---------- Forwarded message ---------
From: **Marc Brenman** <mbrenman001@comcast.net>
Date: Fri, Jun 5, 2020 at 9:54 AM
Subject: Re: Fwd: American policing needs fixing
To: Jeremy <jeremy.s.wu@gmail.com>

Hi Jeremy, alas the crossover between police and "national security" is already occurring. The New York City Police Department, for example, has one of the largest intelligence and anti-terrorism units in the United States, comparable to some federal agencies. They even have staff stationed overseas. They've been accused of surveilling and targeting mosques and Arab-Americans. The various "fusion" anti-terrorism task forces around the country integrate police forces with national security entities, the FBI, etc. Police forces sometimes cooperate with Homeland Security/ICE in undocumented immigrant provision of intelligence and raids. Police departments sometimes get stuck between an institutional inclination toward "law and order" and local elected officials, who may oppose immigration raids and sometimes declare "sanctuary cities." I don't know examples of local police departments surveilling and gather intelligence on Asian-Americans, but it would not surprise me if some did so at the request of federal agencies.

Marc

On June 5, 2020 at 6:35 AM Jeremy <jeremy.s.wu@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Marc,

Thank you for your quick response and analysis.  Inevitably today's situation will lead to discussions of racial profiling, policing reform, and legislative action.  Asian Americans must not miss the boat about its extension to the students/scientists/espionage situation.  Police may be substituted by law enforcement and national security.  Do you see the link and potential approach?

---------- Forwarded message ---------

From: Marc Brenman <mbrenman001@comcast.net>

Date: Fri, Jun 5, 2020 at 9:05 AM

Subject: Re: Fwd: American policing needs fixing

To: Jeremy <jeremy.s.wu@gmail.com>

 Hi Jeremy,

 The Economist article is a good one. I don’t buy into the “invading army” trope. Having been raised in an Army family, I have some idea of what the military is actually like. I also de-emphasize the issue of surplus military goods for police. They have their place, and the issue is mostly of visuals. Alas, today police are sometimes out-gunned. This also reaches the issue of your question as to why I recommend voting for Democrats. Republicans consistently vote against gun control of any kind, and oppose police reforms. Studies consistently show that an authoritarian mindset is a common indicator of far rightwing beliefs. This resonates with issue of many police having high control needs.

 There’s some overlap in our discourse, such as pointing out the large number of police departments. The article emphasizes “rooting out systemic racism.” I don’t, because I try to concentrate on initiatives that are doable. No one yet has succeeded in rooting out systemic racism, and I don’t see that happening in the context of police reform. The police are a subset of American society, and can’t bear the burden of all the sins of American society.

 The Economist article makes the interesting point that police are the “intake valve” for the criminal justice system. But as I note, the police are really in the social control business. The criminal justice system is just one aspect of social control.

 I do agree with the article that the evidence is mixed that using education to “root out officers’ implicit bias” works. In fact, the evidence is pretty much lacking. Implicit bias is a neurological concept, and very few people pretending to be experts really understand it. If done poorly, implicit bias training can awaken discriminatory thoughts and cause more problems than it solves. Too many organizations leap to “educating” on implicit bias before they tackle more foundational issues such as benchmarking, diversity metrics, bad old intentional discrimination, disparate impact, the need for nondiscrimination policies/practices/procedures, grievance and complaint procedures, neutral/objective/professional investigations, alternate dispute resolution, affirmative action, EEO, etc.

 I support the article’s advocacy of collecting better statistics. However, a great many statistics have been known for a long time, and they haven’t helped much. Sometimes they have been used for “broken windows policing,” and have led to more accusations of bias.

 The Camden, New Jersey example in the article is a good one.

 I agree with the emphasis on changing the sovereign immunity paradigm. However, this is in the Supreme Court as we speak. Police reform can occur in several spheres, including the federal judiciary. The Supreme Court will not change much in this area until a Democratic president has the chance to appoint several justices. But even then, the sovereign immunity issue is rooted in the Constitution, and goes deeper than a simple liberal-conservative dichotomy. It goes to the very role of government, and how much authority we provide to those who govern us. The police are part of the governance structure.

 Regarding de-funding police, that is a fraught path. What happens when someone calls the police and they don’t show up because of a shortage of personnel or vehicles or communications equipment? The real issue is more one of strategic planning, determining mission, prioritizing, allocating resources, etc. As I note in my paper, the police today are called on by society to carry out duties outside their legislated sphere, including first responder mental health services. In that regard, an expansion of services is called for, not a decrease in services. The question is what type of services, who performs them, how good are they, and can people be coerced into receiving mental health services? Another area where police are called upon that is outside usual criminal justice issues is dealing with the homeless. In San Francisco, for example, it is estimated that police make around 100,000 calls per year on homelessness issues. Policing is just one form of infrastructure in society; others include housing, employment, healthcare, education, transportation, etc. All of these issues need to be dealt with, but for right now, I'm concentrating on reducing police violence.

 I raise a number of issues not raised in the article, such as the undue power of police unions.

 I hope this is helpful. Please let me know if you have any other questions.

 Best regards,

 Marc