

**Violence Prevention Coalition:**  
**Community Conversation Notes for September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

**Topic:** “Use of Force” policy by the Oakland Police Department

**Participants:** 19 - 21 community members

**Note:** Comments are grouped by theme, not in the order given

**Commentary on police culture:**

- If money comes from the pockets of police for misconduct, it would change how police think about accountability; the community should not be responsible for paying those costs.
- If court costs come out of police union funds, officers would have to pay for other officers’ error and I think it would change their perspective
- Part of the problem we have is we can change and add to the policy however; use of force is escalating – they show up with military equipment. If we don’t look at the equipment they use, then this [use of force policy] becomes just a very small piece.
  - Why do you have a bearcat at 73<sup>rd</sup> and Bancroft? Black and brown people. They don’t care. It’s not even a thought. (referring to an event in District 6)
- How low is the bar to become a police officer in Oakland? It seems we need to raise the bar. The bar is too low and might be contributing to some of the problems. [Also] whistleblowers and others who actively try and prevent police brutality aren’t protected. The bar is low because so few people want the job.
- Lots of people apply to OPD; lots of requirements – which typically disadvantages Black people; b/c Black people are arrested disproportionate to others, then [requirements] weeds them out.
  - How do we not make the requirements increasingly more prohibitive?
  - Change requirements so they are real; work closely with the appropriate people on the requirements.

- Police lie. And, if they're going to lie, they should have to lie in public. (RE: how policies are implemented within the department).
- How do we handle the issue of race?
  - "If they stop Betty Sue, a white woman, they're going to abide by the policy. But if they stop me [MoC] or [another MoC] then the policy is unlikely to be followed."
  - Police deny race is a factor when policing; put language in policy that requires you to agree to police in a way that addresses these disparities
- Group expressed desire for a test that evaluates implicit bias or racism; if other companies can have these tests, so should the police.
  - [Harvard Implicit Bias test](#)

### **Commentary on officer training:**

- If you're a teacher or social worker or other type of mandated reporter, you are required to report misconduct, why not the same from officers
- "I'm a small woman with grey hair – they stomped me because I didn't immediately give them my backpack. They're trained to obtain domination at any cost. They've been trained that it's their right and job to completely overpower."
- The training won't make a difference if the individuals being hired are ill-suited, or there's inadequate reinforcement of the culture shift from all levels within the force.

### **Comments on changing policing policy:**

- Can we also talk about the policies of use of force, but the procedures?
  - If there is a disagreement between? CPRA + OPD, then it's resolved by the Police Commission by a discipline committee. We need to work on the quality of the CPRA investigation; to include an understanding of how they came to their findings. Be a watchdog over the Commission + CPRA
- Do we feel like the system is doing what it is supposed to do? How do we get updated use of force into training?

- We have started to see pretty significant change. Officers who shot J. Pollack were fired – will they stay fired? We’ll see. [Because] it’s important that bad officers stay fired.
- People on probation and parole were stopped constantly, but it had very little impact on actual crime. [It] resulted in a lower return rate than if OPD went to Rockridge to stop and search folks.
- Do we know what works?
  - 1) is there a community somewhere in the U.S. where they are trying new things and it’s working; 2) we should find progressive thinkers – a Brookings Institute [type] think tank about how you start over, because there’s a mindset in the police department that has to change.
- There is a racial disparity in the stop of vehicles, but also use of force and it is the reason we’ve been under Federal Oversight. And the needle hasn’t moved.
- Who negotiates? Who else is a part of this process? Who is in opposition to what happens here? (RE: Use of Force policy)
  - We could come up with all the policies we want, but who is really in there.
    - **Response:** right now, it’s the police commissioners (ad hoc committee) gathering input from the community.
      - Two Sgt. of OPD invited by Commissioners; “...no one else gets to make their own job description.”
- There is an effort to center people directly impacted by police violence. It is up to the ad hoc commission who will then go back to their commissioners.
  - We ask that there be no more private meetings w/ OPD.
- Social workers, counselors, etc. will one day be the folks deployed instead of police.

**Resources discussed:**

- [City Auditor’s review](#)
- [Use of Force policy](#)
- [Harvard Implicit Bias test](#)