District of New York, suggested that the starting point of the day should be to make a concerted effort to ensure that both groups—police and communities of color—are truly seen and truly understood. She explained,

To say that the minority community has a conflicted relationship with law enforcement is a profound understatement. But if you listen closely, you can hear how often both groups are saying the same thing: “Don’t look at me and just see the uniform.” “Don’t look at me and assume the worst.” There is a mutual desire to be understood. We can find commonality from this common ground.



COPS Office Director Ronald Davis

1

“There is a mutual desire to be understood. We can find commonality from this common ground.”



New York Mayor Bill de Blasio

Attorney General Eric Holder addressed the group via video. He declared that community policing must play a central role in reducing the risk of exposure to violence for boys and young men of color, both as victims and as perpetrators. He emphasized the need for trust between law enforcement and community leaders and the importance of finding a better way forward to achieve this goal:

Far too many young men of color become entangled in a vicious circle of poverty, criminality, and incarceration. The relationships between law enforcement and this population are characterized by hostility and mistrust. Forums like this are so important to bring leaders together not to engage in philosophical discussions but to find concrete solutions.

New York Mayor Bill de Blasio described the grassroots sentiment that he has heard from New Yorkers about their relationship with police: “They want to work together and have a deep connection because they realize that the absence of those connections makes too many things impossible.” Mayor de Blasio recounted a story that a prominent minister from Queens had told him. The minister was expecting a visit from an older African-American parishioner who was coming to discuss ways to address the rift between the police and the community. On his way to see the minister, the man was stopped by the police. The mayor called this an example of how much a reset is needed. He issued this challenge:

We have a society in which it is not unfair for people to wonder if they belong and whether they have opportunity. For our young people, they wonder if there is anything ahead. Our job is to reinstall that hope in them. We must show our young people they belong and are our future. Show young men of color in this city that we believe in them as the future of our city.

Mayor de Blasio underscored his belief that it is possible to drive down crime and repair community relationships at the same time, saying that building a unified society means taking away negatives, particularly those that make people feel that they will be treated unfairly. He offered this advice: “If you want to convince someone they matter, visibly invest in them.”

Tony West, associate attorney general, U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), provided a dual perspective, born of both his professional experience working closely with law enforcement and his personal experience growing up as a young African-American male. Based on his professional experience, he readily acknowledged the dedication and commitment of law enforcement officers under difficult circumstances, asserting that most officers take their policing profession to heart because they



Associate Attorney General Tony West

believe that it is an honor to serve. But, he added, he also was coming to the discussion as his father's son. He described the lessons that his father taught him when he was a young boy, lessons that were informed by family history and community experiences: "Keep your hands visible, ask permission before reaching for your registration, never talk back, and speak only when spoken to." His father called these survival skills.

Mr. West noted that in 2043, people of color would be the majority. He cautioned,

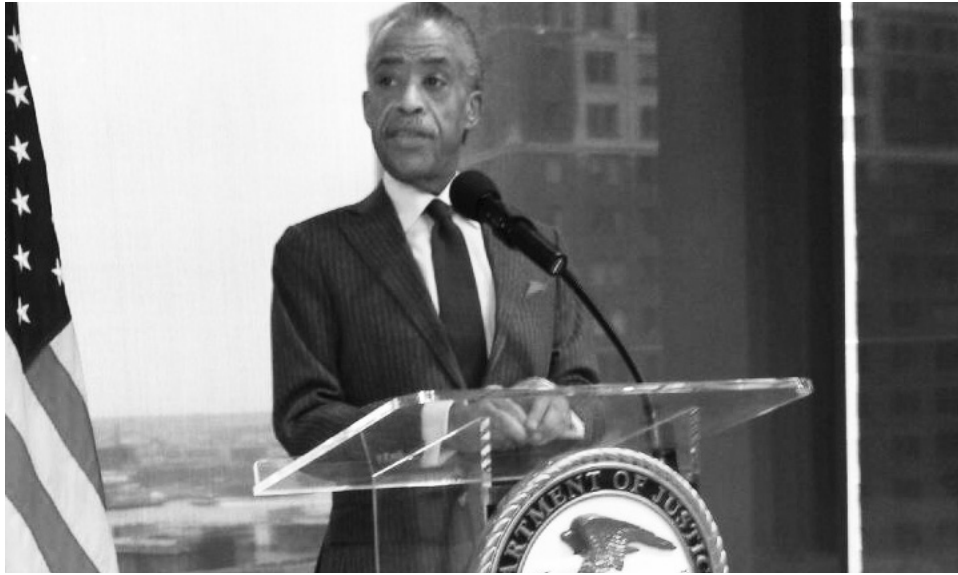
There are still too many pockets where folks are trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty and violence—where negative contact with the criminal justice system by too many young men of color. Few things are as troubling as criminal justice that lacks integrity. So as we have reduced violent crime over the last few decades, communities of color have borne a disproportionate share of incarcerations. Law enforcement has been a threat to them, not an ally. As we see neighborhoods changing, it is clear that community law enforcement must serve the communities to which they are accountable. Devising a better plan as to how to treat young people of color is not an option; it's an imperative.

