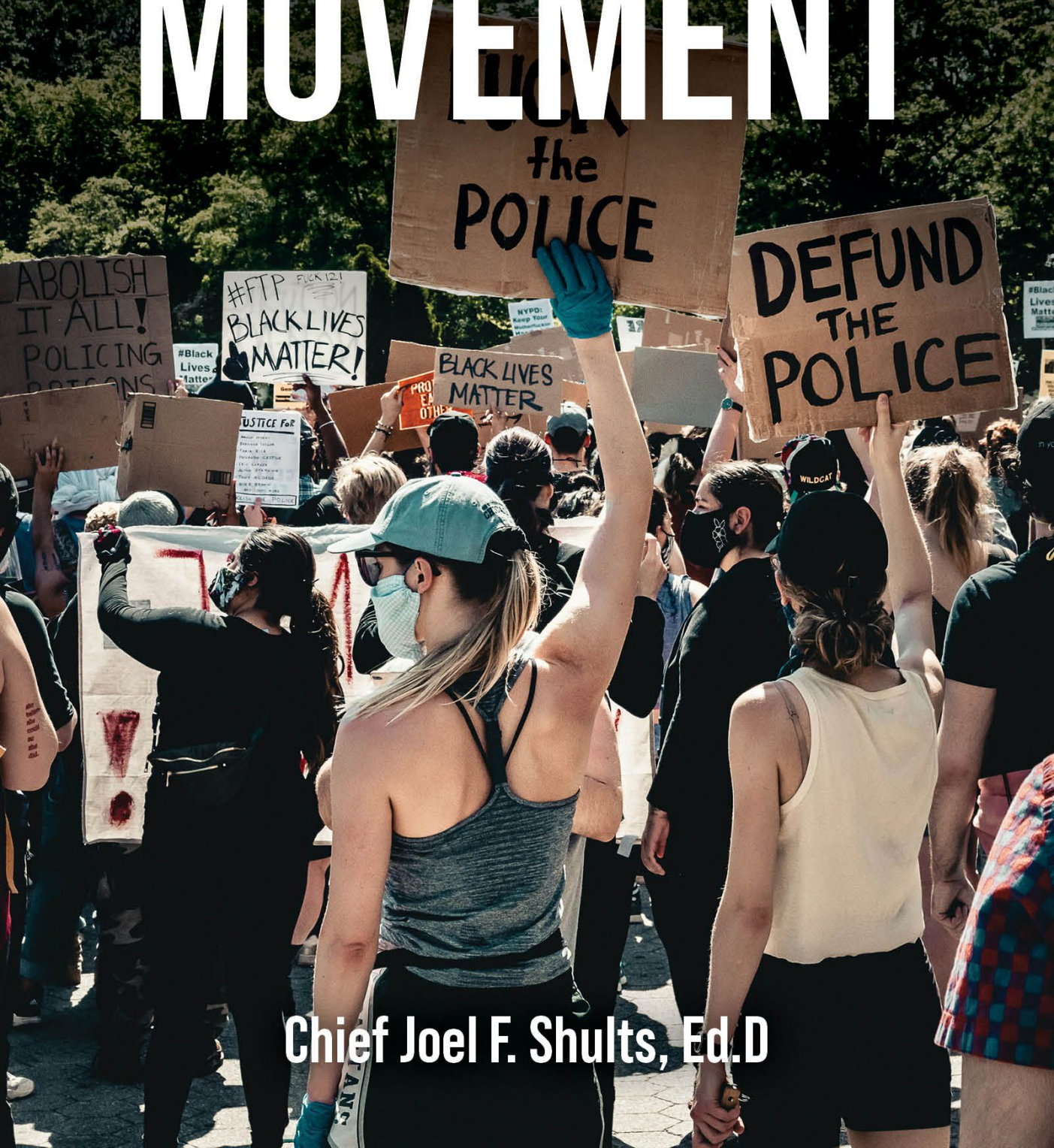


THE ANTI-POLICE MOVEMENT



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The National Police Association's free Law Enforcement education series is designed for home school, classroom, or independent learning. As part of our nonprofit educational mission, it prepares you for careers in public safety. This series is authored by [Chief Joel F. Shults, Ed.D.](#)

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Abolition of the Police Disguised as Reform

Abolishing law enforcement has been a topic in some academic circles for decades. It seemed so ludicrous to those outside the ivory towers where ideas are churned about that no one in the real world gave any attention to the threat that the idea of ridding America of police officers might become popular.

The defunding of law enforcement has been activated in many jurisdictions, even though many of those are showing regret and re-funding. Police leaders and alert citizens should be aware that defunding was always a means to move toward abolition of police entirely. While some efforts are out in the open, many efforts to abolish the police engage more subtle tactics to achieve the same eventual goals. Although most Americans still trust their police partners and cannot imagine having no policing in their communities, there are active groups still plodding and plotting toward abolition with ideas that seem good but include the seeds of abolition.

