

CURRENTS

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CHANGING THE POLICE-RACE RELATIONS AGENDA

Also

- *Combatting Hate Crime*
- *Auditing Police-Race Relations Practices*
- *Police Race Relations Training in Montreal and the Maritimes*
- *Community Policing in the U.S.*
- *Race Crime Statistics*
- *Partnerships and Accountability*

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The Urban Alliance on Race Relations is an educational agency and an advocate and intermediary for racial minorities. It works towards encouraging better race relations, increased understanding and awareness among our multicultural, multiracial population through programs of education directed at both the private and public sectors of the community. It focuses its efforts on the institutions of our society including educational systems, employment, government, media, legislation, police, social service agencies, and human services, in order to reduce patterns of discrimination and inequality of opportunity which may exist within these institutions.

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Editorial

From Conflict to Partnerships Changing The Police-Race Relations Agenda

The focus of attention of police-race relations in recent years has largely evolved around issues of police mistreatment of racial minorities. The perception of racism in the provision of policing services has been the principle cause of minority community concerns. In addressing these concerns, the institutional response by the police has included initiatives in such areas as training, employment equity, the use of firearms, an independent complaints system and so forth. If the impact of these initiatives is significant, they will certainly do much to improve the police-race relations climate.

However, it is suggested that there are other equally important items on the police race relations agenda. Is it, for example, naive to suggest the police have a role to play in helping to combat racism in the wider

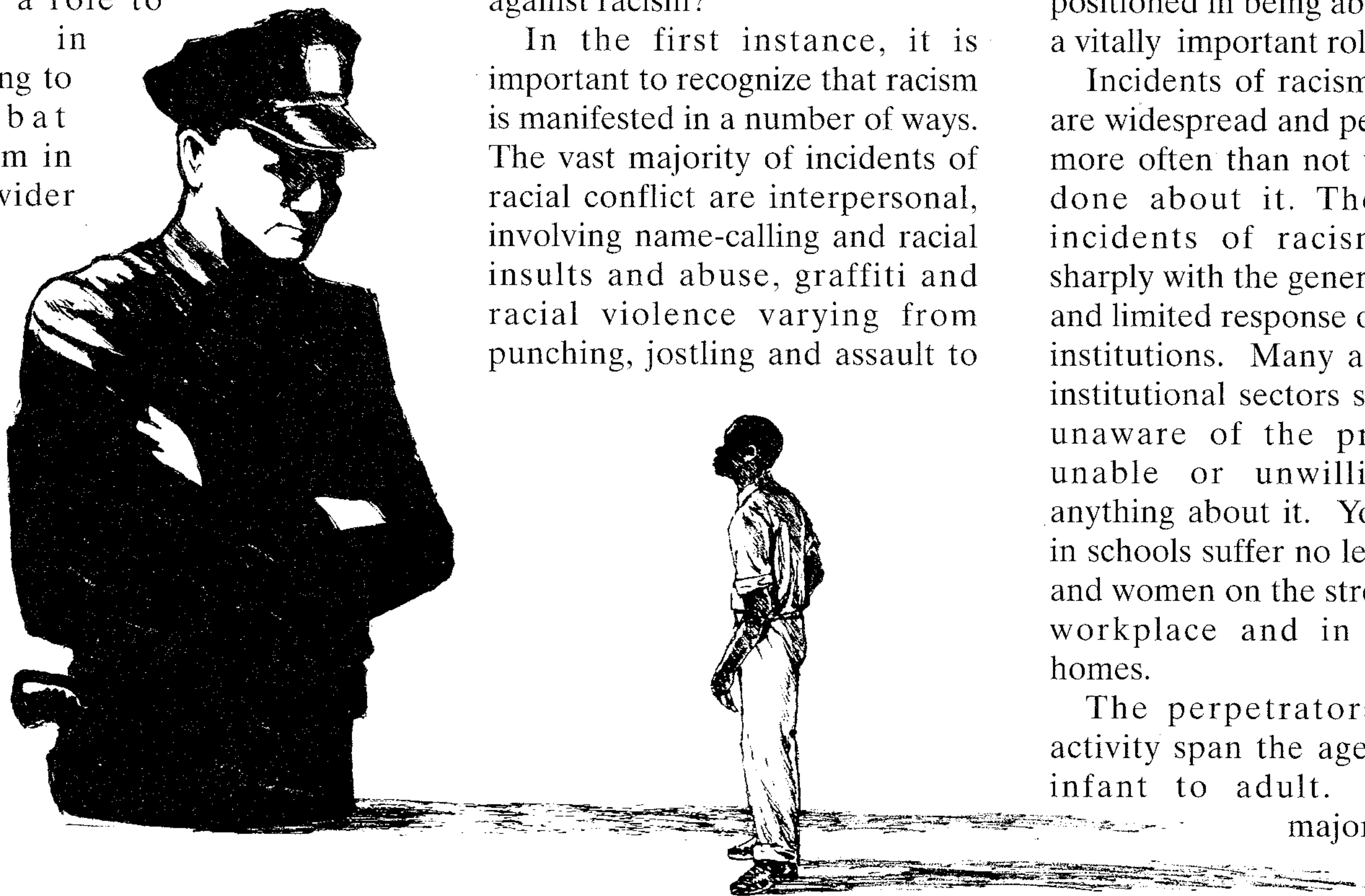
community? Instead of being perceived by many as the major culprit of poor race relations, how can the police possibly be seen as a proactive ally in the fight against racism?