Mr. West envisioned this conference as an opportunity to let the respective narratives and histories shape a discussion that would foster the foundation of trust that is essential for productive law enforcement. He framed the discussion as a call to action:

We know that individuals that come into contact with law enforcement are more likely to obey the law in the future if they feel that they have been treated fairly. Today is about turning what we know into what we can do.

3

"Keep your hands visible, ask permission before reaching for your registration, never talk back, and speak only when spoken to." Tony West's father called these survival skills.



Reverend Al Sharpton

Opening Keynote: “Law Enforcement and Civil Rights”

Reverend Al Sharpton, President, National Action Network

Reverend Sharpton recalled that on this day, 46 years ago, he was a 13-year-old boy in Brooklyn and was watching television with his mother when the news that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., had been killed came across the screen. He did not understand why his mother began to cry hysterically. She told him that he would have had to grow up in the Deep South to understand Dr. King’s importance. It was not until many years later that he realized what she meant and that he learned, as he put it, “As time moves, a lot of us don’t move on with the times and have no appreciation for those who paved the way.” Noting that the election of President Obama would have been unthinkable just a generation ago, Reverend Sharpton declared, “Now we must not simply *discuss* coming together, but *actually* come together.” He described his vision for the way forward:

I spoke to young people in Chicago, saying we must stop the gun violence. We can’t get that angry with each other and be remembered only for being destructive. We’ve got to be able to work with the local police to deal with all the guns in our community. One kid said to me, “We can’t talk to the man.” I told him, “We *are* the man.” People didn’t fight and die for us to be the lawless ones. They expected more. So one of the things we must do is reestablish in young people the expectation rather than letting them believe that they just fit into a stereotype. Our community cannot assume that law enforcement is the enemy and will always give us a negative and disenfranchising experience. The way to build trust is [to] get away from our preconceived notions of each other, no matter how justified they might be.

Reverend Sharpton acknowledged that deep divisions remain and challenged law enforcement to open the lines of communication:

Every case I fought, I was called by a victim; I did not chase after them. Ask yourselves: Why do they call me and not the police? It is because they feel that I will represent them. Your job is not done until they will call you. What did we go to jail for? To make this system work. What is controversial about asking the DOJ for justice? At the end of the day, we can be together if we are serious about serving the same people: the citizens of this country. Law enforcement may not be comfortable with all community leadership, but law enforcement still must listen to them and call them first.

He concluded by urging leaders to take the necessary next steps, even if doing so seems unpopular with their constituencies:

If we can leave our comfort zone and meet in the middle, the legacy is that we deserve whatever respect we receive. We can learn from Dr. King's example and grow beyond the boundaries. In the '90s, Commissioner Bratton and I fought verbally with a different vision. But we met yesterday on profiling. To his crowd and my crowd, it raises questions; but if we don't do it, he doesn't deserve to be commissioner, and I don't deserve to be a civil rights leader.

Bill Bratton, Commissioner, New York Police Department

Commissioner Bratton left no doubt about the importance of the day's agenda, saying, "This is the issue of our times and has been for several generations." He reminded the participants that 46 years ago, in 1968, law enforcement was the most visible tool of government in the communities but was not delivering the promise of democracy—the promise that police should ensure that all citizens have access to the freedoms of democracy.

Commissioner Bratton observed that this forum would have been impossible in the 1960s, and he called the ability to convene it today a testament to how progressive America's police have become. He noted that the world could be moved with a lever, so long as there was a strong fulcrum. The commissioner declared,

If we don't get this right, we squander the promise of democracy. A lever is needed to move this forward, and law enforcement must be the fulcrum. We can show the world the way democracy was meant to be. I do believe that we can get this right. Today, let's find a way to be the fulcrum so that when society uses the lever, it is on a strong foundation.



Associate Attorney General Tony West and Commissioner Bill Bratton

Commissioner Bratton observed that this forum would have been impossible in the 1960s, and he called the ability to convene it today a testament to how progressive America's police have become.

Repairing the Relationship between Law Enforcement and Communities of Color

Commissioner Bratton introduced the discussion with a quote attributed to Mahatma Gandhi: “To create change, you must become the change.”

To illustrate how determined he is to speak to and work on the relationship between law enforcement and communities of color, the commissioner discussed how he spent his time during the past week. His days included meeting with Reverend Sharpton on stop and frisk and racial profiling; sending teams to Los Angeles to collaborate and learn from the city’s experience with racial profiling, camera technology, and predictive policing; encouraging the expansion of the Cops with Kids program that fosters role-playing interactions between police and kids with issues with the criminal justice system that lead to candid discussions; meeting with a senior African-American official of Citibank and a wide variety of like-minded executives to discuss how they see this relationship through their prism; meeting with a district attorney and police officials in Brooklyn about alternate support mechanisms for young people who have had an arrest experience to find a way to pull them back and support them; holding discussions on violence and how to improve relationships with African-American men; and identifying precincts to work on ways to get kids away from violence. It was a full agenda, one that the commissioner urged law enforcement to embrace:

This is incumbent on all police. We must be viewed not as the oppressors but as the agents of change and be creative and passionate about this. So again, this is the issue of our times, and we must get this right because it impacts the promise of democracy.