Mental health support services are gaining much-needed attention. Several non-law enforcement (NLE) and co-responder programs are claiming success. The delusion of the abolitionists is that police budgets should be cut to fund these programs. Police failure is essential to the abolitionists' long-term goals, so reducing police agencies' capacity to respond to calls fits the abolitionist agenda perfectly. Diversion and defunding are synonymous. The need for robust law

enforcement budgets and staffing will not be reduced by adding NLE responders. While valuable, NLE responders will not be able to handle the volume of calls, nor will they handle calls where violence or weapons are involved.

Citizen oversight of local policing has always been present. When police agency heads are selected by elected officials, and Sheriffs are elected directly, the control of policing is at the ballot box. Calls for more accountability ring hollow when law enforcement is already subject to constant surveillance, court orders, restrictive legislation, and civil liability. No one suggests that police officers should run rogue with no one watching, but the reality is that everyone is watching. Additional community input is important, but red flags toward abolition are waving. When anti-police activists and those with no understanding of the realities of what police officers deal with and the constraints surrounding them have policy-making authority and decisions over treatment of personnel.

In the name of accountability, legislators are pressured to increase liability for police officers by removing qualified immunity and other legal protections and impeding police fraternal and union influence which exist to protect fair working conditions for police officers. The move to prohibit safety equipment such as rescue vehicles and protective gear against assaults, as well as removing options to control violent criminals are ways to dissuade persons from becoming police officers or remaining so. These efforts have gained ground as evidenced by the recruiting and retention crisis in American policing. These efforts are not-so-subtle

means of ensuring the demise of law enforcement toward the goal of abolition.

In addition to defunding the idea of non-funding is also a component of abolition. Vociferous objections to any building or renovation of justice facilities replace civil debate with arguments that new jails, police equipment, or update police facilities are simply not needed and would be harmful to society. Every project and its impact on tax-paying citizens deserve scrutiny, but reducing the criminal justice system's capacity to deal with crime is another attempt to cause failure with an eye to abolition.

Media narratives of police encounters are often guided by anti-police sentiments rather than fact-based reporting. Viral videos are too often accepted as "news", but more disturbing are biased mainstream media accepting the narratives of those without substantiated facts. Many commentaries make patently false claims and exaggerations about police misconduct and violence that a gullible public fails to closely examine. These narratives are fed by those who claim to be in favor of police reform, but many of whom are just building the case for abolition.

The abolitionist is an idealist who rejects the idea that evil exists, and that people make intentional predatory decisions to kill, steal, and destroy. They believe that destroying existing systems and replacing them with new systems will reduce bad human behavior. They explain all crime as the product of capitalistic oppression or mental illness, which can be eliminated by good vibes, no borders, and expecting everyone to be

peacekeeping lovers of their neighbor. There is no precedent for such a society but rather a common-sense expectation that chaos and brutality would be the real result. We must not be led to a disastrous result with false promises wrapped in nice-sounding packages.

Anti-Cop Violence is Terrorism

Portland, Oregon police continue to seek to connect with their community even after all they have been through. They planned a Coffee With a Cop event at Bison Coffee House, a neighborhood coffee shop. Coffee With a Cop has been a series of events offered by local police agencies at local establishments where citizens can drop by and chat with law enforcement officers. Events are usually cordial, well-attended, and a great bridge-building activity.

There are enough bridge burners in Portland that six masked criminals shattered the windows of Bison Coffee House at 3:00 a.m. the morning before the neighborhood event occurred. The news reports referred to the offenders as vandals and the crime as vandalism. The more accurate term would be terrorists doing terrorism.

Owner Loretta Guzman is an enrolled member of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes. In addition to the suspects smashing windows with hammers and crowbars. Although the attackers apparently did not enter the building, they did spray what appeared to be fire extinguisher powder into the business. The thousands of dollars of damage includes the residue on Native American artwork and an authentic buffalo head on the wall. Authorities have considered adding hate crime charges in the attack.

To Guzman's credit she courageously still hosted the event that evening after cleaning up and baking a fresh

batch of homemade bakery items for the shop. A GoFundMe page was established to help pay for the damage.

Federal law (18 USC Ch. 113B) defines terrorism. Under the heading of domestic terrorism the definition is “acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State; appear to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping”. Far beyond mere mayhem and property damage, and even beyond a hate crime if partly driven by Guzman’s heritage, the acts seem to be well aligned with the definition of domestic terrorism.

A man walked into the 10th district West Side Chicago Police station on Ogden Avenue mumbling and ranting anti-police sentiments. The man was holding a plastic bag through which was visible what appeared to be a gun and pointed at officers in the building. Officers fired in response to the threat, sending the suspect to the hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. No officers were injured.

