MUTUAL MISTRUST BETWEEN LAW ENFORCEMENT AND MINORITY COMMUNITIES

March 12, 2015
Thursday, March 12, 2015
2:15 – 3:45 p.m.
Gardner Auditorium, The W.A. Franke College of Business
Facilitated by: Ms. Andrea Houchard, Director, Philosophy in the Public Interest

AGENDA

2:15 p.m
Welcome and Introduction
Ms. Andrea Houchard, Director, Philosophy in the Public Interest

2:30 p.m.
Community Discussion
Ms. Andrea Houchard, Director, Philosophy in the Public Interest

1) What reasons do minority communities have to distrust law enforcement?
2) What reasons does law enforcement have to distrust various communities?
3) What are some promising strategies for building trust between the communities and law enforcement?
4) What does this issue reveal about the values of liberty and security?

3:35 p.m.
Closing Questions and Recap of Discussion

Campus Committee (P7)

Special thanks to our partners, supporters and venue hosts!
1) What reasons do minority communities have to distrust law enforcement?

Not all minority community members mistrust law enforcement, but some do.

- A recent Gallup poll reports that blacks have significantly less trust in police than whites do and yet 3/4 of Blacks report having ‘some’ to ‘a great deal of’ trust in police.
- There may be subtle differences between ‘mistrust’ and ‘distrust’; however, this handout uses the two terms interchangeably.

Minority communities differ from each other and therefore may have differing perspectives on law enforcement. Their distrust may be rooted in different societal structures, events, or so on. However, there may also be some commonalities worth addressing.

Here are some reasons that members of minority communities sometimes mistrust law enforcement.

**PERSONAL EXPERIENCE**

“I always had a negative perception of police. I always looked at it in a negative way because that’s how I was exposed to them…a lot of times when you see a cop it is because somebody is in trouble.” George Madison Jr., an African-American firefighter and youth minister in Evansville, Indiana.

**KNOWLEDGE OF OTHER'S EXPERIENCES**

On March 6th, 2015 Tony Robinson was shot and killed by a police officer in Madison Wisconsin. According to Madison Police Chief Mike Koval, the teen was killed “in the ‘context’ of ‘mutual combat.’” BuzzFeed News reports that Koval later confirmed Robinson was unarmed.

**PERCEPTION OF STEREOTYPE BIAS**

Some law enforcement officers may consider minority communities “other” where they are “typified” by their skin color or other features. The way in which a minority may be subjected to a stereotype varies on their individual community history where the group was subjected to domination and made inferior.

**PERCEIVED RACISM**

Racism can be overt, conscious, and explicit, as when someone uses a racist epithet. But it can also be covert, unconscious, and implicit, as when someone subconsciously alters their behavior toward someone. Stop Racism and Hate Collective defines racism as:

- The generalization, institutionalization and assignment of real and imaginary differences between people to justify privilege, aggression and violence.

Racism can be expressed behaviorally, institutionally, and culturally. A person, practice, or institution is racist if:

- Imaginary or real differences of race are accentuated and
- The differences are “assumed absolute and considered in terms of superior and inferior” and
- The differences are used to justify any sort of inequity, exclusion or domination.

**FEAR OF ARREST OR DEPORTATION**

The FBI has posted a Law Enforcement Bulletin which includes a report on Policing in Arab-American Communities. The report states:

- Some communities fear law enforcement agencies because of immigration enforcement, surveillance, and racial profiling.
- Communities fear federal law enforcement agencies more than hate crimes.
STATISTICAL EVIDENCE

According to The Sentencing Project, 60% of people in prison in the United States are racial and ethnic minorities, even though Black and Hispanic individuals jointly make up approximately 25% of the population in the United States. There may be complicated reasons for the overrepresentation of minorities in prison.

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<thead>
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<th>Lifetime Likelihood of Imprisonment</th>
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<td>All Men</td>
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<td>Black Men</td>
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2) What reasons does law enforcement have to distrust various communities?

Not all law enforcement officers mistrust minority communities, but some do. In addition, officers’ training, experiences, and attitudes differ.

Here are some reasons that members of law enforcement sometimes mistrust members of minority communities.

EXPERIENCE WITH OR KNOWLEDGE OF THE DANGER THEY FACE

Many officers face real danger. Knowing about such dangers can reduce trust.

- In December of 2014, police officer Tyler Jacob Stewart was shot and killed while investigating a domestic violence suspect. The AZ Daily Sun reports Stewart was shot at multiple times by the suspect and was eventually shot in the face.

- The Daily News reported earlier the same month that two NYPD cops, Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu, were shot dead to avenge the deaths of Eric Garner and Michael Brown

EXPERIENCE WITH OR KNOWLEDGE OF DECEPTION

In July 2011, Derek Williams was arrested in Milwaukee on suspicion of robbery. After struggling with officers, he was handcuffed and put in a police car. He complained of trouble breathing and requested an ambulance. The officers ignored his request and Williams died.
The police chief defended the officers; he argued that suspects regularly complain of pain or claim to need medical care even when they do not need it, and the officers were basing their actions on these prior experiences. However, Milwaukee later enacted the policy of calling an ambulance whenever someone in custody requests one.

More generally, officers tend to see negative aspects of the communities they serve. These experiences can yield overall negative impressions.

