



**Ideation Title:** Police the Police

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I am sure that no one reading this essay needs to be informed of the tragic epidemic the Community of Color is facing. There has been little to no respite from hostility for POC since the birth of this nation. It is clear that there are structural barriers and systemic injustices barring POC from reaching their full potential and enjoying their constitutional rights to life, liberty, and property. Here I will focus on the right to live.

Young men of Color, especially Black men, have much to fear from the justice system. With mass incarceration stealing the lives of one out of every three Black men, the odds are not in their favor. Yet, to go prison one must first have an encounter with the police, one must survive this encounter. Racial inequality in the United States is multifaceted, and there is no single strategy to ensure liberty and justice for all. However, I believe there is a single strategy to end the brutality towards and murder of POC by the police: we must police the police.

Our servicemen, whether they be first responders or military, are granted extraordinary leeway. This is most certainly because we wish to honor their dedication to protecting and serving this nation. Yet, are our Black and Brown brothers and sisters not also children of this nation? The first step in the fight against police brutality is to hold these individuals accountable for their actions. Enough instances of violent police behavior have been documented to show that the only “threat” most of these men of Color have posed is the amount of melanin in their skin. How is it that a police officer feels at ease with a KKK member brandishing a gun and can stay calm enough to deescalate the situation verbally, but is so threatened by a Black man with his hands in the air he must shoot the man? Police officers must be held to a higher standard. This nation cannot keep protecting murderers.

Once the unfit officers have been held accountable, we must turn to the upcoming generation of policemen. We must reorient their training to foster an egalitarian view. Required reading should include *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander and *Brotherhood of Corruption* by Juan Antonio Juarez. There are many psychological tests that can detect prejudice, not just explicit prejudice that individuals can explain and rationalize, but implicit bias, bias that occurs subconsciously. I believe these tests should be a part of academy training. If someone scores highly on implicit bias towards POC perhaps the individual should be mandated to attend therapy before attaining their badge. After all, racism in many ways is a mental illness.



The training of gun use must also be addressed. It is interesting to me that not only do these “threatened” cops remove their gun from the holster and discharge it, they aim to kill. Not disarm, not stop, kill. When did this nation get to a place where police officers can act as judge, jury, and executioner? Serial killers on death row are given years to prove their innocence, yet twelve year-old Black boys are shot dead without a second thought. We must reconsider gun training, ensuring that cops understand there will be consequences for a death at their hands. These men and women who are entrusted with firearms must understand that shooting to kill must be a last resort to use only when all other options have failed.

The last piece of this strategic puzzle may sound a little far-fetched, but bear with me. Men of Color who have served time should be trained as cops. Children of Color are taught to fear cops, whereas White children, such as myself, are taught that we should call them at first sign of danger. To employ men of Color who have been through the system could bridge the gap between the Community of Color and the police. This could not only reduce the fear that POC feel around cops but offer employment opportunities for convicts reentering society. One of the largest contributing factors to the United States’ overwhelmingly high recidivism rate is low job prospects. By allowing these men to enter the police force, we ensure their financial stability and their successful reentry into society.

It is clear from work with juvenile delinquents that young people labeled as “criminal” will often assume that role. The Rosenthal effect also demonstrates that children who are expected to show progress will. Society does not expect good things from POC, as a result they are not given the opportunities to thrive. Our cops label youth of Color, they have an expectation of their wrongdoing. Policemen project these biases onto the behavior of these individuals, mistaking fear for life as fear of being caught. If we can address these biases we can save lives.

I am grateful for our first responders, but as a nation we cannot keep making excuses for their very apparent discrimination. It is not Blue Lives Matter versus Black Lives Matter. It is acceptable to march with Black Lives Matters and thank the policemen who are guarding the protest. One difference White allies, such as myself, must remember: policemen can shed their Blue, POC can never shed their Black. It will not cost the police departments much to implement new training methods, but to continue on this course will cost the community of Color countless lives. Let us be on the right side of history and be advocates for this very necessary change.