

We, the Department of Criminal Justice at the University of Texas at El Paso, stand in solidarity with all who seek justice and equal treatment under the law, especially with the families of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, David McAtee and countless other persons of color killed and victimized by excessive use of force by law enforcement throughout the U.S. and here at the border.

We recognize that policing is inherently difficult and dangerous, but we also demand that all persons be treated equally, with dignity and respect, and not be singled out because of their race or any other extra-legal characteristic. Criminal justice research has long shown that young men of color are more likely to be profiled by police, to be stopped and searched, arrested, and subjected to use of force, including deadly violence, than members of other groups--when holding constant, legally relevant variables such as criminal behavior. This unconstitutional and illegal treatment is among the most dire social problem in our country today, tearing at the social fabric that holds us together. While it is the duty of every law enforcement agency to acknowledge and address such discrimination, dignity and respect of each individual extends into every phase of criminal justice to include treatment of defendants in court, while incarcerated, and the way that people are treated when they reenter our communities.

To that end, we are revisiting the six pillars put forth by President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) to propose some preliminary ideas that are just the beginning of what we can do in policing, but this does not include the many reforms that should be done to bring about lasting change across the CJ system.

Pillar 1: Building Trust and Legitimacy

- Police officers should generate legitimacy with the people whom they serve, particularly in neighborhoods where such levels of trust are lowest and where the illegal and unnecessary use of force by police is most problematic.
- Police officers should be concerned about the welfare of citizens under their control and custody. Fellow officers have a duty to intervene in potential excessive force and unethical situations. When police do not obey the law, they too must be prosecuted and punished.

Pillar 2: Policy and Oversight

- Increase faculty research with local and regional police departments in the area of racial profiling--documenting its incidence, studying its causes, and creating, implementing and testing programs to reduce its occurrence. Research partnerships aimed at identifying and addressing racial and ethnic disparities will extend to other areas of criminal justice as well (e.g., courts, corrections).
- Policies should reflect community values, such as having an Independent Review Board examine citizen complaints against Police Officers and body-worn camera footage in use of force incidents.

- Police departments should have policies on how they will respond to citizen complaints that were founded or likely to have occurred. The International Association of Chiefs of Police has a resource center/model policies, vetted by practitioners and academics available to all police administrators nationwide.

Pillar 3: Technology and Social Media

- Police departments should require greater accountability for use and archiving of body worn cameras (BWC) and footage. For example, failure to turn BWCs on, turning them off during an incident, and/or tampering with footage should be enforced with consequences.

Pillar 4: Community Policing and Crime Reduction

- Decades of criminal justice research show that community policing methods and involving the community increases police legitimacy, public cooperation (calling 911), and crime goes down.
- To be legitimate, the police must be held to a higher standard than ordinary citizens in the laws and rules that govern their behavior.

Pillar 5: Training and Education

- Police departments should have updated use of force policies that emphasize de-escalation.
- Police departments should provide continuous training throughout an officer's career, and must re-train officers who are unable or unwilling to abide by policy.
- Police are often tasked with handling social problems such as citizens who are homeless, experiencing mental health issues, and youth misbehavior in schools. Inserting police into these situations oftentimes unnecessarily redefines a social issue into a "criminal" one, and may lead to sensory over-responsivity, or using excessive force.

Pillar 6: Officer Wellness

- Overhaul the policing subculture to ensure officers that they will be respected and treated fairly by their immediate supervisors and department administration.
- Encourage officers to seek help for mental and emotional trauma experienced on the job. Institute mental and emotional fitness tests for continued duty.

At UTEP, the Department of Criminal Justice currently offers an elective undergraduate class called: *Multiculturalism and Crime*, and an elective graduate class called: *Race, Ethnicity and Criminal Justice*. We encourage students to educate themselves about these issues, get involved in the local community, and be part of the solution.

Citation: President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. 2015. *Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.