In the first instance, it is important to recognize that racism is manifested in a number of ways. The vast majority of incidents of racial conflict are interpersonal, involving name-calling and racial insults and abuse, graffiti and racial violence varying from punching, jostling and assault to

maiming and even murder. While a number of different bodies and organizations are involved in combating racism, it is suggested that the police are uniquely positioned in being able to assume a vitally important role.

Incidents of racism in Canada are widespread and persistent, yet more often than not very little is done about it. The frequent incidents of racism contrast sharply with the generally dilatory and limited response of our public institutions. Many agencies and institutional sectors seem largely unaware of the problem, or unable or unwilling to do anything about it. Young people in schools suffer no less than men and women on the streets, in their workplace and in their own homes.

The perpetrators of racist activity span the age level from infant to adult. The vast majority of these



perpetrators may be described as a cross-section of the community. We therefore need to disabuse our minds of the idea that racism is solely or even mainly the work of the extremist fringe.

Though the evidence in Canada is largely anecdotal rather than statistical, there are enough indications to suggest that racial minorities suffer from frequent acts of racial harassment. Not only do minorities suffer directly from these incidents, but it is also important to recognize that part of their everyday Canadian experience is the insecurity and anxiety arising from the threatening atmosphere associated with the possibility of racial insults, graffiti and violence directed at them. Racial incidents are by their very nature discriminatory. They aggravate inequality and adversely affect relationships between different racial groups. Unfortunately the most common response to racism on the part of the victim at the moment is to quietly accept and submit to this indignity, harassment and brutality. Such racial incidents will continue to fester as a serious problem for as long as the victims are isolated and the actions of perpetrators go unpunished.

A Police Response

The initiative taken by the Metropolitan Toronto Police Force in dealing with Hate/Bias oriented criminal activity as described in the article by Chuck Konkel represents an important new direction in beginning to address this issue. It is suggested

that the image of the police in the minority communities could be greatly enhanced if they were seen to be taking pro-active action to prevent such racial incidents from occurring in the first place and, when it does occur, detecting and prosecuting the culprits.

