

Police corruption



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The term police corruption is defined as the abuse of police authority for personal gain or to gain advantage for the police organization. Police corruption can take the form of a variety of criminal activities ranging from actual commission of serious criminal (i. e. drug trafficking and money laundering) to the instances where police will “ look the other way” when a person commits a minor everyday violation of the law. Some police corruption may involve overlooking crimes committed by family or friends. Police corruption may also involve depriving people of their legal rights.

Throughout time, corruption has been present. While most people would rather look the other way on issues such as this, we all need to find out why it happens, what we can do to further prevent it from happening and how to protect ourselves once it does happen. The history of corruption begins as early as time has first been recorded. Even before Columbus explored America the judicial system in England was subject to corruption. The corruption stemmed from tax collectors scamming people for more money, to officials of the court taking bribes for acts against other citizens.

Most corruption came to light when reporters started printing unfiltered news to the general public. An outcry of justice was heard at this point. From this people were unafraid to go after public officials and officers to gain back the injustice served to them. The forms of corruption stem from bribery, pay offs, to unnecessary force put on those who are detained, to the loss of evidence from crimes so that certain people do not get arrested. Federal laws have been enacted to protect people from the corruption of authoritative officials.

Federal law is applicable to all state, county, and local officers, including those who work in correctional facilities. The key federal criminal statute makes it unlawful for anyone acting with police authority to deprive or conspire to deprive another person of any right protected by the Constitution or laws of the United States (Section 18 U. S. C. § 241 [2000]). Another statute, commonly referred to as the police misconduct provision, makes it unlawful for state or local police to engage in a pattern or practice of conduct that deprives persons of their rights (42 U. S. C. A. 14141 [2000]).

Additionally, federal law prohibits discrimination in police work. Any police department receiving federal funding is covered by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U. S. C. § 2000d) and the Office of Justice Programs statute (42 U. S. C. § 3789d[c]), which prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, and religion. These laws prohibit conduct ranging from racial slurs and unjustified arrests to the refusal of departments to respond to discrimination complaints. (Free dictionary By Farflex, 2003)

Modern day scandal's include but are not limited to 1964 when the passage of the Civil Rights Act was enacted. In 1964 Congress passed a Public Law 88-352 (78 Stat. 241). The provisions of this civil rights act forbade discrimination on the basis of sex as well as race in hiring, promoting, and firing. The word " sex" was added at the last moment. According to the West Encyclopedia of American Law, Representative Howard W. Smith (D-VA) added the word. His critics argued that Smith, a conservative Southern opponent of federal civil rights, did so to kill the entire bill.

Smith, however, argued that he had amended the bill in keeping with his support of Alice Paul and the National Women's Party with whom he had been working. Martha W. Griffiths (D-MI) led the effort to keep the word "sex" in the bill. In the final legislation, Section 703 (a) made it unlawful for an employer to "fail or refuse to hire or to discharge any individual, or otherwise to discriminate against any individual with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions or privileges or employment, because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

The final bill also allowed sex to be a consideration when sex is a bona fide occupational qualification for the job. Title VII of the act created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to implement the law. (The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Web site (www.eeoc.gov)).) After this bill was passed EOE was enacted where employers had to be equal opportunity employers. They were not allowed to discriminate against people and if they did they would be subject to fines, imprisonment or even lose their businesses.

Every year because of this law, businesses get new posters that have to be in a visible place under federal law so that employees have accessibility to them. Corruption of officers was brought to a real light in the Rodney King beating of LAPD officers on March 3rd, 1991 during the riots of Los Angeles, California. It was said King was beaten with unnecessary amount of force and brutality from the Los Angeles Police Department. Officers respond that after a high speed chase they subdued King but he resisted arrest.

There were four officers in this particular altercation all were acquitted on April 29th, 1992. (CNN Wire Staff, June 17, 2012). Police corruption and brutality are being combated by the use of surveillance used when arrests are being made. The use of dash cams came into effect in the 1980's. It became more common in the 1990's. Since the 1990's the dash cams have not only helped officers but it has also been the downfall of their demise as well. The dash cams also have protected citizens when false reports have been made.

A police officer will never employ unnecessary force or violence and will use only such force in the discharge of duty as is reasonable in all circumstances. Force should be used only with the greatest restraint and only after discussion, negotiation and persuasion have been found to be inappropriate or ineffective. While the use of force is occasionally unavoidable, every police officer will refrain from applying the unnecessary infliction of pain or suffering and will never engage in cruel, degrading or inhuman treatment of any person. (Peak 257)

A person can go to Google and search police altercations from dash cams and you will see a plethora of evidence not only for the officers but against them as well. Just recently in Pennsylvania two different departments have had charges brought against them for excessive abuse from officers on subdued citizens. One precinct is from Springdale, Pennsylvania has an officer named Sargent Mark Thom was charged with excessive force. This particular officer assaulted a suspect with his fists and tasered the same defendant while he was handcuffed.

The second news report found on this officer was being sued for excessive force used on an off duty cop. Due to the amount of complaints and charges against the particular officer the Federal Bureau of Investigations is pursuing federal indictment charges against Sargent Thom. The second altercation happened in Lancaster, Pennsylvania where an officer forcibly punched a woman in the face numerous times while she was handcuffed in the back of the police car. These officers in this particular assault are being held accountable for their actions by not only their department but the local government as well.

Too often we look toward our officers and law enforcement agents with blind eyes of heroism. We do not want to see the bad that can come from them being human. We assume since they are officers of the law they are held to a higher standard of being honest. When these types of offences are brought into light, our respects of these officials are waived and have to be reinforced with the good they do. It's just like when President Bill Clinton was under attack for the adultery committed with Monica Lewinsky. When those actions came into light our faith in the leader of our country was waived.

People pushed for impeachment but it never happened. Instead, what did happen was the next president Bush was held under microscope for many actions until he proved himself to the public. Many times we overlook all of the good and only see the bad. When this happens nothing matters to people except for the bad. One bad apple can always ruin everything in a system. This is why we hold our officials to a higher standard. In a world with people we will always have bad and the good. Police corruption and brutality are something we always will have to contend with.

As long as there are criminals out there we will always be watching and waiting for the good guys to make a mistake. When these people do make mistakes we will persecute them until justice is served. Yet, while we do these criminals are still out there so we still have to rely on these same people to do right. Even if one of their officers are convicted of such charges, we still will call these departments when we need help. With the help of modern technology cases of brutality and corruption are seen more easily, and are more easily prosecuted.

Technology comes at a high price it not only helps protect officers but criminals as well. Especially if a video camera is only turned on after the fact of an altercation has taken place so people only see the police doing what they think is bad. This world we live in is not only a happy one but a scary one. We can only hope we can find the good and stay with it, but with the good comes the bad and the battle of good versus evil will always be a war raging on as long as humans are alive.

Works Cited

<http://www.cnn.com/2012/06/17/us/rodney-king-timeline>