

Police: racial profiling in america

[Economics](#), [Trade](#)



POLICE: RACIAL PROFILING IN AMERICA Naomi D.

Hopkins Stevens-Henager College APP 101 9 February 2013 Abstract This paper will discuss the relationship between Fear and how it relates to Racial Profiling in Police Practices. We will also discuss and illustrate real life examples under which Racial Profiling has occurred and how it is scientifically defined. The communication between peace officers and ordinary everyday citizens will also be examined. Police: Racial Profiling in America The issue of Racial Profiling in America by our Police Force is an undeniable truth and tragedy. Steve Holbert and Lisa Rose in their book the color of Guilt & Innocence recount a story of a Caucasian woman who is forced to walk alone with her young daughter down dark unfamiliar San Francisco streets at night in the dark.

We'll call this woman Lisa. She had just exited a train car with her young daughter and was walking down the dark streets unsure of her surroundings when she noticed that a stranger man, whose features she couldn't make out, was following her and her daughter. Lisa had heard and seen reports about a young man in his mid-20s that was dark complected and had been robbing tourists. She felt her body tighten as she began breathing rapidly and she had quickened her pace pulling her daughter along without realizing it, until her daughter started pulling her in the opposite direction because she had dropped her candy cane that she had gotten from the cable car employee earlier that evening. After her experience in the city, she began to question whether the irrational fear of monsters conjured up in the mind of a four year old was so different from the "monsters in the closet" we perceive as adults, the only difference being that the "monsters" we see as adults

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have a face and the face is of those who are different or those whose skin color is darker than our own.

(Holbert, S; Rose, L 2004). This begs the question, “ Did she fear this man because it was nighttime and she couldn’t see him and was unsure of her surroundings? Or was it because the man following her reminded her of that minority man who had been on the news who was robbing tourists? This brings to mind another quote I found while writing this paper: “ Rather, racial profiling is more about our human response to an instinctual and primitive fear buried deep in each one of us. ” (Holbert, S; Rose, L 2004) On the subject of Fear and Racism, I’m led to another quote in the book used primarily for my research on this very subject as it relates to American Law Enforcement practices. When we ponder the concept of fear in the comfort of a classroom, almost all would agree that to fear a person because of skin color, religious affiliation, or appearance is irrational. In the phobic sense, this fear is xenophobia, the fear and/or hatred of foreigners or anything that is foreign. ” (Holbert, S; Rose, L 2004).

I would even go so far as to say that contempt prior to investigation is in itself, a form of fear and intolerance. How can we judge a situation, let alone a person, accurately without all the facts? Do we assume we are Gods or Goddesses that are worthy to judge our fellow men or women? If so, what makes us so different, or dare I say, “ Superior” to another? I am reminded of my own feelings, when as a small child; I made the decision to say that “ all white people are racist. ” This statement in and of itself is in fact, a form of racial profiling. That is, I was judging a certain race of people, in this case,

whites and assuming that I had gathered enough information to do so. This brings me to another quote out of my research, “ To understand the complexities of prejudice, racism, and racial profiling, we must first explore the origin of fear and understand how it can dictate the way in which our body responds to outside stimuli long before we become consciously aware of the racial implications. ” (Holbert, S; Rose, L 2004). In fact, the word “ fear” comes from the old English word for “ danger.

” When we, as human beings, experience fear our brains respond to perceived danger by using three distinct systems. The first is called Primal or Primitive fear system, and is found in most animals and mammals. This system responds first by alerting the body to any danger.

This reaction is automatic and triggers our “ fight or flight” response. The second is triggered by the “ fight or flight” response and is the mind’s Rational or logical fear system. “ This system takes over in an effort to assess the potential danger and weighs options for survival or escape. ” (Holbert, S; Rose, L 2004). This system effectively plans possibilities we need to consider to escape an immediate or future threat. The third system is called a person’s Consciousness or Awareness, and acts as a mediator between Primal Fear and Rational Thought.

This system will strike a balance between the mind’s emotion and reason and will become the ultimate decision maker in the entire process. Now, let’s examine some history on racial profiling that is actually quite interesting. This thought brings me to another quote I pulled out of this book I used to research this topic/ “ Start with a good idea. Test it thoroughly, and use it

with care. Put it in the hands of those who don't have the experience and training to apply it properly. Add a little discrimination and pressure, and turn up the heat for 20 years. What do you get? Racial Profiling. (Holbert, S; Rose, L 2004).

“ In a nutshell, this is the story of Howard Teten, a former FBI Chief of research in the late 1950s who many criminologists credit with popularizing the concept of “ criminal profiling. ” A man who lived the best of both worlds, Mr. Teten studied psychology at the University of California at Berkeley while working crime scenes in San Leandro, California. Back in the 1950s, cops typically looked for clues at a crime scene to try to tie the crime to a particular suspect. Teten took this concept one step further by looking at the manner in which the criminal committed the crime in order to develop a psychological profile.

This profile ultimately helped officers identify a criminal's personality traits and mental state and led to a classification of potential suspects who could have committed the crime. ” (Holbert S; Rose, L 2004). This very method, which is called “ criminal profiling”, has been widely distorted, especially when it comes to the United States “ War on Drugs.