In an earlier and unrelated incident, another man managed to enter a training area on the fifth floor through a fire stairwell during a Chicago PD training, picked up weapons that were nearby, and pointed them at officers. Armed officers in the room fired and wounded the man.

These recent events are not unprecedented. During the protest riots of 2020, Aurora Police officers were trapped in a station under assault for seven hours. Evidence of the intent to harm or ambush the officers included stashed weapons and tools for arson found after the crowd was dispersed. In July a 20-year-old man was arrested after video showed him firing a shot through the glass at a police station in Riverside, California. In April, the friend of a man who died while in custody marched into a Milwaukee, WI police station and after a brief conversation with the officer working the counter, began shooting. He fled and was shot by officers later as he raised his weapon against commands for him to surrender and drop the gun.

Attacks outside of police stations in the parking lots and entrances add to the list of violence against law enforcement in their own workplaces. Some police stations are fortress-like and for good reason. Many agencies still want their facilities to be safe and open spaces for citizens as they should be. For violent criminals to destroy that sense of safety is an insult to the public.

Whether tougher penalties would affect the decisions of those bound by hate is subject to debate. But to label them merely as vandals or even assailants ignores their true purpose and identity. They are, and should be prosecuted as, domestic terrorists.

Disgraceful NY Judge Implies Cops Can't Be Religious

Serious philosophers, theologians, and scholars rightly have wrestled with the serious questions of government power, justifiable war, the death penalty, and killing another in self-defense. None of these deep thinkers include Associate Justice Troy K Webber of New York State's Appellate Court.

When NYPD Sgt. Patrick Marsteller sued for the right to keep his job and refuse the COVID vaccination on a religious exemption, Judge Webber expressed her doubt of Marsteller's religious convictions since he was a police officer and police officers kill and that conflicts with Christian values because of "That, you know, do not kill the thing?"

Critics immediately pounced on the judge's flippant statement and flagrantly ignorant understanding of basic theology as a prejudicial comment. In context, Marsteller's objection to the vaccine was predicated on the use of aborted fetal tissue in its development, a pro-life position that the judge mocked for its implied hypocrisy.

"What this judge said is reprehensible – does being a cop conflict with Christian values?" Queens Councilwoman Joann Ariola. "Police are not on the streets looking to commit mass murder, they are there to stop criminals and protect the innocent. This kind of anti-cop rhetoric has no place in court."

The judge was wrong on about every level of this case. Regardless of how one feels about abortion, in the ending of a pregnancy, the unborn has no guilt, no responsibility, no advocates, and no complicity in its termination. That is no comparison to a life taken in the heat of a battle of self-defense or defense of others, or even, for that matter, in the legal execution of the death penalty.

Secondly, the sincerity of one's religious belief – in this case, Christianity – is not automatically nullified by being a person who, in the line of duty, might be subject to using deadly force. This is true for every religion that I know of, and every religion is represented among the diverse ranks of police officers. If there is a moral abhorrence to the possibility of doing harm, the simple answer is to not become a police officer. Since there is no mandatory service, as in the case of a wartime draft, there is no need for a cadet to be a conscientious objector.

For a police officer who holds Christian beliefs in particular, the orthodox guide to Christian conduct is the Bible. The Bible holds no prohibition to righteous killing, only a prohibition of murder. Clearly, it follows that if a third person is threatening murder by attacking a civilian, police officer, or posing a high risk to the public at large should they escape capture, using necessary means to prevent the murder is not itself murder by any legal or moral definition.

Further, the authority of governments and the Christian mandate to be obedient to government is found in the

New Testament where it is stated:” Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God’s servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience. (Romans Chapter 13 New International Version for those interested).

Lastly, the text and context of the judge’s remark is aptly described by Councilwoman Joann Ariola as leftist anti-cop rhetoric. The implication is that the police like to kill and are likely to kill, two propositions that are soundly defeated by multiple studies. Judge Webber should not be allowed to touch any cases remotely attached to the involvement of a law enforcement officer.

Anti-Police Activity Goes Professional

We've seen the ACAB (All Cops Are Bad) protest posters and have heard the shouts amid riots and protests claiming racism and brutality. We tend to think, and have been led to believe, that these voices spontaneously arose out of righteous indignation and the ACAB view caught on with a few vocal politicians who thought they could grab a headline or two.

The reality is that the Anti-Police sentiment is being intentionally fueled by those with an economic or political agenda that goes beyond good citizen involvement in community affairs. To be sure, organizations that promote justice and seek accountability in policing do not deserve to be labeled as anti-police. Those who profit economically or gain political power by explicitly opposing law enforcement and inciting violence and resistance deserve to be identified and regarded as a threat to law and order.