In order for the police to assume an effective role in combating racism, a number of suggestions have been made for an expanded police role, including:

- Recognize racial incidents as a serious phenomenon over and above that of ordinary harassment requiring concerted action.
- Record all incidents where a racial minority person is the victim (whether or not there is any obvious racist motive involved), and monitor these incidents over time.
- Treat all incidents where a racial minority person(s) is the victim as a possible case of racial offence until it is shown otherwise.
- Examine ways in which action can be taken to prevent racial incidents, such as patrolling likely trouble spots at key times.
- Give serious consideration to establishing a specialized unit to investigate and monitor all forms of racist offences.
- Consider more rigorous action against organizations, and individuals who inspire racial hatred and harassment.

Such an aggressive program of police action could have a major impact on reducing racial incidents and could have a positive impact on the image of the police within minority communities. This would allow significant pay-back in gaining greater minority participation in supporting other policing activities.

Police-Minority Conflict in Democratic Societies

Charles S. Ungerleider

Democratic nations manifest uneasy relations between police agencies and the communities they are intended to serve.¹ Social heterogeneity (especially heterogeneity of colour and ethnicity) and inequalities in the distribution of wealth and power make the relations between the police and racial minorities extremely fragile because, in democratic societies, the police are "... the most visible... embodiment of the dominant group's power."²

Relations between the police and members of minority groups in Canada have been the focus of considerable public attention and scrutiny. During the past 15 years there have been no fewer than five official inquiries, directly or indirectly related to the relations between the police and minority groups.³ In almost every region of Canada the relations between police and minority groups are undergoing close examination.⁴

Racial minorities, women, gays and lesbians charge that the communities in which they live are over-policed, that the police misuse their power^{5,6} that they are blamed for their own victimization (blaming the victim), and that members of their communities are under-represented within police organizations.⁷ These patterns are regarded as evidence of discriminatory treatment resulting from institutional and personal racism. In other words, citizens who belong to these groups believe that the police have placed them in a category of "other" which deserves less respect and is granted less status, fewer rights, and more

obligations than the police or other members of society's dominant groups.

On the other hand, the police complain about and are fearful of members of some of these groups. When they were questioned recently about their greatest fears regarding the future, police officials reported that they are fearful about two issues: "... drug abuse and the likelihood of collective violence from disadvantaged "visible minorities".⁸ When asked about the basis of their fears, the police officials justified their fears with reference to "... increased militancy in the pursuit of political goals, manifest in obstructive and deliberate law-breaking, as well as open disrespect for police carrying out their duties",⁹ though they were unable to provide any concrete evidence in support of their claims.¹⁰

How Does Police Minority Conflict Arise?

It does appear that persons in certain categories are more frequently subjected to small or gross indignities and mistreatment at the hands of the

police. Such mistreatment seems to be inherent in the relations between police and "others" who have been stigmatized by the larger society. As indicated earlier, those "other" include racial minorities, women, gays, lesbians, the poor and the homeless. Consider, for example, that (a) police are often employed to remove from public view poor, urban, nomadic alcoholics and the homeless, (b) police have only recently given grudging acceptance to the notion that rape and family violence are serious criminal activities, and (c) that police are more vigorous in their pursuit of street-level criminal activity than they are of corporate crime. My argument is that the police are most likely to mistreat individuals who are stigmatized by the dominant society. This is what leads, in part, to "over-policing" and "under-protection" of minorities, if not blaming the victimized for their own victimization.

Canadian society is hierarchically stratified along a number of dimensions, including ascribed attributes such as skin

colour, ethnicity, sex and religion. These attributes often evoke strong affective responses and are often used by "outsiders" to impute cohesion among persons who are similarly perceived, separating "them" from "us". The categorization of people in this way can provide a shared sense of identity as well as distinctive perceptual, normative and behavioural patterns. These differences are injected into society's policy processes — including the processes affecting criminal justice — creating disputes about what behaviours are to be considered criminal and how seriously particular criminal violations are to be regarded. For example, sex is a dimension of social segmentation which leads to disputes about whether prostitution and abortion should be considered criminal offenses and, if criminal, how seriously they should be taken as criminal violations.¹¹