Finding Ways to Talk to One Another

The question of how law enforcement and communities of color could better communicate with one another was a cross-cutting, touchstone issue. Chris Watler, project director for the Harlem Community Justice Center and forum moderator, recalled a meeting with police where a mother rose in exasperation and said, “I don’t know why you do what you do. Why do you operate that way? We used to know the cops in our communities; if our kids messed up, they’d bring them to us.” Mr. Watler asked the participants to consider why the community does not understand what law enforcement does and what law enforcement has learned about what it needs to say to the community.

Yale Law School Professor Tracey Meares emphasized the need to engender an expectation of trust in the people law enforcement is dealing with and to treat them with respect. She cautioned that these factors are not legislative or found in constitutional law; they are simply something else that police must do. Oxnard (California) Police Chief Jeri Williams agreed, noting that law enforcement tends to keep things close to the vest. “To make trust and respect part of our mission and culture,” she said, “our officers have to hear this from the top.”

Joanne Jaffe, chief of the Housing Bureau, New York Police Department (NYPD), suggested that the dilemma of policing in public housing is a case study of the difficulty in bringing understanding on both sides. She noted that so many residents of public housing are afraid to go out for fear of getting mugged that it is understandable that they might create a gang for survival. The community wants the police there and wants them to act, but when the door locks are continuously broken, it appears that the police are settling for failure. She said,

We struggle so much with reducing the amount of crime and the proportion of violent crime which impacts on community policing. But it really is about getting involved in people’s lives and finding those mechanisms to reach so many people—they don’t have a voice and need law enforcement so badly.



Associate Attorney General Tony West; Loretta A. Lynch, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York; and Commissioner Bill Bratton

Chicago Police Superintendent Garry McCarthy laid some of the blame on the metrics of policing, which he said are not producing outcomes and are leading to overspecialization. He recalled that when he came to Chicago, he disbanded the huge task forces and pushed accountability to the precincts, giving them the resources for policing and holding the beat officers accountable for the conditions that occurred on their beat. He described his model:

Get the cops back into delivering the services we want to deliver. Critical to reconciliation is the narrative of bad relationships that have not yet been overcome. We must deliver the services, and we are training our police officers to do the police work in a more holistic approach. Tell people what you are doing because, if not, they will draw their own conclusions. We need effective strategies to reduce crime and build trust in the community, but let’s not take the murder rate off the table because you can’t build trust if you don’t provide for public safety.

The need for better communication and building relationships was emphasized over and over again:

Jeffrey Blackwell, police chief of Cincinnati, Ohio, said “Policing is all about relationships, and in order to do that, we have to recognize that we have fractures. Be authentic, transparent, and a sustained force in the community and explain your culture. It’s all about how you treat people and the relationships you build.”

Cecil Smith, police chief of Sanford, Florida, said “In Sanford, building relationships required us to knock on doors and become a part of the community’s life.”

Scott Thomson, police chief of Camden County, New Jersey, said “We went out and knocked on doors and asked how to change both the mindset of the police department and the community and how to provide the services in those areas to the individuals. We asked how can we, as a police department, serve you.”

“Knock on the door and be a part of the community life.”

Darrel Stephens, executive director, Major Cities Chiefs Association, said “How can people understand what we do if we are not willing to share that? We develop relationships by working together to solve problems, and this is a way to engage the community and develop that trust.”

Zachary Scott, sheriff of Franklin County, Ohio, said “I go to visit different churches, and my officers do, too. We go to schools in uniform and put brochures in the high schools about careers in law enforcement.”

Susan Herman, deputy commissioner, NYPD, suggested that the challenge is determining how to operationalize trust and mutual respect and create an atmosphere where there is mutual dignity and respect. She offered six strategies to consider:

- 1. We must inform about truth telling, so this will be a new experience for police to do this in such a transparent way.**
- 2. Divert as much as possible those who don't belong in the criminal justice system, both pre- and post-arrest.**
- 3. Create constitutional, effective, and compassionate policing.**
- 4. Train by teaching concrete ways to promote change.**
- 5. Encourage regular engagement by developing active feedback from all parts of the community, and find concrete ways to develop relationships in terms of what is and what is not appropriate.**
- 6. Promote collaboration, which is really emphasizing partnering and problem solving. Talking about and engaging in deliberate collaborations at every level promotes community policing and will promote good relationships.**

Professor Kennedy concluded the discussion by pointing out the importance of what Reverend Sharpton and Commissioner Bratton had said:

Commissioner Bratton said that policing has been oppressive and has not been fostering democracy and [that] we must say this out loud and recognize the damage it has caused and fix it, fix the relationships in our own house. Reverend Sharpton said that lawlessness is not our destiny, and we are going to own that. It is our job to make the lawbreakers feel differently. Let's recognize how profound it is that all are willing to own the problem. We would not have seen that earlier, and it is setting the stage for insisting on democratic policing, which is revolutionary.