Recently, a group calling themselves Stop Cop City is thought to be responsible for acts of property damage and vandalism to a proposed law enforcement training facility in Atlanta, Georgia. The group claims to be comprised of those with environmental concerns about the property on which the training facility is being built. But the language of the protests is anti-police claiming that the facility is an expansion of the "police state". A firm contracted to design and build the Atlanta police department's new training facility had several broken windows and graffiti painted on a window earlier this year that said: "Drop Cop City or Else." The company

reported \$80,000 in damages. Financial accountability for the organization does not appear to be available.

Protestors can cash in on opportunities to be paid for participation in demonstrations, some even with the task of being provocateurs. The presence of outside agitators in Ferguson was significant enough that NYPD sent detectives to Missouri to learn about their operation in anticipation of riots in New York City. Law enforcement officials, government officials, and even local protestors, a local peacekeeping pastor, and the owner of a black-owned newspaper in Ferguson acknowledged the presence of outside agitators that added to the chaos of the protests.

A Beverly Hills company aptly named Crowds on Demand has hired actors to portray themselves as lobbyists, and be supportive fans and paparazzi at other events. Homeless persons have been recruited for a few bucks to show up at a rally to bolster numbers. The company was sued on claims of extortion for intimidating practices, including a website for misinformation, to embarrass a businessman according to a 2018 article in the Los Angeles Times.

With recent embarrassments to the Black Lives Matter organization regarding squandered money from the millions donated after the death of George Floyd, some local organizations found no support for protests against white supremacists from the national organization. A look at the expenditures of the National Education Association, a staunch supporter of getting the Black Lives Matter curriculum into schools and getting law enforcement out, spends more money on

political contributions than programs that benefit teachers or students.

Politicians, including prosecutors, local leaders, and national elected leaders who are vocal about defunding and defanging the police attract megadollar donors that support the agenda of dismantling the criminal justice system. Billionaire George Soros states on his own website that his advocacy is not anti-police: “The goal is not defunding the police but restoring trust between the police and the policed”, but the candidates receiving his millions are “reform” minded prosecutors and leftist ideologues who favor defunding. He donated half a million to an effort to oppose a ballot issue that would have increased the number of police officers in Austin Texas, after helping elect District Attorney Jose Garza who favors prosecuting police officers over criminals. He also supported San Francisco DA Chesa Boudin who was recently recalled after only six months in office for being soft on crime.

These groups and the dollars they collect and distribute keep fanning the flames of anti-police sentiment at a time when confidence in law enforcement remains high and efforts to punish police officers for doing their job are meeting public backlash in the face of rising crime fears. The public must not be deceived by those who cash in on money and power at the cost of public safety.

6 Ways the Antipolice Movement is Harming America

If the antipolice crowd planned the weakening of law enforcement in the many nefarious ways it is occurring, then they are brilliant strategists and propogandists. If the byproducts of their fury are mere happenstance, then they must be ecstatic at their destructive influence. Here's what is at risk.

Local business

It was hard enough for small business owners to make a living in urban areas before the destructive riots, and even before COVID. Businesses offering services to underserved areas have additional challenges but remained for those who needed access to food and other goods in their own neighborhoods. These are some of the hardest hit from recent days of civil unrest. Recovering from looting, vandalism, and fear is not as simple as filing an insurance claim. A loss of police protection is unsustainable. Many are leaving, seeking opportunity elsewhere.

Many areas thrive partly because people want to travel to or through the area. As travel is increasing after COVID, who wants to go to areas where there is no guarantee of safety or police response? The vitality and diversity of many communities relies on visitors having good travel experiences, whether for business or leisure. Those opportunities are now being lost to both the travelers and their potential hosts.

Tax base

Social justice takes money for sustainable programs and personnel. There are cries for more drug treatment, more social services, more alternatives to a police response. The concept of defunding to shift resources doesn't even sound good in theory to those who work in the reality of emergency services. The loss of tax revenue resulting from lower property values, less sales tax revenue from closed businesses, and fewer consumers venturing out to spend, will have crippling effects in the cities where the demands are the greatest. Looking for federal money is not a long term solution.

Media Credibility

Those who know and care about facts have come to realize that widespread media bias or laziness is failing to convey reality to Americans. Media reports are fed from media manipulators. The language of antipolice sentiment has been adopted from the blog level to the national media. Competition for website clicks has reinstated traits of yellow journalism where misleading headlines sold newspapers. Gannet publications is an example. The publishing giant states its mission on its webpage: "As the new Gannett, we exist to make communities stronger. As an award-winning news organization, we inform and empower our communities. As a modern media company, we foster deep and vital connections among our communities and the world around them." Despite referring to itself as a news organization, its stated objective is to mold opinion and behavior. There is no commitment to objectivity.

Essential public safety programs

The defund proponents are seeing school safety staff and programs gutted. Who will engage in traffic enforcement aimed at reducing the 38,000 annual traffic deaths of which 10,000 are from drunk driving? Murder is on the rise. Despite the current critique of the 1994 Crime bill that added tens of thousands of officers to the payrolls of agencies, that increase in police officers had a well-documented effect on reducing crime rates.

