

# Law enforcement contact

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Law Enforcement Contacts with African Americans and Asian/Pacific Americans It is common knowledge that the diversity of population in the USA is growing: the percentage of people of Asian, African and Latino origin is increasing, and this tendency seems to be rather significant. For example, statistics concerning the US population in the year 2000 showed that there were " 71. 8% white, 12. 2% African-American, and 11. 4% Hispanic". By the year 2030 these percentages will be 60. 5% white, 18. 9% Hispanic, 13. 1% African-American, and 6. 6% Asian people" (U. S. Bureau of the Census 1997).

Due to these changes, the role and specifics of law enforcement have been changed as well. " To be effective, police executives must understand the diversity in their workforces and in their changing communities" (Shusta et al. Multicultural Law Enforcement, 2001). This essay is dedicated to describing the major types of cultural misunderstandings between police officers and diverse populations and to analyzing common conflict resolutions used by police departments in such cases. I decided to represent the analysis in the form " problem-possible solution".

The main problem that causes cross-cultural conflicts is the lack of confidence to police forces among the minority communities; when such situation is present then every law enforcement action of a police officer will be viewed as a possible act of discrimination. The possible solution to this situation is to increase the level of the minorities' confidence: both by providing training to the population, informing them about the role and positive actions of police departments, or using mass media to show police actions from a positive point of view. A successful decision may be to hire several police officers from local population, or to enroll trusted

representatives of the minorities into law enforcement process.

In order to increase the level of confidence the police may establish contact with local groups of leaders and together work out the decisions concerning armed force use, level of police control and similar issues. The role and attitude of local mass media is also important; the authorities have to initiate contacts with mass media representatives and cooperate with them to create a necessary confidence level. Language barriers between the community and the police and prejudices of the officers have to be eliminated.

Different perceptions of privacy and family concepts may also serve a reason for conflicts. The occasions of protest actions can also be a source of cultural misunderstanding. Police departments need to provide necessary training for their officers, to create a tradition of respect and understanding to the values and beliefs of minorities. It is important for the officers both to respect the demands of those taking part in the action and maintain the necessary level of social peace and order.

There are a lot of cases when a representative of minority has been overblamed because of his/her race. For example, the murder committed by a Latino man has been reported as a " case of machismo" and this served as a basis for the prosecuting. In such cases the formulations and investigation of the crime have to be carefully implemented; the police needs to control its use of force and arguments used by the court.

In general, the process of law enforcement in a multiracial community is a double-sided process for police officers. On one hand, racial and ethnic differences should be necessarily taken into account; on the other hand, all US citizens have equal rights and overestimating the above-mentioned

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differences will be regarded as discrimination.

" Professionalism today includes the need for greater consideration across cultures and improved communication with members of diverse groups" (Shusta et al. Multicultural Law Enforcement, 2001). In my opinion, police officers that deal with multicultural communities need to receive special help from the departments and should constantly improve their knowledge concerning peculiarities of the ethnic group they are dealing with.

Literature:

Shusta R. M., Levine, D., Harris Ph., Wong H. Multicultural Law Enforcement: Strategies for Peacekeeping in a Diverse Society (2nd Edition). Prentice Hall, 2001. - 455 p.