Reverend Jeff Brown speaks

Developing Effective Strategies for Communities of Color to Engage Law Enforcement

Reverend Jeff Brown, director, Rebuilding Every Community Around Peace (RECAP), introduced the discussion. He acknowledged how great the divide once was, saying, “Some 30 years ago, I wouldn’t be friends with many of you at this table. My outlook of police was not good, and I figured it would never be fixed and I should stand against what is happening and be vocal about it.” But there was something about seeing 14- to 18-year-old boys be the victims of gun violence that convinced him to “come out of the four walls of the church.” He came to understand that “we are a nation of laws, and no community can survive without law; you have to either work with law enforcement, or you have to be content with a lack of enforcement.” He decided to listen instead of preach. He listened to youths on the street and asked for their perspective about how the partnership between young people and the church could affect violence. And he began to build relationships “with another set of subject matter experts at the street level: the police.” He offered his advice as a faith-based leader:

If you are thinking of a strategy of police-community relations, then there must be groundwork done by community leaders. Not every youth wants to get off the street, and that is problematic for me because supposedly every youth can be saved. But being able to understand and to see at the street level, meeting individual youth and knowing who on the street can be worked with and helped and also understanding which youth reject help—being able to develop that as a community leader was critical. We are at a very critical juncture in the life of our nation, and utilizing the moral voice of the community—clergy, coaches, parents—is how to move forward.

9

And he began to build relationships “with another set of subject matter experts at the street level: the police.”

Strategies for Engagement

Mr. Watler emphasized the importance of being candid, calling the idea of truth telling and racial recognition very powerful. But he said, “We also want to know what are the lies in the community that we are telling ourselves.” He noted that Black parents must talk to their young children about how they navigate public spaces, which says something to those children about how authority figures think of them and shapes how they think of each other. He asked the participants to consider strategies to help communities of color and law enforcement engage with each other.

Thomas Saenz, president and general counsel, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, observed that he was the sole representative of the Latino community at the table. He called this a problem not only for the Latino community but also for law enforcement. He raised concerns about law enforcement’s failure to understand the Latino community because of the lack of linguistic competency to engage in a discussion with Spanish speakers and because of the lack of respect shown to non-English speakers. He cited immigration as another serious concern, even for the vast majority of Latinos who are American citizens, because the Latino community has not been told clearly that law enforcement is not involved in immigration. “This is a recipe for a major problem in the future because often the Latinos’ sole picture of law enforcement is ‘Sheriff Joe’ [Sheriff Joe Arpaio of Maricopa County, Arizona].” Mr. Saenz urged law enforcement to improve its attitude about the Latino community:

You should not look for the same leadership in the Latino community as in the African-American community. Where is the Latino Jesse Jackson? He does not exist. But the assumption that there is a deficit in the Latino community because there is no Jesse Jackson shows great disrespect for the Latino community. The community strategy must focus on the Latino community, to work together to gain an understanding of the Latino community and where the leadership exists at the local level.

Sarah Sayeed, director of community partnerships, Interfaith Center of New York, provided a Muslim perspective:

As a Muslim at the table, this is about law enforcement and democracy. What is at stake for Muslims is the ability to practice our religion freely and equal protection under the 14th Amendment, which we face especially since 9/11. We are seen as a problem, but we want law enforcement to see our community as an asset, not a problem. We need greater cultural understanding. We have convened conversations between religious leaders and city agencies, not just focused on crime but on issues such as immigration or domestic violence. This is an opportunity for law enforcement to work on these issues from another perspective.

10

“The community strategy must focus on the Latino community, to work together to gain an understanding of the Latino community and where the leadership exists at the local level.”

A more personalized approach to policing, which had been recommended as a communications strategy, was cited as an equally important community engagement strategy:

Reverend Brown said, “One strength is to identify those young people [who] are very high risk but also are amenable to change. Often when we hear about crime, the numbers seem so overwhelming that the problem seems too big to address, but when we drill down on numbers, probably only 1 percent were shooters, so a small number of young people are doing this, and some might be amenable to change. We have a mug shot sheet with faces and street names, and we use that as a tool in the community to aggressively target for public services. It is the idea of sharing information to help them get help. We go one by one through these young people, and many respond.”

Chief Jaffe said, “The police must go into people’s homes and work with families, which is the basis of two of our programs; this empowers team leaders in the community. We have to look at the households and develop relationships. It is very expensive and resource intensive, but it is making a difference.”