Police officers are leaving embattled agencies and jurisdictions through resignation and retirement. They are also keeping a lower profile, reducing initiated activity, being more reluctant to engage in order to protect their minds, bodies, and finances from the threats that have increased toward them. Inflammatory rhetoric has emboldened lawbreakers and weakened law enforcement. This loss of productivity off officers struggling to remain multiplies the effect of reduced staffing from defunding and resignations.

Loss of leadership for reform

One of the saddest ironies of the antipolice movement is the loss of great leadership for reform that is embodied in police leaders. Chiefs with long years of service, many of whom are executives of color, are leaving their positions in protest or hopelessness of what they know as professionals to be impossible and irresponsible demands.

The promise of a brighter and better future for those serving in law enforcement in the light of public attention has turned to dust. We will not only continue to lose competent leaders now, but perhaps an entire generation of young men and women who will be discouraged from joining the law enforcement profession.

Loss of checks and balances

With whatever faults exist, the criminal justice system has been a guardian of rights and due process on the local level. With local law enforcement at risk of collapse, federalization will increase. As demands for radical reform reach the ears of opportunists in Washington, more federal control over those dollars will occur. America should pride itself that it is protected in each local community by the 18,000 police agencies directly accountable to their communities. Loss of that local control to federal influence portends a loss of liberty. Ceding most criminal justice efforts to mental health and social services enters people into a world where there is no representation, no public oversight, no appeal, and no accountability to victims of crime.

In many ways freedom is ultimately the cost we may bear more than anything.

Gutting Police Services for Pie in the Sky

If a headline read “Ambulance Services Cut to Fund Cardiac Health”, readers would shake their heads in disbelief. Would hospitals really stop responding to ambulance calls for heart attack victims to help pay for education, brochures, checkups, and low-fat diet plans? Do nations at war cut spending on troops to pay for more diplomats? Should plumbers stop fixing stopped-up toilets and concentrate on installing new pipes?

The teacher’s union in Bellevue, Washington has passed a resolution against having a school resource officer (SRO) in favor of using whatever funds would be for a police presence in their school to be funneled into counseling and mental health services. The renewed discussion comes after a shooting at a nearby Seattle school that left a 17-year-old student dead at the hand of a 14-year-old who brought a handgun to Ingraham High School.

The union, claiming to represent the interests of Bellevue teachers, parroted the ideology of the National Education Association which vociferously opposes law enforcement in schools as a corollary to their Black Lives Matter in schools agenda. “There’s definitely a history with students of color feeling a certain way with the presence of officers in school,” Jill Rock, president of the Bellevue Education Association asserted.

The resolution referred to a previous 2020 resolution that states the district must recognize “...that we

participate in and perpetuate the school-to-prison pipeline and other expressions of institutional racism through our biases, our curriculum, our pedagogy, and our discipline policies, and that we continue to harm Black students and families when we do not act to dismantle institutional racism...”

The resolution goes on to say “WHEREAS, the Bellevue Education Association recognizes that many students and staff have experienced an increase in violence across campuses in recent years and there exist valid, important concerns regarding safety on campus. WHEREAS, the BEA supports clarifying the responsibilities and further training of on-campus Administration to respond to incidents of violence and also to increase access to mental health counseling at our schools.”

Whether the union truly represents the feelings of teachers or students of the school, it does represent some curious reasoning in explaining its opposition to SROs. In referring to the “school-to-prison” pipeline, the resolution states as fact that responding to disciplinary problems results in students being groomed for a life behind bars because of institutional racism. Differential treatment by race is certainly a matter deserving of study and monitoring, but to identify SROs as a core component of the allegation ignores the value of officers’ presence.

In an irony that seems to escape the authors of the resolution, the document validates the existence of safety threats on campus and an increase in violence. Their answer is to better train administrators on

responding to incidents of violence. If there is an administrator's union, it would be interesting to see what their view would be of making first responders out of administrators.

There is widespread agreement that the need exists for better access to mental health services, especially for young people. What is far less certain is what these preventive services would accomplish in reducing individual's acts of violence. SROs are a safety net, not only for immediate response to threats and violence but as an effective relational connection to students and a presence that can discourage attacks.

The final logical fallacy of the purloining of law enforcement resources to fund mental health resources is that it is a binary choice of one or the other. They are two different functions for two different purposes. There is no mathematical correlation to school safety in subtracting from one and adding to another. So, sure, bring on the counselors. But keep the cops.

Corporate Antagonism Towards Law Enforcement Continues

Financial support from businesses for causes ranging from local little league baseball to diversity have been a mainstay of good corporate citizenship in the American landscape. Things have taken a turn from non-controversial support to potentially risky advocacy and now to advocating negative actions against law enforcement.

