



Nope, and they never will....

As each generation of police officers find themselves in the predicament of a changing world and changing work environment, today's policing is probably more so in the crosshairs of change than ever in recent history. Looking through the prism of a street cop, it often feels confusing, misguided, counterintuitive, wasteful and even wrong.

The general attitudes about law enforcement and public safety have gone through a caustic change in recent years as anti-law enforcement organizations were given a national platform and allowed to spread activist propaganda about the American law enforcer through the judicial, executive and legislative branches of our government and given all the possible exposure by the ever-complicit mainstream media. It was wrong from day one, but we are still dealing with the effects of this purposefully misguided narrative that promoted lawlessness, hatred, divisiveness and exclusivity, and favored some groups or political beliefs over others.

The idea that the American police officer was out of control, evil and in need of long-awaited reform and oversight was and remains an elitist fantasy designed to serve the interest of a few and to divide people by ethnicity, race, beliefs and socioeconomic standing. We are a reflection of the society. We, the police, are who you are. If the aforementioned holds true in their mind about the police, they ought to take a look in the mirror and subject themselves to the high standard we have opted to hold ourselves to.

We witness all the changes firsthand and in real time. Bad public policy can create negative phenomena such as unemployment, homelessness, government dependency, and decay in societal norms and mores, which in turn often result in increased crime rates. On the other hand, good public policy can have the adverse effect. What is good and bad policy, and how does policy come about anyway? Our government is based on representative democracy and is essentially the voice of the people. At the end of the day, people get to decide what type of governance they want and what laws and policies they want. If the people of California decided that police officers could no longer be armed, in theory, they could. The practical aspect to this fantasy would dictate that no such law would get passed. I suspect recruiting would become an issue, and a mass exodus from law enforcement would follow. After all, while public safety is a collective responsibility, police officers are the only ones who are asked to do it on behalf of

others as a full-time endeavor. In turn, we expect to be compensated and treated fairly according to the challenges and the danger of our profession.

In the past, we have been directed not to impound vehicles of unlicensed drivers, not to act as immigration agents by inquiring into people's immigration status, and we do as we are directed. Representative democracy in action... for some it is, for others, maybe not so. More recently, we have been directed not to respond to so-called low-level crime incidents in schools and not to enforce several city ordinances designed to discourage vagrancy and urban outside living. We are directed to perform certain job functions in the way that reflects the needs and wishes of the ever-changing society, and it can be challenging. It's a battle of ideals and worldview, and we are subject to those forces. This can be especially challenging when voters pass misguided laws like Prop 47 and Prop 64, often with good intentions, but were misled by activist organizations and their deep-pocketed liberal financiers. It is hard for us not to have strong feelings about these issues because we actually have to deal with their effects; we're not sitting as a member of a commission, or as a policymaker, or as a philosopher or sociologist, but as the person who really has to experience, witness, and in the end, deal with the end results, in person and often, literally, hands on. We quickly find out which legislation works or not.

Unlike most people, we are not given the luxury of living in a make-believe and feel-good world, of looking at the world through rose-colored glasses. The nature of our job is such that we must keep our feet firmly planted on the ground. We are the reporters of life, the trained observers of human interaction, good and bad, hitting the streets all times of the day, going to every corner of the city, and in the process, generating reports based on these observations and events. We witness a lot more than an average person, from the best to the worst of humanity. It gives us a unique perspective on life. So unique, in fact, that very few people in our society would ever be able to see life the same way as we do. That is why it is so frustrating for us to quietly accept the changes that we have to put up with. It's the "if only they knew what I know" and "why in the world would they ever implement this law?" that often runs through our heads as we deal in real time with the effects of misguided albeit possibly well-intended laws.

In short, yes, it will always be frustrating. No, they will never understand us....

Stay safe and watch your six. If you have any questions, feel free to email me at TJTarjamo@lappl.org or contact me at (213) 798-2286.