Hilary Shelton, Washington Bureau director and senior vice president for policy and advocacy, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), acknowledged the “love-hate” relationship between the police and the community and the concern that “you can call the police, but you wonder if the solution will be more harsh than the problem.” He observed, “Part of the challenge is the siloing of law enforcement. Looking at the parameters of law enforcement as a silo would be helpful in bringing a full array of experts and resources to address these serious problems.”

Pastor Mike McBride, executive director, Berkeley Organizing Congregations for Action, described his organization’s efforts to build the capacity of local clergy to take the power they have seriously and understand how to influence how law enforcement affects the community:

We must collaborate, but law enforcement has a presence of trauma that we must work through on all sides. Our power as a network is to have collaborative strategies. Positive relationships with chiefs across the country create conditions for the community to participate as partners and architects who take ownership of the process. The challenge for all of us is that strategies are still given to law enforcement as an option rather than a mandate. If we are waiting for chiefs to opt in to treat our communities properly, we are waiting too long. What are the strategies that reduce the violent crime? Our power is about common strategies. But not all community leaders are created equally, so how do we know who to engage with? We take seriously that we must discern this.



Assistant Attorney General Karol Mason

“Often when we hear about crime, the numbers seem so overwhelming that the problem seems too big to address, but when we drill down on numbers, probably only 1 percent were shooters”

Implementing Effective Practices to Engage Communities of Color

Chief Chris Magnus, Richmond (California) Police Department, introduced the discussion. He described Richmond as a small, hardscrabble city with challenges. The population is mainly African American and Latino; only 15 percent of the population is White. When he arrived in 2005, the city had a high homicide rate and poor police-community relations. But there was a desire on all sides for change, so he used a multipronged approach:

- Engage *all* officers, not just a small subset in community policing.
- Use up-to-date evaluation tools capable of evaluating new hires' community policing skills. Some older instruments do not even mention community policing.
- Provide developmental training. Training at the academy can make a difference, but many officers did not get training in progressive policing, and many departments lag behind the academies.
- Evaluate criteria for promotion. Do they include how many arrests an officer has made or what the officer has done with community policing?
- Keep the officers in their positions long enough that they can understand the neighborhood, build relationships, and develop the trust to bridge the divide. When officers have the proper skill sets to deal with the challenges in the community, the community is less likely to jump to the wrong conclusions if something bad (such as a shooting) happens.
- Take guns off the street because this lowers the number of officer-involved shootings. Richmond's use of force is down, which is doable when use of force is explained. Last year, the city had only four use of force complaints.
- Focus on issues other than crime to help show that crime is not the police's only priority. For example, Richmond's police helped reduce the number of abandoned cars, in part by moving code enforcers into the department.
- Change how to police around violence. Because Richmond has a small number of shootings, occupational-style policing is not the best use of resources. The department disbanded the police street teams with acronyms, because they were one of the worst community dividers: They would go into the bad areas but go after the wrong people.

Chief Magnus concluded,

Now we are training strategically. We know the problems in the neighborhood, and that is what we focus on. Use of force is rigorously documented and always discussed. This sends a message [to officers] that they will be supported but they are accountable. Last year we

12

“When officers have the proper skill sets to deal with the challenges in the community, the community is less likely to jump to the wrong conclusions if something bad (such as a shooting) happens.”

had 16 homicides, down from 61 just 10 years ago. We brag about this as a community, that we went six months without a homicide. It brings officers and residents together to be proud and build on what is working.

The benefit of disbanding special task forces, as Chief Magnus and Superintendent McCarthy had done, was a recurring theme among police leaders. As Stockton (California) Police Chief Eric Jones summarized, “We must be generalists, not specialists.”

The issue of police training fostered a wide-ranging discussion.

Chuck Wexler, executive director, Police Executive Research Forum, described the challenge: “We think we are going to take a 24-year-old officer, whether Black or White, and expect him to separate the bad guys from the good guys and not get killed himself. We can intellectualize this, but at the end of the day, you have to send kids in to make those decisions. How do you train and operationalize this?”

Sue Manheimer, police chief of San Mateo, California, agreed, saying, “Working within marginalized communities, where there is tension, strife, mistrust, and a reluctance to show leadership, it is hard to expect our troops to go out there and gauge it. Everyone here who has had success has had the cooperation of the community. I turn back to COPS to say that I think we need some basic primer. I am not even aware sometimes that we may actually offend the community as we are trying to do the work in the community. Our work is important. We need to have an understanding of cultural competencies and how they inform how we approach communities.”

Professor Meares noted that police officers learn a lot about tactics but very little about interpersonal relations or problem solving and practice little for real-life situations through role-playing. She called the lack of this kind of training “a major weakness, especially for smaller agencies. How you organize yourself to do good community policing is important.”