Ice cream makers Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield, the co-founders of Ben & Jerry's which is now owned by conglomerate Unilever, are starting a campaign aimed at ensuring personal financial ruin for police officers accused of misconduct. Their aim is to eliminate the qualified immunity defense to civil actions and encourage personal suits against officers that would force them to pay from their personal bank accounts and real estate. Cohen and Greenfield have a history of accusing police of widespread racism and brutality.

Qualified immunity is a defense to lawsuits that was established by court precedent. The doctrine was designed to protect government actors – not just law enforcement – from being sued personally for complex decisions they have made for which there were no clear guidelines. It is not a blanket exemption from lawsuits for police officers, nor a major impediment to those who have suffered from wrongdoing or negligence.

Punishing police officers for being police officers as a corporate policy is not limited to Ben and Jerry's. LEGO's toymaker halted promotion and display of police themed LEGO sets in 2020 in the wake of anti-police protests. BikeCo, the distributor of Fuji Bikes, announced that they would no longer sell bicycles to police departments. The irony is immediate, since bike patrol has been a major component in community policing efforts across the country. The bike distributor claims that police bikes have been used as weapons against protesters, although police officers are uniquely vulnerable while on bicycle assignments.

Major sports organizations have encouraged and enabled anti-police sentiment, and suppressed support of law enforcement, perhaps influenced by athletic gear makers Nike and UnderArmor. Supporting black lives and supporting law enforcement has become an artificial divide. Supporting defunding of the police is not the same as examining ways to reform policing for everyone's benefit. Corporations that support groups advocating defunding include Microsoft, Intel, Airbnb, H&M, Cisco, Degree, DoorDash, Vans Inc., Lululemon, Dropbox and the Pokémon Company International.

Admittedly, decisions on whom to support or on remaining neutral aren't always easy in the boardrooms and backrooms of companies small and large. Mom and pop stores in Portland felt compelled to write on their windows that they were black or BIPOC owned to avoid destruction by protesters. Starbucks has been picketed for supporting the Seattle Police Foundation, and criticized for supporting anti-police sentiments. Employees of Ford Motor Company wanted the

supplier of one of the most popular police vehicles to stop selling to law enforcement, but company leaders refused to give up that market. Other corporations have supported the claims of racism in policing but have been called out for their own lack of diversity and social responsibility.

There are also many companies that have expressed support for the men and women who make up our nations law enforcement community. Many simply realize that quality law enforcement is essential to the operation of their businesses, whether they are direct vendors to police departments or not. Others are simply good citizens who recognize that their police officers belong to them and want the best possible outcome for their communities. That should never mean that citizens should refrain from speaking out on issues where law enforcement needs change. Being an ally of law enforcement gives a credible voice for guidance and change.

Citizens who want to maintain and improve quality law enforcement can encourage those businesses that have visibly or even quietly supported law enforcement. A word of thanks, a thumbs up, and patronage of their establishments can make a difference.

Anti-Police Noise Stifles Real Citizen Awareness

In an excellent article by NPA contributor Steve Pomper, he cites a clearly justified police shooting of an attacker who had just committed murder. Pomper related that Seattle protesters rose up against the shooting “despite non-police video showing the suspect shooting into the car the women were sitting in, police video showing the suspect shooting at arriving officers who had only seconds to react, and despite one of those women dying.”

The conclusion that, to some anti-police activists, no use of force is ever justified (since no police entity should exist) is an opinion well protected by our concept of free speech. The solution to irrational and destructive speech is to either ignore the voice with which we disagree or engage in intelligent discussion using facts and logic to engage the subject matter. The flaw in that very reasonable approach is that it rarely exists.

Agitated protestors garner headlines. Their passion inspires. Their rhetoric about racism tickles the emotions and scratches the itch of guilt. The recitation of the martyrs – even murders shot in the commission of their crime by heroic responding officers – never acknowledges the evil but appeals to the image of lost promise and grieving family left behind. Their loyalty to the “victims” of “police violence” is absent the crime scene and autopsy photos of their victims but filled with the double sadness that the killer was just about to turn

their life around, had just celebrated a birthday, was going to be a good father to the babies left behind.

Not only do people listen to those voices, their headlines, and their narrative but there is very little available information to contradict their claims. The officers who had to make those dreadful decisions are forbidden to speak. Police leaders are forced to dance to the tune of conciliation. Investigations take time, and evidence will not be allowed to speak until a civil or criminal trial when the incident is likely long forgotten by the protesters and their audience. Witnesses remain silent by advice of lawyers. The tide of misinformation and disinformation rises.

What can the ordinary citizen do to filter the truth? Here are some keys:

1) Wait. It will be a long time before a use of force case is fully investigated. Even in controversial cases supposedly being watched nationally, by the time the facts become known and vetted, minds have already been made up based on the commentators and activists who are seeking attention with their speculation and accusations. Recognize that many voices have been silenced. Video and interviews have been edited. There is never just one side to the story, and hardly ever just two.