Canadian society is also stratified along lines of economic and political power. It is a society in which monetary resources are unequally divided, enabling those who possess monetary resources to purchase goods and services as well as political access and influence. This means that those who possess wealth and political influence are less likely to become enmeshed in criminal processes and, if enmeshed, less likely to be punished. First, the economically advantaged exert influence on the definition of criminal behaviour and are not likely to define as criminal those patterns of behaviour in which they engage. When they become

involved in criminal activity, the economically and politically advantaged tend to engage in criminal activities (white collar crime) which are more difficult to detect and prosecute than the "street" crimes committed by less advantaged people. And finally, those who possess economic resources can purchase better legal representation.¹²

It is the intersection of social stratification with police ideology that creates the conditions for conflict. In any encounter — but especially street encounters — between the police and public there is a range of behavioural choices open to citizens. These range from acquiescence to police authority and police definition of the situation to resistance to police authority and their definition of the situation. Somewhere in the middle of the continuum is an assertive proclamation of one's own definition of the situation and of one's rights as a citizen.¹³

A person's behaviour in such an encounter is influenced by one's perceived location in the society's system of social stratification. Police respond to their own definitions of a person's location as well as the persons' demeanor. It is in this way that one's self-definition and one's imputed identity intrude upon the relations between police and citizen.¹⁴

Police misconduct — especially physical and verbal excesses — is most likely to arise in contexts where one or more of the following conditions prevail:

(a) where a disturbance has occurred and order is difficult

- to restore,
- (b) where there is a hostile or indifferent audience,
- (c) where the main actor(s) are aggressive and verbally abusive,
- (d) where there is resistance to police requests or to arrest, and
- (e) intoxication.¹⁵

From the perspective of the police officer there are a variety of factors which may exacerbate abuse in such situations. The police officers in such situations may perceive a confused situation requiring control in which they must primarily rely upon the authority of their office. If they are unable to separate their office from their own self-concepts, they may perceive challenges to their office as challenges to themselves. Using age, appearance, language and other behaviours, the police may have stereotyped the main actor as someone who is unrepresentative of the community and the values it represents. And they may feel that the actor is deserving of retribution for the alleged transgression of community standards.¹⁶

Poor police-minority relations are influenced by the structural features of a society in which opportunity, rewards and constraints are unequally and unfairly distributed. The criminal justice system promotes the interests of the most powerful members of society. Within the context of that system, the police contribute to the criminalization of marginalized individuals by selectively perceiving and responding to deviance.

Immigrants are especially vulnerable since they are frequently perceived as being "different, excitable, and arrogant".¹⁷ In other words, the analysis of poor police-minority relations must appreciate the importance and influence of the socio-political context in which police organizations operate.

Conclusion

The development of effective procedures for recruiting, training, rewarding, and deploying members of police organizations and the development of grievance and public complaints procedures are important elements for improving the way that police organizations serve the public. There are, nevertheless, limits to the efficacy of such procedures. Canadian police organizations are part of a society in which people are stigmatized on the basis of attributes such as skin colour, religion, social class, and sex.

Thus it seems likely that, because the police are the most visible embodiment of the society and its values, the relations between them and minorities will continue to be characterized by tension and conflict. Recognition of the limits of community policing, police selection, preparation, and deployment should not inhibit action in these areas, though it does suggest that dramatic changes are not likely to occur simply because of their implementation. Such procedures must be accompanied by other legal and educational mechanisms to ensure social justice for all Canadians.

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Giving "SERVE AND PROTECT" a New Meaning An American Perspective on Community Policing

Ronald E. Hampton

African-Americans today believe that law and order is not being kept in their communities. It should not have taken the Rodney King beating and subsequent Los Angeles riots to show that traditional policing in America is not working. The average African-American citizen is terribly dissatisfied with the police and their services in his/her neighbourhood. However, in some parts of America, a movement is underway to dramatically reshape the roles of both police officers and the communities they serve. It is being led by a handful of police officers, chiefs, criminal justice experts and community activists.