Dean Esserman, police chief, New Haven (Connecticut) Police Department, recounted how he was inspired to change training techniques after a stay in a teaching hospital where he saw the medical staff presenting his case to each other every day, providing a continuous learning environment for the interns and fellows. He explained, “So we got a grant to subscribe to lifelong learning—not *what* we learn but *how* we learn. We have to have a constant learning environment. If you have a homicide and within 24 hours the sergeant is having a conference and in that room are many officers learning how to investigate, it becomes a teaching environment. Teaching is not just someone else’s job.” He added that his department is planning to institute fellowships and internships because most officers stay in the same organization and the same place for an entire career and would benefit from different experiences and environments.



COPS Office Director Ronald Davis and Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley

“We think we are going to take a 24-year-old officer, whether Black or White, and expect him to separate the bad guys from the good guys and not get killed himself.”

“It is important for law enforcement officers to have a sense of the research on racial bias so that they begin to recognize the power of race and how it can influence everyday decision making.”

Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley extolled the benefits of problem-oriented training but warned that police often take a defensive posture and resist change. The changes made in his city were unpopular with the department but were implemented anyway because they were needed. Now, he said, “The things [the police] most feared, like cameras on cars or mental health training, have become their saviors. Allegations of police misconduct have dropped, and the problem-oriented approach is what brought the community and the police department together.”

Mr. Saenz cautioned that there have been instances where the police union was an impediment to implementing change. He suggested that candid discussion about whether union leaders feel empowered to obstruct reform is needed.

Joseph Akers, interim executive director, National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, reported success with a program called “The Law and You,” which involves showing young people one of four videos (“What if the Police Come to Your Home,” “What if You See Your Friend Shoplifting,” “Drug Trafficking on the Street,” and “Traffic Stop Situation”) and then engaging in a discussion. Mr. Akers also encouraged a greater use of social media to engage communities. He noted, “Everyone has a cell phone. We need to get information out that way, whether about missing persons or just a general communication, so they know what our departments are doing. We could also provide links to other agencies so people don’t have to contact the police department all the time.”

Stanford University psychology professor Jennifer Eberhardt provided a unique perspective on racial bias and how it can influence police actions:

Racial bias is not about a few bad apples. It is pervasive, and it does not require conscious awareness or animus. It is something we can all be affected by in various contexts, including policing. The stereotype of African Americans as criminals is one of the strongest in our society. Everyone has knowledge of it, and that knowledge can influence our perceptions and behavior. Even our perception of body movement is influenced, in part, by race. My research shows that the body movement of African Americans is perceived as more threatening and aggressive than the body movement of Whites. Having looked at cases of officer-involved shootings of African-American men, nearly all are triggered by the body movement of these men. In addition, my analysis of the NYPD stop-and-frisk data shows that Blacks are more likely to be stopped on the streets for “furtive movement” than Whites. It is important for law enforcement officers to have a sense of the research on racial bias so that they begin to recognize the power of race and how it can influence everyday decision making.

Michael Davis, director of public safety, Northeastern University Police, suggested that when the African-American community is not involved in the democratic process, the police are left to deal with the effect, which is high crime. He offered a slightly different focus:

The words should be “community building” instead of “community policing.” The community needs to build those informal social controls. We must focus on those communities that are poor and African American and Latino and look to build those communities and get them back into democratic processes at the local level. At the end of all this, we want to see people have a voice in policy making. That is a true measure of success in community building.



Assistant Attorney General Karol Mason and Office on Violence Against Women Director Bea Hanson

Developing Recommendations to Advance an Agenda for Action

Mr. Watler asked for final thoughts from the participants.

Mike Fitzpatrick, chief probation officer, U.S. Probation Department, Southern District of New York, acknowledged the difficulty of getting staff on board with changes because they feel that they are already well trained at what they do. He suggested, “Show people the research, and reassure them that this is just a natural progression and it is working.”

John Firman, director of the Research Division, International Association of Chiefs of Police, noted that, looking at the continuum, police are often at the back end where kids are already in trouble. He pointed to programs like Cops and Kids, suggesting, “At the front end, it is simple relationship building and being able to talk to one another. Keep it as simple as ‘I want to tell you how I feel.’”

Robert Listenbee, administrator, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, DOJ, offered a three-pronged approach: First, we know that when kids are treated fairly, they are most likely to cooperate. We have set the age of adulthood at 18, but we need to consider the brain and behavioral development going on during adolescence and not treat this as a hard and fast cutoff point. We need to incorporate what we know about how trauma can affect adolescent development into our response to kids in the juvenile justice system and provide trauma-informed care to those kids who need it. Second, officers need to talk to kids directly. When they do this, powerful things happen. We must engage youth on a sustained basis to have an effect. Third, we need to find ways to keep kids in school, not in court. Diversion is a resource that will help kids address their problems and will help reduce the number of kids coming into the criminal justice system.

15

“We know when kids are treated fairly, they are most likely to cooperate.”