2) Listen. When news outlets, particularly those with an editorial history of activism, choose to describe an officer involved incident as a “violent killing” rather than an “in custody death under investigation” it is clear that a bias is showing. When an event is compared to other

events such as “this follows a spate of brutal police killings across the country”, the careful consumer recognizes that the reporter isn’t just reporting a fire, but throwing gasoline on it to make it bigger.

3) Trust. A good citizen is skeptical and demands openness and accountability, but some level of trust in the system must remain. This trust is not merely blind faith and patriotism, but a recognition that our judicial system and law enforcement are generally trustworthy. For example, the vast majority of cases of police use of force that reach a criminal or civil trial are resolved in favor of the arresting officer. Skeptics argue that the system is rigged, that cops can’t be successfully prosecuted, and that cops will cover up misconduct by other cops.

The reality is that outside agencies cooperate to investigate complaints as thoroughly as any violent event. Officers can lose their careers and pensions by lying about other officers in a coverup. Grand juries have great power to indict officers who commit crimes. Prosecutors are accountable for objective investigations and determining charges. Multiple levels of the criminal justice system are at play and are accountable to one another. Journalists and activists watch the system carefully. Jurors are notoriously careful in their duties.

4) Seek multiple sources. Anyone can create a website with an impressive header that looks like a legitimate news source. Reading carefully, it often doesn’t take long to determine whether a writer has a bias. As a writer for NPA and founder of The National Center for

Police Advocacy, my perspective should be transparent to any inquiry. My expertise allows me to back up my editorial positions with facts and logic. Others purporting to be objective journalists, or those with a stated agenda, should be able to defend their reporting as either news or editorial. Claiming to be news while holding an obvious bias is a red flag, as the American public has been learning for at least the past decade.

The Myth of Militarization

As disturbances around the country explode after officer-involved suspect deaths, law enforcement is standing by to provide a measure to mitigate violence and property damage. Dramatic video of armored vehicles and riot-gear clad police often incite cries that the police are provoking violence, as though donning protective gear lights a match to an otherwise peaceful protest. As someone who has been trained in crowd control as a member of the National Guard, and who has been on the scene during the disturbances in Ferguson and Portland, these claims reflect a gross misunderstanding of the tools used by police to keep others safe.

I've also been on the scene of many fires but have yet to hear anyone in the crowd or in the press criticizing firefighters for wearing helmets, fire-resistant bunker gear, breathing apparatus, or rolling in large trucks to a scene. No one accuses the firefighters of starting the fire or making it worse by showing up ready to deal with it, even if it turns out to be a false call. First responders have a right, and indeed a moral obligation, to protect themselves from harm when called to a scene. From latex gloves to armored rescue vehicles, the purpose of equipment is to accomplish the mission with no injuries or fatalities.

The moral obligation of self-preservation, or what is often called "officer survival" by trainers and critics alike, is not merely a selfish one. If a police officer is injured or killed, they become a liability to completing

the mission. They incur great costs to the taxpayer (although we pay far too little attention and resources to our dead and injured). They become another victim requiring resources for rescue and treatment, diminishing the capacity of response to others. In addition, an officer disabled during the mission is no longer able to protect the weapons, vehicle, and other gear assigned to them, leaving gear vulnerable to acquisition by lawbreakers and rioters.

When riding with a Portland officer during the ceaseless siege on their city, I noticed there was no rifle or shotgun in sight. Whenever I do a ride-along with any agency I want to know where their shotgun is and how to access it just in case, since I'm not usually allowed to carry my own weapon. He told me that they had stopped having shotguns in the patrol car lest they be overcome and the car and or weapons be stolen and used against others.

Helmets, shields, shin guards, heavy gloves, long batons, gas masks, and other gear have very practical purposes. Those with no intent to peacefully protest bring bottles of frozen water, balloons filled with bleach or urine, and any available rock or brick to throw at officers. Their hateful purpose is to injure and demoralize officers, their tactical purpose is to keep officers from interfering with looting and arson. Chemical irritants are not for the purpose of punishing protestors, but to move and disperse hostile crowds away from a vulnerable area. Gas masks for officers helps keep them on mission. "Riot sticks" are not appropriate or practical for overhead swings to bash heads, but to be used horizontally to push against an advancing hostile group.

While a fully equipped crowd control officer may look intimidating (not a bad strategy in itself), the primary purpose is to allow the officer to do the job they were sent to do and return home whole and healthy, ready to continue to serve.

As for armored rescue vehicles, there is no intent to “militarize” civilian law enforcement, but to enable officers to enter dangerous areas and complete their mission. I once published an open challenge with a cash reward to anyone who could send me evidence that machine guns were mounted on an armored vehicle. The challenge went unanswered because these vehicles are not tanks ready for battle, and fully automatic weapons are a rarity in police armories. Surplus MRAPS have been acquired by police agencies only where the very high cost of purchasing law enforcement specialized vehicles makes this military surplus the only option. Do even small agencies need a bullet-proof vehicle? I worked in an isolated rural area where a parole officer was pinned down by rifle fire from the home of one of his clients. His only rescue was by a surplus armored vehicle that the local sheriff’s department had acquired despite criticism from some residents who thought the idea was so much macho foolishness.