The days of the aloof, distant and remote officer are over - when the definition of responsibility was only to get information and make the arrest. This approach required little concern for dealing with the conditions that give rise to the crime or for minimizing the psychological damage to the individuals.

Community policing is much more than simply putting officers back on the block. Community policing is a strategy that emphasizes collaboration with citizens in the identification and resolution of neighbourhood problems. Community policing places the police with citizens they are supposed to be serving. This is a radical change from the traditional police - citizen relationship. Community policing calls for a paradigm shift, that is from a mind set of "just us" to justice on both the part of the police and the community.

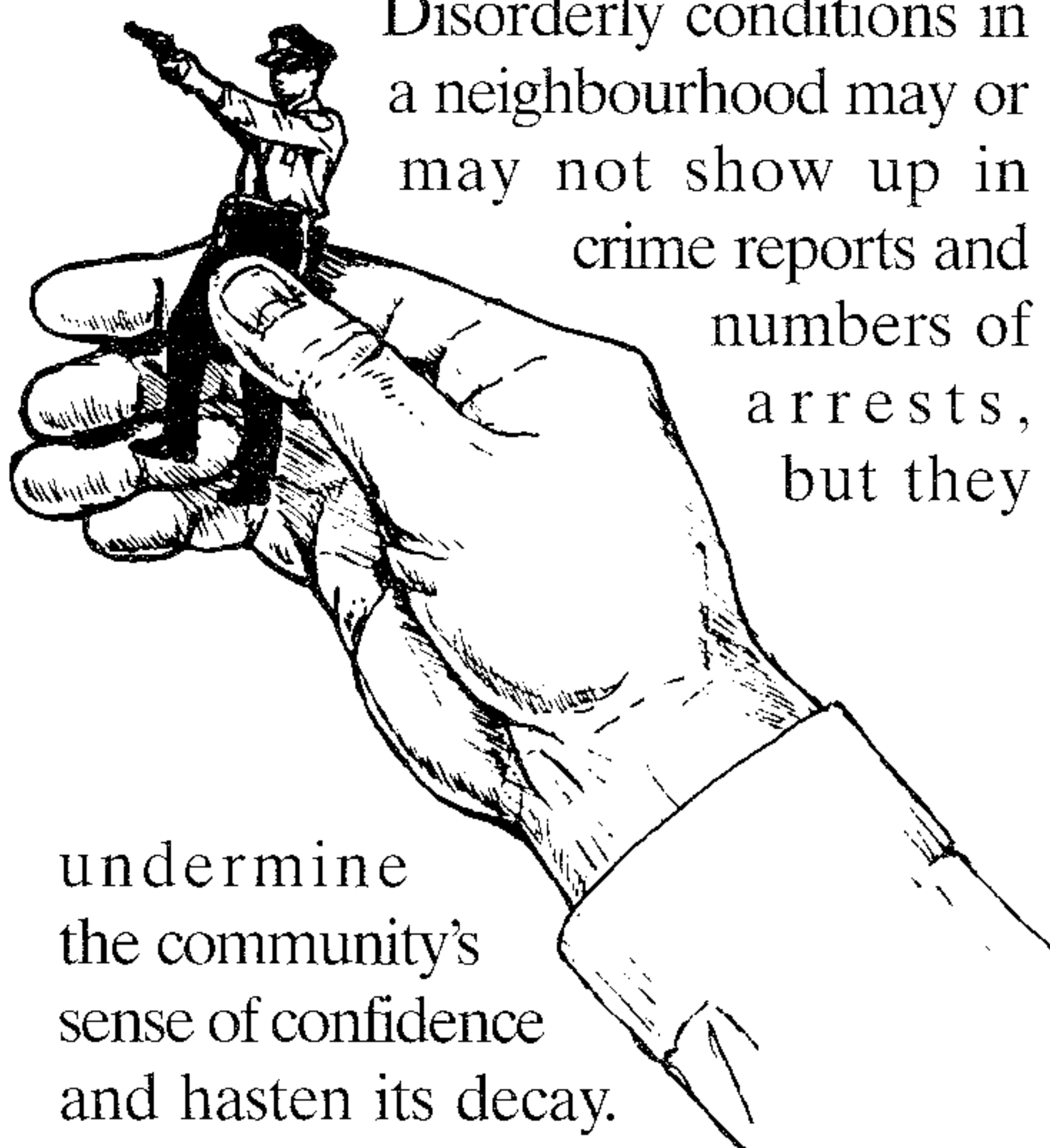
No longer does the community sit idly by while the police "do it alone". In community policing, the citizens are an active partner in the development of crime fighting and prevention strategies.