Attendees of the 2014 conference “Strengthening the Relationship between Law Enforcement and Communities of Color: Developing an Agenda for Action”

Rich Stanek, sheriff of Hennepin County, Minnesota, described the approach in his county:

Hennepin County is an extremely diverse community. We believe leadership starts at the top, so it’s very important that we engage our community leaders, but we don’t wait for them to come to us. Each and every day we are meeting with faith leaders, business leaders, educators, and families in order to determine how we can best serve those specific multicultural communities. Our deputies are highly trained in cultural sensitivity, and we actively recruit from those diverse communities. We host roundtable meetings and focus on community outreach through one-day Citizens’ Academies. We are continually developing partnerships in order to build communities of trust. Our Community Engagement Team leads with a multifaceted approach, and I am very proud of the work they do.

Ezekiel Edwards, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), offered this perspective:

I believe the way forward [preferably] is not litigation but through collaboration. Sometimes that is not how we do it, but this conversation has inspired me [that real collaboration and equal partnership between law enforcement and the communities are possible]. I want to think [that those of] you around the table are the rule [when it comes to real commitment to such partnerships] but wonder if you are the exception. This is very positive, but this [group] is a small sample.

Mr. Edwards advised that mass incarceration is a matter of great importance to the ACLU, and it is determined to bring down the prison population. He asked law enforcement to think about what people are being arrested for and how quickly they end up in the criminal justice system. He noted the racial disparity in marijuana arrests—African Americans are more likely to be arrested for possession even though they and Whites use the drug at roughly the same rate—and suggested that this seems to be due to race and perhaps police practices. Finally, he recommended that police collect better data and make it available online because currently law enforcement “is not transparent about what you are doing.”

“Each and every day we are meeting with faith leaders, business leaders, educators, and families in order to determine how we can best serve those specific multicultural communities.”

Seattle Interim Police Chief Harry Bailey said that the key is not to drop the ball. “We have been doing great things and must continue that. But always keep an eye on the relationships and don’t take them for granted, because they can fray [and] you don’t even know it until something happens.”

Deputy Commissioner Herman suggested that people accused of crimes and victims should be viewed by law enforcement as two separate constituency groups because they are not the same. She recalled a former boss telling her not to use the term “police force” because of its negative connotation. She urged, “Think of who your audience is.” A panel member agreed that law enforcement should build relationships with victims, something very important in domestic violence cases. He suggested identifying African-American men who have been working to address the issue of domestic violence and using that type of role model to address the larger issue of violence in the community.

Dr. Sayeed was concerned that characterizing communication as being simple to do does not adequately reflect how complex it can actually be, particularly when dealing with different cultures, ethnicities, and age groups. She noted, “Communication is about speaking but also about listening. It is about conscious and unconscious processes and the interplay of reason and emotion. It is a process of learning and self-awareness. It is not a simple thing, and we should teach it as a set of skills.”

Eugene Schneeberg, director, Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, suggested recruiting members of the clergy at the police academy.

Professor Eberhardt recommended setting up scientific advisory boards to use experts to inform law enforcement issues. She noted that universities across the country would be excellent resources for this.

Professor Kennedy, expressing optimism, outlined a course of action:

We began with Bill Bratton saying we have done wrong, and when Bill Bratton says that, the rest will follow. We heard Al Sharpton say the community has done wrong, and when Al Sharpton says that, communities will follow. So people are ready to move, which is an opportunity for action we’ve never had before. As things stand right now, we know how to do all of the following: help police go to communities and have the conversation that the police get it, policing has to change; work with communities and help them say, “We have to own violent crime,” as angry we may be at the police; go to senior people and get them on the procedural justice page; fold the line-level procedural justice curricula that we know works into the service academies; take the research on bias and go to agencies and say the research shows that bad racial outcomes do not mean you’re racist; identify the small number of people who are at the



COPS Office Director Ronald Davis

highest risk for violence and say to communities and law enforcement, “Focus here and not on everybody else in the community;” and engage that 2 percent with community intervention that gets their attention and can prevent violence without even being arrested. We know that it is more effective not to start by locking people up, but when none of the rest works, we still have law enforcement for those who have to be locked up. This is all off-the-shelf stuff that can be done nationally. If we did nothing but those things in the next five years, we would all consider that a major victory.

Ronald Davis, director, COPS Office, thanked all participants and offered some closing thoughts:

The goal of the COPS Office is to help the field advance the field. All around the country, great work is being done by men and women in the field, and our job is to support that. We want you to take this message back with you and share it with others. The best teacher is success, and we have heard success stories today, and those will spread. We want a dialogue in this country that reducing crime and strengthening community relations are one and the same. The benefit for us was not only the great discussion but also that you will go share it.

Justice Department’s National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice

The Justice Department’s National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice, funded through a \$4.75 million grant, will create a substantial investment in training, evidence-based strategies, policy development, and research to combat distrust and hostility between law enforcement and the communities they serve. Improving relationships between law enforcement and the community has been a priority for the DOJ under Attorney General Holder.

