



President's Task Force on 21st Century Police
Phoenix, Arizona
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Testimony of **Chief Jeffrey Blackwell**, Cincinnati Police Chief

Honorable members of the taskforce: My name is Jeffrey Blackwell and I am the Police Chief of the Cincinnati Police Department in Cincinnati Ohio. In recent years, the Cincinnati Police Department (CPD) has become recognized as the standard in major city policing both nationally and globally. This status has evolved from the department's willingness to try new approaches in providing policing services designed to improve community safety and quality of life while at the same time delivering constitutionally equitable services to the entire community. Our commitment to innovative problem solving approaches and initiatives to reduce violence are further solidified through our participation in the "Collaborative Agreement" (CA), which also includes the provisions contained in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) agreed to with the Department of Justice in 2002. The purposes of the CA are to resolve social conflict, to improve community-police relationships, to reduce crime and disorder, and to fully resolve all of the pending claims that arose from the litigation filings alleging excessive force, racial profiling, and abuse of authority. The parties recognized that there was considerable friction between the department and the minority community. The ultimate goal of the CA was to reduce that friction and foster a safer community where mutual trust and respect is enhanced among citizens and police officers. The CA reflected the following goals adopted by over 3500 respondents through the feedback process developed by the parties:

1. Police Officers and Community Members will become Proactive Partners in Community Problem Solving.
2. To build Relationships of Respect, Cooperation and Trust within and between Police and Communities.
3. Improve Education, Oversight, Monitoring, Hiring Practices and Accountability of CPD.
4. Ensure Fair, Equitable and Courteous treatment for all.
5. Create Methods to Establish the Public's Understanding of Police Policies and Procedures and Recognition of Exceptional Service in an Effort to Foster Support for the Police.

I list the aforementioned information regarding the state of policing and of the conflict existing in Cincinnati in 2001 to demonstrate where we were as a community and the pivot that took place, with tremendous work amongst thousands of concerned stakeholders that had us rise from this low point and grow steadily into a premier police agency in this country. In fact, since the conclusion of the terms and conditions of the CA in 2007, the Cincinnati Police Department has continued to “live by” the framework established in 2002 and has made significant progress in the following areas:

- **Use of Force Policies/Training**—Use of force policies were revised, training developed, and use of force protocols improved;
- **Deadly Force.** The use of deadly force by CPD members against African American citizens and all others has been dramatically reduced;
- **Injuries to Citizens.** Injuries to citizens during arrests have been dramatically reduced;
- **Injuries to Police Officers.** Injuries to Police Officers during arrests have been dramatically reduced;
- **Mentally Ill interactions.** Response to mentally citizens have improved due to training and deployment of Mental Health Response Teams;
- **Citizens Complaint Authority.** Officers are more accountable through investigations by the ‘outside’ Citizens Complaint Authority.
- **Videotaped Traffic Stops and Contact Cards.** Traffic stops are taped through in-car video cameras mounted in every patrol car and field contact cards are completed with traffic stop data that is analyzed routinely;
- **Employee Traffic Solutions System.** Nineteen types of officer conduct, performance, and activity are carefully tracked and evaluated regularly through a comprehensive tracking system;
- **Publicized Police Policies.** Police policies and crime statistics are available and accessible to the public;



- **Community Police Partnering Center.** The Greater Cincinnati Foundation founded Better Together Cincinnati, a funding collaboration of major corporate and nonprofit foundations throughout the region, which secured 5 million dollars in initial private funding to establish the Community Police Partnering Center. The Center is hosted by the Urban League of greater Cincinnati, which is represented on the Board along with the ACLU, the City, Fraternal Order of Police, NAACP, and other community representatives; and
- **Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence.** Beginning in 2006, the parties have supported the establishment of violence reduction efforts using problem-solving principles including Ceasefire, and Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV).

So as I digressed 13 years in order to explain “where we were”, I did so to illustrate the great changes and strides for excellence made by the Cincinnati Police Department to transform our agency. So as we are here today giving testimony regarding Police-Community Relations, Constitutional Policing, etc., it is well understood that the deliverability of police services in America needs to change. The relationships between communities of color and police agencies have been a strained one for generations. Many societal issues and ingrained impediments have contributed to this “relationship chasm” and made difficult any sustainable improvements. Historical racism in America, poor police training and oversight, as well as the over-reliance on inefficient and archaic police enforcement strategies and models, increasing urban poverty and joblessness, urban-core gentrification, declining “moral voice” levels and decreasing diversity in law enforcement ranks have all played a role in the fracture between police and people of color in this country. Additionally, the increasing amount of video footage capturing instances of critical misconduct and abuse of authority, have stalled or even “push backed” appreciable and often hard fought gains in this critical arena. For “What affects us anywhere, affects us EVERYWHERE in policing.



Communities across America have struggled with the complexities imbued with improving cultural relationships. Some of these communities are large metropolitan areas with diverse populations. These areas are faced with a dichotomy of interests insomuch as fear and authority largely have driven police practices while changing demographic have seen emerging ‘pockets’ of people literally screaming for fairer police treatment, inclusion, and equitable service deliverability.

Crime and the ‘fear of crime’ drive many police intervention strategies. The emergence of data-driven statistical analytics is pushing police agencies into a more “focused” approach which at times minimizes or ignores the “human component” and other interactive factors that create synergy and ‘buy-in’ from interested, and sometimes desperate community stakeholders.

This factor has increasingly negative consequences in communities of color and other diverse areas that have emerged in impactful numbers. It is in these circumstances that police agencies can improve short-term and long-term results by minimizing and even eliminating barriers; real or perceived, and develop meaningful relationships that inspire collective cultural competence and in doing so, increase the probability of intangible yet sustainable engagement and synergy that lead to safer, collaborative, harmonious communities.

Three things that are essential in this quest are:

- 1. Trust (Relationships)**
- 2. Collaboration (Authentic)**
- 3. Transparency (Department-wide)**

[From here I will infuse some of Cincinnati’s programs and connective anchors that have worked for us and will work for other communities]

Chief Jeffrey Blackwell—Cincinnati Police Chief