The key to understanding the

concept of community policing seems to lie not with the police, but with looking at crime in a different way.

The advocates of community policing down play statistical measures of crime. Instead, they put a premium on community perceptions.

Disorderly conditions in a neighbourhood may or may not show up in crime reports and numbers of arrests, but they



undermine the community's sense of confidence and hasten its decay.

When you go out to the neighbourhood and start talking to people, it is inevitable that although they are concerned about serious crime, the primary concern is the lack of order. Citizens are concerned with how their neighbourhood appears to its inhabitants and outsiders alike. For

example, if drinking youth, abandoned buildings, the inability to use the parks, drugs in the neighbourhood and prostitution are rampant in their areas, most citizens are troubled by these disorderly circumstances. These are often precursors of crime. In old police bureaucratic terms, disorder is unimportant. The handling of these disorderly circumstances does not show up on statistical crime indices. Neither does the media, politicians or the police brass, for that matter, focus on the importance of disorder in general particularly when developing policies. In addition, police officers have not advanced through the ranks by attacking the conditions or working to solve the problems caused by disorder.

Eliminate the disorder, advocates of community policing say, and you can alleviate crime. An effective community policing concept with strong participation, trust and support from the community would give the police officer the political, moral and social authority to work on these problems. This, in fact, would result in both the community and the police

being truly empowered. Also, it would be in the best interest of the officers, as well as the citizens, to keep disorder and other problems away from the neighbourhood.

Dealing With Serious Crimes

Critics of community policing, as outlined above, say that the idea of a friendly beat officer as some magic bullet solution for serious crimes such as murders, rapes, assaults, big-time, sophisticated drug dealing and the rising tide of violence fueled by crack cocaine, is laughable.

Yet community policing techniques are appropriate for more serious crimes. Once one starts analyzing who commits crimes, one finds that to the extent people do experience serious crime - especially assault, rape and murder - often the crime is committed by someone they know and sometimes quite intimately. Yet, police departments are built around responding to predator/stranger crimes, in spite of the fact that when we break down serious crime, the predator/stranger often turns out to be a date, an acquaintance or someone in the community or neighbourhood.

Community policing advocates have called for a rethinking of both the nature of the crime and the role of the police in crime control and prevention. Rethinking the crime problem means a shift away from the predator/stranger strategies and the focus on crime indices. It requires moving towards notions of what constitutes disorder and how it can be contained and reversed before it leads to serious crime. Rethinking the role of the police includes abandoning traditional notions of what it means to fight crime.

Proactive Policing

Our police today seem to hold

back and wait until something happens. Then they go in with their lights flashing and sirens screaming. As a matter of fact, this reactive mode is relatively passive in comparison to the community policing model, which allows the officer to work very aggressively, but in a pro-active fashion to stop or reduce the problems before they start. The latter approach is much more aggressive, but not in terms of the lights it flashes or the loudness of the screaming sirens. Community policing is a very intrusive approach at the invitation of the community. Moreover, community policing can, if implemented well, be cost-effective in many ways.