The initiative, which will be an ongoing partnership with the DOJ, will provide training to law enforcement and communities on bias reduction and procedural fairness and will apply evidence-based strategies in five pilot sites around the country. It will also establish a clearinghouse where information, research, and technical assistance are readily accessible for law enforcement, criminal justice practitioners, and community leaders.

The California Endowment

The COPS Office would like to thank our partner in this forum, **The California Endowment (TCE)**. TCE is a private, statewide health foundation with a mission to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities, and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians. Recognizing the profound adverse impact of race and gender on the health of poor communities, TCE launched the Sons & Brothers program as a core part of the Building Healthy Communities (BHC) strategy.

Action Items

Police Operations

In hiring, focus recruitment and promotions on procedural justice.

Train and promote police legitimacy from recruits to the command staff level.

Implement geographic accountability.

Building Relationships between the Police and the Community

Build relationships

Be present. Reassigning officers frequently makes it difficult for them to get to know the community.

Emphasize that law enforcement must work with the leaders in the community, whether or not they are comfortable with them.

Emphasize partnership and problem solving in collaboration with community members.

Remember to keep working on relationships. They can fray, often without anyone noticing.

Improve communication

Find common ground in the desire of people on both sides—the community and law enforcement—to be understood.

Be authentic and transparent. Tell the community what law enforcement is doing and why. Make data available online.

Solicit feedback from the community.

Rethink training

Train officers to develop interpersonal relationships and solve problems.

Build community policing into training programs.

Teach communication skills.

Recognize the power of race

Remember that racial bias is pervasive. Research has shown that people who are not consciously mistrustful of African Americans or intentionally racist can still behave in a way that is influenced by racial bias.

Understand young people

Keep in mind that though adulthood starts at 18, that is an arbitrary number. Adolescents continue to develop after that date.

Address the fact that young people who enter the criminal justice system often have post-traumatic stress disorder.

Show young men of color that we believe in them as the future of the community.

Keep as many people as possible out of the criminal justice system.

Learn about diverse communities

Try to understand the culture of the people you are trying to work with; if you do not, it is possible you may offend them.

Though much of the focus on working with minority communities is on African-American communities, remember that law enforcement must also understand Latino, Muslim, and other cultures.

Develop Community Policing
Remember that community policing should be for everyone, not just a small subset of officers.
Disband special task forces; they divide the community. Officers should be generalists, not specialists.
Offer Leadership
Remember that in order for trust and respect to be part of law enforcement culture, officers must hear from the top that these are priorities.
Work to build communities and get people involved in the democratic process.
Acknowledge that policing has sometimes been oppressive and work to fix damaged relationships.

Law Enforcement's Role
Inform about truth telling to encourage transparency.
Divert good people out of the criminal justice system.
Create constitutional policing methods; eliminate stop and frisk as a tactic.
Engage the community frequently; actively encourage and develop feedback mechanisms from all segments of the community.
Collaborate on public safety issues with city agencies, businesses, nonprofits, and community organizations.

The Community's Role
Identify leaders within the community.
Reclaim ownership of the public space.
Come outside of the four walls of the church; this includes faith-based leaders.
Acknowledge the historical stereotypes.
Learn the cultural differences within the Latino community to engage them appropriately.



About the COPS Office

The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territory, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime.

Rather than simply responding to crimes once they have been committed, community policing concentrates on preventing crime and eliminating the atmosphere of fear it creates. Earning the trust of the community and making those individuals stakeholders in their own safety enables law enforcement to better understand and address both the needs of the community and the factors that contribute to crime.

The COPS Office awards grants to state, local, territory, and tribal law enforcement agencies to hire and train community policing professionals, acquire and deploy cutting-edge crime fighting technologies, and develop and test innovative policing strategies. COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders and all levels of law enforcement. The COPS Office has produced and compiled a broad range of information resources that can help law enforcement better address specific crime and operational issues, and help community leaders better understand how to work cooperatively with their law enforcement agency to reduce crime.

- Since 1994, the COPS Office has invested more than \$14 billion to add community policing officers to the nation's streets, enhance crime fighting technology, support crime prevention initiatives, and provide training and technical assistance to help advance community policing.
- To date, the COPS Office has funded approximately 125,000 additional officers to more than 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies across the country in small and large jurisdictions alike.
- Nearly 700,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office-funded training organizations.
- To date, the COPS Office has distributed more than 8.57 million topic-specific publications, training curricula, white papers, and resource CDs.

COPS Office resources, covering a wide breadth of community policing topics—from school and campus safety to gang violence—are available, at no cost, through its online Resource Center at www.cops.usdoj.gov. This easy-to-navigate website is also the grant application portal, providing access to online application forms.



COPS

Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
145 N Street NE
Washington, DC 20530

To obtain details on COPS Office programs,
call the COPS Office Response Center at 800-421-6770

Visit the COPS Office online at www.cops.usdoj.gov.

Published 2014