

Good essay about policing and ethnic groups in america

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Police in America are charged by the state with the duty to enforce the law, protect both people and property, and preserve civil order. To accomplish these goals, one of the things that distinguish police from other groups involved in the preservation of order is that police are allowed to make arrests and police are often allowed to use force. This ability to use force has sometimes been troublesome when examining the interaction between police and different ethnic groups in America.

The interaction of police forces with different groups of people throughout the history of this country and other countries has often been studied and the results documented. There is a long and somewhat negative history of police interaction with different racial and ethnic groups in this country. During the years prior to and for several decades following the Civil War, police brutality and harassment of African-Americans was prevalent. Slave patrols were one of the first forms of organized policing in America. Following the Civil War local police forces enforced Black Codes and then Jim Crow laws to further racial segregation in public places” (See “ Race and Ethnicity – Policing and Minorities”). At this time in American history, the early twentieth century, many police forces did very little to respond to violent acts against African-Americans committed by white Americans. Acts of assaults and even lynchings were met with little police reaction. Furthermore, as the Civil Rights movement took hold, police often engaged in violent confrontations with African-Americans who engaged in civil disobedience to protest segregation in America.

It wasn't until the mid-1970's that police forces began to employ African-Americans in significant numbers. In the two decades that followed African-

American police officers began to move through the ranks and a number of larger cities, such as Los Angeles, had black police chiefs.

Even still, some conflict remains with regard to police interaction with different ethnic groups in America. One phenomenon which is often discussed with regard to police interaction with different races and ethnicities within America is that of racial profiling. “ Racial profiling disproportionately targets people of color for investigations and enforcement, alienating communities from law enforcement, hindering community policing efforts, and causing law enforcement to lose credibility and trust among the people they are sworn to protect and serve” (ACLU). The effect of racial profiling on different ethnic groups’ impressions of police is evident when looking at certain studies. In Perceptions of Police among Members of Six Ethnic Communities in Central Queens, NY, Executive Summary, author Robert Davis documents that, “ most Americans (55%) believe that local police are guilty of brutality against Blacks and Hispanics at least occasionally. Among Black Americans, this figure rises to 79%. While only 16% of Whites say that they are sometimes afraid that the police will stop and arrest them even when they are completely innocent, fully 43% of Blacks express this fear” (Davis, 1). Racial profiling is not just limited to one ethnicity or racial group. Although many link racial profiling as connected to black and Hispanic Americans, a growing number of Arab, Muslim, and South Asian Americans are finding themselves victims of racial profiling (See ACLU).

Works Cited

ACLU. “ Racial Profiling: The Three Faces of Racial Profiling.” Web. 17 February,

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