All of this is, of course, diametrically opposed to the standard military style of instruction that police officers receive. Police training tends to approach the officer as a vessel to be emptied and then filled and indoctrinated with precisely the knowledge that the institution wishes to convey. Moreover, the military style of training is closely reflected in, for instance, their language - "war on drugs", "war on crime", etc. However, does an emphasis on community work and building problem solving skills adequately prepare officers for what they have to face on the street? Or, do police have to be tough as nails to do the job? Frankly, one thing that is rarely communicated in training is the very high level of fear on the part of police officers. Police officers encounter the worst elements of criminal activity in a community. This explains, in part, the degree of fear and anxiety experienced by the police. Therefore, reintroducing the police into the neighbourhood as part of the community has to be done in close

collaboration with the citizens for the safety of the community and the police.

Community policing, according to some of its critics and opponents, has an aura or appearance of some namby pamby, touchy-feely liberalism. Yet, on closer examination, the community policing model seems genuinely tough and radical in ways that would appeal to conservatives and liberals alike. When all is said and done, community policing emphasizes grass-roots networking and citizen empowerment. It also suggests a radical decentralization of power in police bureaucracies, shifting authority away from hierarchical chains of command, out toward the precinct houses and line officers working with communities to develop local strategies.

People are going to have the opportunity to patrol with the police, introducing them to the law-abiding citizens and helping to alleviate the fear experienced when entering new neighbourhoods. Moreover, whenever officers work within a community policing framework, they develop a sense of satisfaction and real accomplishment. Finally, both the citizens and the police can "repossess" their community from thugs, thieves and criminals.

The health and welfare of a community is a collaborative and collective responsibility. It is only with a genuine sense of responsibility and action that our neighbourhoods can be transformed from being killing fields to fertile fields of human potential.

Ronald E. Hampton is the Executive Director of the National Black Police Association, Washington D.C.

Initiatives

An Ontario Race Relations Policy for Police Services

In response to concerns about relations between Ontario's police services and racial minorities, the Ontario Solicitor General established the Task Force on Race Relations and Policing. Included in the 57 recommendations made by the task force was a call for a race relations policy to assist police services with race relations initiatives and to enhance community policing. It also recommended the policy be credible to all partner groups, clearly oppose racism and discrimination in the practice of policing and promote a service orientation to policing.

In addition, the Police Services Act directs police services to protect all of the rights guaranteed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

In 1991, the Ministry of the Solicitor General through its Race Relations and Policing Unit, developed the employment equity regulation for police services. This regulation also states that each of Ontario's police services must have policies to address race relations issues in the workplace.

How the Policy Was Developed

Since the fall of 1991 the Ministry's Race Relations and Policing Unit has consulted extensively with police services, police associations and community groups as well as Ontario government agencies including the Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat and the Human Rights Commission, to develop the Race Relations Policy for Police Services.

This development process was overseen by an Advisory Committee embracing all partner

groups. The resulting policy has been formally endorsed by both the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards and the Police Association of Ontario.

The policy team analyzed 52 existing race relations policies or similar documents from police services and other groups across North America. They conducted group consultations in six regions in the province with participants representing community groups, police services boards and associations and some government ministries.

The fruit of these efforts is the Race Relations Policy for Police Services, based on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code. The policy is fully supportive of the goals of community policing.

What Does The Policy Say

The policy contains an introduction, a statement of principles, a statement of policy, specific objectives, and a glossary. The first statement of the policy defines the essence of the document; "The right of all Ontarians to equal rights and

opportunities is enshrined in federal and provincial law." It goes on to articulate key principles of racial equality and fairness, community service and community policing and accountability.

More particularly, the policy commits Ontario's police services to:

- provide the fullest possible services in a fair and equitable manner to all segments of the public, without discrimination on the basis of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour or ethnic origin;
- extend fair and equal treatment under the law to every community and individual within its jurisdiction, without discrimination on the basis of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour or ethnic origin;
- maintain a respectful and co-operative relationship with all communities that recognizes their racial, cultural and linguistic diversity, thereby fostering