While reporting from the Ferguson disturbances, an officer told me they were not allowed to wear their protective gear because it would leave a bad impression. This while the scorched remains of business still smoldered in the background.

Depriving any first responder of the necessary equipment to do their job effectively and safely is to put public safety at risk.

Sympathy For Criminals Becoming Public Policy

As they say in the South, “bless their hearts”. What we used to call soft on crime is now mental health awareness, racial justice, and criminal justice reform. In Colorado, Governor Polis signed legislation to reduce penalties for some offenses. Former Colorado prosecutor George Brauchler pointed out in a Denver Post editorial that “the most offender-friendly governor in our lifetimes pushed a bill, entitled “Misdemeanor Reform,” that slipped in a provision carving up a long-existing felony statute and decriminalized gun ownership by tens of thousands of felons, including those convicted of drug dealing, organized crime, burglary, arson, car theft, treason, sedition, anarchy, and inciting a riot to name only a few.”

In the typical rush to criminal justice reform reverberating throughout the nation’s legislatures, contradictory laws have been passed. Colorado’s reforms, for example, forbids gun possession by a misdemeanor conviction of assault, but not for burglary or drug dealing. In another law, some crimes involving guns were reclassified as more serious misdemeanors, while the penalties for misdemeanors were reduced, meaning the former lesser offense had a harsher punishment than the new higher classification.

In the midst of these disjointed and short sighted changes, the Colorado legislature did impose stricter gun laws on law abiding firearms owners. Fewer

penalties for felons, more burdens for the non-criminal citizen. One doesn't have to pick on Colorado for creating laws that fail to consider the reality of unintended consequences. Californians are suffering from rampant increases in crime and its Governor is back pedaling to deal with it.

Gavin Newsome is finally addressing a lapse in the law that has emboldened organized shoplifters who calculate the value of their stolen goods to stay in the misdemeanor range. Meanwhile, as that nation observed from the lack of prosecution of theft and vandalism during last summer's riots, many prosecutors don't consider misdemeanor theft serious enough to prosecute aggressively. In addition, retailers are cautious about apprehending shoplifters, realizing that there are liabilities involved and a have a low expectation of justice.

On the national level, President Biden's latest nominee as U.S. Attorney for Massachusetts, Rachael Rollins, is on record as having a policy in her current prosecutorial role of not prosecuting some crimes. Her memo, emblazoned with her quote "There are many ways that we can hold people accountable without putting them in jail", she includes driving offenses, drug offenses, and property crimes as non-violent offenses less deserving of prosecution. She also states that a criminal conviction can be a barrier to education, income, and housing.

Those are compassionate words and an evaluation of non-jail options and prosecution priorities is good practice. However, anyone who has been the victim of a car crash with an unlicensed, uninsured motorist, dealt

with a drug influenced trespasser, or felt that pain of the theft of something of value would be hard pressed to believe that a blanket catch-and-release policy is justice for the victims. Rollins' 66 page memo devotes a half page to victims.

In addition to the list of offenses whose charges she prefers to decline, she has made it a policy to avoid making criminal defendants accessible to immigration law enforcement, and expressing a concern that a criminal conviction can harm "immigration consequences". Her official policy is to excuse shoplifting of "necessities", to allow the return of property as a reason not to prosecute theft, prosecution only after special approval for disorderly conduct arrests from disturbances, and gives tacit permission to break and enter for a place to sleep. Reduced prosecutions for possession of drugs with intent to distribute by limiting the impact of officer observations of known characteristics of drug possession with intent to distribute, and a litany of excuses for criminal behavior.

Bad laws and weak prosecutors are not the only factors associated with an increase in crime. Chicago's Police Superintendent recently fired a verbal shot at the courts for releasing criminals back on the street. At a press conference when asked what can be done about the body count when 12 persons were killed and 70 other shot on a recent weekend, Superintendent David Brown said "What we can do different is challenge the courts to render Chicago safe. Holding offenders in jail longer, not releasing murderers back into our community."

All manner of ill conceived and hastily constructed criminal justice reform efforts are creating a storm of mistrust and fear among a voting public that will likely not long tolerate increasing violence and criminality. Making a policy to generate a headline or satisfy political aspirations will eventually be slowed as the public realizes the peril of dismantling a system that, while never perfect, was working for them and not the criminal actor.

About The Author



This series is authored by [Chief Joel F. Shults, Ed.D.](#) Joel is a retired police chief. He is an award-winning writer, college professor, trainer, and first responder chaplain.