**STRESS**

Even when not in imminent danger, law enforcement can be a stressful job. In addition, law enforcement officers have lives outside of their jobs, some of which can bring added stress. Stress has been shown to be negative correlated with trust.

**CULTURAL BARRIERS**

Law enforcement officers may have obstacles of language barriers, differing cultural customs, or possible concern about a community member’s legal status.

**OTHER REASONS**

President Obama suggested in an interview with BET Networks that possible distrust on law enforcement’s behalf may be a result of:

- Bad training
- Departments not trying to “root out biases”
- Departments tolerating sloppy police work
- The officer may not know any better
- The officer may have a subconscious fear of those who look different.

One strategy to consider is creating more opportunities for open dialogue between law enforcement and various communities.

Kate Abbey-Lambertz and Joseph Erbentraut from The Huffington Post suggest some possible actions for law enforcement:

- Be more sociable or personable with people within a community; be more visible in a positive light where the mission for a community’s safety is promoted.
- Make contacts through youth programs, neighborhood associations and representatives, news media, faith organizations and businesses to educate citizens on police operations.
4) What does this issue reveal about the values of liberty and security?

“Those who sacrifice liberty for security deserve neither.” – Benjamin Franklin

Liberty can be defined as: the state of being free to enjoy social, political, and/or economic rights and privileges. Sometimes when we increase our liberties, we decrease security. Similarly, sometimes when we increase security, we reduce some liberties. The issue of mistrust between minorities and law enforcement may raise questions about how we ought to balance liberty and security within our cities, state, and country.
HOT TOPICS CAFÉ COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

The “hot topics” in the Hot Topics Cafés are nominated and selected by community members that represent diverse constituencies and viewpoints. We thank our committee for their participation.

*Voted on Spring, 2015 “Hot Topics.”

Flagstaff

Frankie Beesley, Program Coordinator, Friends of Flagstaff’s Future
*Joe Boles, Professor Emeritus, NAU College of Arts and Letters
*Jean Malecki-Friedland, MD, MPH; County Director and Chief Medical Professor and Chair, Preventive Medicine and Public Health, Miami Miller School of Medicine; Co-Founder: The Compassion Project
Jacque Gencarelle, Northern Arizona Behavioral Health Association
*Barbara Hickman, Superintendent, Flagstaff Unified School District
Sherman Stephens, Flagstaff Community
Craig Van Slyke, Dean, The W.A. Franke College of Business
*Michael Vincent, Dean, NAU College of Arts and Letters

Sedona & the Verde Valley

*Karen Daines, Assistant City Manager, Sedona
Paul Friedman, Sedona Citizens for Civil Dialogue
*Kate Hawkes, Producing Artistic Director, Red Earth Theatre
Darrin Karuzas, Principal, Sedona Red Rock High School
*Sandy Moriarty, Sedona Mayor
Tom O’Halleran, Keep Sedona Beautiful; Board Member, Verde River Basin Partnership
*Judy Reddington, Arts and Letters Advisory Council, NAU; Board Member, Museum of Northern Arizona; Board Director, Sedona International Film Festival
*Steve Segner, Owner, El Portal; Chair, Lodging Council, Sedona Chamber of Commerce
Patricia Lowell, Sedona Public Library, proxy for: Virginia Volkman, Director, Sedona Public Library
Jessica Williamson, Sedona City Council

Ex officio

Andrea Houchard, NAU Philosophy in the Public Interest
Jona Vance, NAU Department of Philosophy
Robin Weeks, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, Yavapai College, Sedona Center
Randy Wilson, Arizona Daily Sun

NAU’s Philosophy in the Public Interest is non partisan and does not endorse any position with respect to the issues we discuss. Philosophy in the Public Interest is a neutral convener for civil discourse.

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Sources

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NEXT ON CAMPUS HOT TOPICS CAFÉ:
Black Lives Matter as a New Age Movement

Thursday, March 26th
5:30 - 7 p.m.
Gardner Auditorium
REMAINING HOT TOPICS CAFÉS THIS SPRING

**FLAGSTAFF**

**General Topics**

**The Value of Live Performance**
Wednesday, April 1st, 2015, 6 - 7:30 p.m.
*Museum of Northern Arizona*

**Environmental Topics**

**Setting Personal Environmental Priorities**
Thursday, April 23rd, 2015, 2:30 - 4 p.m.
*Museum of Northern Arizona*

**SEDONA**

**General Topics**

**The Value of Live Performance**
Friday, April 3rd, 2015, 4 - 5:30 p.m.
*Yavapai College, Sedona Center*

**Environmental Topics**

**Paper or Plastic**
Friday, March 13th, 2015, 2 - 3:30 p.m.
*Sedona Public Library*

**Setting Personal Environmental Priorities**
Thursday, April 16th, 2015, 2:30 - 4 p.m.
*Yavapai College, Sedona Center (OLLI)*

**NAU CAMPUS**

**General Topics**

**Mutual Mistrust Between Law Enforcement and Minority Communities**
Thursday, March 12th, 2015, 2:15 - 3:45 p.m.
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**Black Lives Matter as a New Age Movement: the relationship between law enforcement and the community**
Thursday, March 26th, 2015, 5:30 - 7 p.m.
Gardner Auditorium, The W.A. Franke College of Business, NAU

**Gender Inequality: economic disparity and related issues**
Thursday, April 16th, 2015, 5:30 - 7 p.m.
Gardner Auditorium, The W.A. Franke College of Business, NAU