For example, it is assumed that if a person, particularly a person belonging to a minority group (that is not white or Caucasian), is seen wearing gold jewelry that is large in size, a “ corn roll” hair style, baggy clothes, and perhaps gold teeth, Law Enforcement Officials automatically assume that this individual is a “ drug courier,” or an individual that smuggles drugs or money into or out of the country. It can be said that a person's appearance,

jewelry, and travel habits can be used as a basis for identifying and prosecuting those involved in the “ drug trade. The end result of these discriminatory attitudes is that these “ profiles” do not demonstrate “ good science” or offer sensible approaches to productive Law Enforcement procedures.

Now, let’s examine the other side of the coin, as it were as it relates to basic race relations. When we all think of a police officer, we all have this stereotypical view that they are tough, intimidating, and very arrogant. In actuality, police officers have learned their very behavior and personality traits from the general public.

Most people, when contacted by a police officer, become irritated, hostile, overbearing, and even belligerent. So, in turn, officers have learned how to desensitize or become “ numb” to their emotions and feelings. It wouldn’t be a far cry to say that they have learned to behave as “ not human” just so that they can get through their day without having to worry about what they said, was it rude, right or wrong, what the repercussions might be, and so on. So it is accurate to say that the general public ourselves, have contributed to the attitudes and behaviors of our own Police Force in America. What we don’t hear about or realize often times is that when an officer goes on duty, he or she faces any number of different variables. For example, having a gun pulled on them, being attacked, being shot, taken hostage, being kidnapped, and any number of other things that would threaten or endanger their lives either mortally or fatally. I will illustrate an example of what ought to be

advertised when hiring police officers: WANTED: LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS: Must be a social worker, mediator, a fighter, a priest.

Must be savvy to the criminal element yet have an unblemished criminal background. Candidates should be compassionate yet distant. Intimidating yet gentle. Aggressive yet always in control. Daily risk of death. Low Pay. Must be willing to work all hours of the day and night in hazardous and extreme conditions.

The Faint of Heart need not apply. (Holbert, S; Rose, L 2004) WANTED: LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS: Must be a social worker, mediator, a fighter, a priest. Must be savvy to the criminal element yet have an unblemished criminal background. Candidates should be compassionate yet distant. Intimidating yet gentle. Aggressive yet always in control. Daily risk of death.

Low Pay. Must be willing to work all hours of the day and night in hazardous and extreme conditions. The Faint of Heart need not apply. (Holbert, S; Rose, L 2004) Realizing these facts, we all ought to be a little gentler with the officer next time we are pulled over for speeding or contacted about a conflict resolution issue. Police Officers deserve respect, but they also do not have the right to demand respect, and it is the same with the rest of us. That being said, when we think of “ use of force” by police officers, we all know the familiar image conjured up; the Rodney King beating on March 3 1991. In case you’re wondering, the case went to trial and all of the officers involved were NOT convicted. The result was the L.

A. Riots of 1992. When we think of this case, we wonder, what could have gone so wrong in our justice system? The answer is not as clear as one might speculate. The “code of silence” is as much to blame as ignorant and wrong attitudes are to blame. “The Code of Silence” also known as “The Blue Wall of Silence” is based on the premise that an officer does not reveal negative information about a fellow police officer. (Holbert, S; Rose, L 2004). I can recall an experience I had in California with an officer who responded to a call about me when I was homeless and sleeping in my vehicle.

The officer responded alone, without backup, and contacted myself and two friends of mine. He falsely accused us of smoking weed, arrested my friend for a warrant she had, shined his flashlight deliberately in my face, and pulled his Taser on me when I reacted unfavorably to his “bullying behavior.” I then had to demand that he call his Watch Commander, or Supervisor out to the field to discuss what happened and what I wanted done about his misconduct. I told the Watch Commander that I wanted an apology, both written and verbal, but to my dismay, he responded and told me, “I’m sorry ma’am I cannot do that.

If I promise to talk to him about this incident, will you refrain from reporting it?” I was appalled to say the least. I later had to go through the channels to report this incident at the Police Department in person, but this is a prime real-life example of “The Code of Silence” in action. How many times has this happened to other citizens, but for whatever reason, they are too afraid or intimidated to report such misconduct.

If we as a society wish our Police Force to be more accountable, we must take the action to make sure that happens. Otherwise, we are just birds preaching to a choir with deaf ears. The sad fact is that many Police Departments still retain the right to “ police” themselves on such issues of misconduct and “ use of force” incidents.

This is the main reason that the officers involved in the Rodney King beating of 1991 were cleared of guilt. First of all, to even file a complaint against a police officer, citizens must endure a lengthy and time consuming process that involves appearing in person at the police department, then wading through the trouble and intimidation of even telling a department employee or filling out a report about the alleged incident, and sometimes are refused and intimidated out of that process. Second and most important, even after all that trouble has been endured by the complainant, little or nothing is ever done about the problem other than to refer it to the Internal Affairs Division of the police department and they in themselves have their own policies and procedures which may or may not include final review by the Chief of Police and even then, the issue may not be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant. In conclusion, I have learned it is sometimes better to ignore arrogant and racist comments by officers unless I have the time to devote to a complaint and investigation process. I'll end with this quote from Martin Luther King, Jr. “ We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people.

” (King Jr. , Martin Luther 1963) References Holbert, S; Rose, L (2004) the color of GUILT & INNOCENCE RACIAL PROFILING AND POLICE PRACTICES IN AMERICA King Jr. , Martin Luther (1963) “ Letter from Birmingham Jail” April 16, 1963 Retrieved from [www. history1900sabout.](http://www.history1900sabout.com/od/martinlutherkingjr/a/mlkquotes.htm)

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