

Written Testimony for Chief Harold E. Medlock

Harold E. Medlock was appointed Chief of Police in February of 2013 for the North Carolina Fayetteville Police Department. He served as Deputy Chief of Police for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department with more than 20 years of law enforcement experience. He also served as National Special Security Event (NSSE) Co-chair overseeing twenty-one NSSE local, state, and federal public safety organization sub-committees charged with producing the NSSE operations plan. Chief Medlock received his bachelor degree in Criminal Justice from Pfeiffer University and decided to further his education and obtained his MBA in 2002. He is a graduate of the FBI National Academy, the National Executive Institute and the Senior Management Institute for Police.

On behalf of the Fayetteville Police Department, I appreciate the opportunity offered by the President's Task Force for the invitation to provide my testimony and values on future improvements for all local law enforcement agencies.

Building a Culture on Transparency and Community Engagement and Dialogue

Enhancing Communication

I've realized that Fayetteville could have experienced an event similar to the one that occurred in Ferguson, Missouri. As a Police Chief, I'm aware of the impact cultural transparency and community engagement has on the relationship between citizens and law enforcement. It appears the Ferguson Police Department's response to the tragedy brought to light disparities between our communities and police departments. Additional incidents can be avoided if police departments use this incident as a learning tool, and a prevention measure. One could speculate that a lack of communication led to poor policing and cloudy transparency. We can't accurately account for the dialogue that initially took place between Officer White and Mr. Brown; but it is possible that a "misunderstanding" was involved. ¹A 2004 study conducted by the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority consisted of officers recruiting police candidates from surrounding suburban neighborhoods to engage with youths in the urban community. The findings were shocking due to the number of frivolous arrests made and poor interactions between the urban youth and officers. This set the tone for Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority to invest in strategies for training officers on best practices for engaging with youth in the field. One of the strategies included an overview of how neurological changes occurring in teens' brains account for many of their "hard-to-police" behaviors. Officers learned how to establish authority using unconventional techniques, increase compliance from teens, and de-escalate volatile situations.

Culture Resemblance

Many police departments are designed to serve and protect the community. It is natural for citizens to not trust anyone or anything in which they do not possess any mutual links. The Merriam –Webster dictionary defines the word link as a “**connecting structure**”. In essence, a police department should have a connection that can be seen and experienced by the citizens they serve. The case of the Ferguson Police Department is not solely built on a “white officer shooting an unarmed black male”, but puzzling factors including the Ferguson Police Department’s demographics don’t provide an authentic picture of the community they serve. Reports have shown that less than 2% of the Ferguson Police Department’s workforce is African –Americans.

²Ferguson experienced a rapid change in their demographics over the years, as the percentage of African-Americans increased to 67%, leaving a population of Whites at 29%, and a population of 4% for unknown/other races. Even though the Ferguson Police Department is located near two historically black colleges, Harris-Stowe State University and Lincoln University of Missouri, the Ferguson Police Department failed to utilize the local colleges as a recruitment tool.

Community Policing

Ferguson also set an unwelcomed tone for an incident that left the community feeling unheard. The community did not see the sympathy or empathy in police officers after the tragic event unfolded, but rather riot gear to prevent their voices from being heard. The use of protective equipment and tactics should have been explained to the community. The community viewed the Ferguson Police Department as have taken a military approach to ensure their officers were protected. The delay in the Ferguson Police Department’s communication about the Michael Brown shooting left many police executives puzzled as it fueled an environment filled with confusion and hostility.

Recommendations for Building a culture of Transparency:

- **Training and Technical Assistance for Police Department be produced on the State Level:** Over the past few years, it has been proven that training conducted in the Basic Law Enforcement Training or standard in-service recertification is not sufficient. The training would focus on fair and impartial policing, community relations and police integrity.
- **Creating community dialogue:** Police Chiefs must meet regularly with community leaders, non-profit groups, local clergies and, agencies heads.
- **Creating transparency:** Police Chiefs must develop a practice of disseminating information about department activities and to discuss possible discipline issues. Must immediately disseminate information regarding officers involve incidents and controversial incidents.
- **Informing and educating the community:** Police Departments should open normal BLET and in-service training classes to community members and media and invite feedback from those who attend.

- **Eliminating basis.** Police Internal Review Boards should include a member from the City Human Resource of Community Relations Department to serve as a voting member of the departmental disciplinary hearings board.
- **Federal and State support in developing effective police-community partnerships:** Community policing represents a departure from familiar ways of operating for both the police and residents. It requires a policing perspective that goes beyond the standard law enforcement focus and a willingness to engage in nuts and bolts neighborhood problem solving. Effective partnerships also involve the willingness of community members to engage in constructive dialogue with the police. Through intentional efforts to build trust and collaborate, police and community members can act as catalysts and facilitators of activities to strengthen the community and increase safety. The violence prevention partnerships below are an example of this practice. Community partnerships must come from the agency head and must be instilled throughout the agency.

Improving Police and Youth Relations:

The Fayetteville Police Department took required steps to improving the relationship between the youth and police officers with programs such as Education Kids on Guns, Police Explorers and adopting the National Police Activities/Athletic League Program. Selecting officers with extensive experience working with youths, parents and community leaders to develop strategies to improve police/youth interactions through dialogues is essential to all relationship-building efforts. Creating training sessions for parents and youth, and the development of community oversight mechanisms has been a part in the success for this strategy and has been proven to work successfully.

In addition, building partnerships with local universities and faith based organizations often helps communities address conflict through research, assessment of the sources of conflict, and facilitating dialogues between communities and police. It is important to document the sources of conflict and developed approaches to reduce conflict through collective efforts, that are evidence based practices. A successful approached for improving youth relations between law enforcement officers should offer structured opportunities for police and youth to meet and work together.

Recommendations for Police Leadership and Youth Relations:

- **Officer Selection:** Officers that have a strong background with youths should be used as an advantage when starting or enhancing youth based-partnerships.
- **Developing Needed Programs:** Police Departments must ask for and receive recommendations from community organizations and faith based organizations on the needs of youths in the community. Actual implementation of recommended programs shows the community that you are listening.

Police Leadership Development

The primary goals of most law enforcement agencies are to reduce crime and protect the citizens. These issues are essential to the policing mission, but officers won't be effective in their mission if they lack the necessary training. Every officer should be equipped with leadership skills and advanced training to combat the tasks they've been assigned. Some would argue that advanced training should be reserved for command staff, or other highly ranked officers, but this line of thinking limits the strengths of an agency to its top executives. Patrol officers and detectives spend an enormous amount of time in the streets interacting with the public. We would fail these officers if we limited their training to the minimum courses mandated by the State. Three core areas should be evaluated as they have an impact on skill development: educational background, Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET) curriculum, and in-service training. The Fayetteville Police Department recently implemented the Fair and Impartial Training (FIP) by Dr. Lorie Fridell, in addition, also permitting entry level staff members to attend training under organizations such as NOBLE, State Management Development Training, and the International Association of Chief of Police. We have seen a remarkable change in the leadership for the police department after incorporating these changes. Having changed the way the Fayetteville Police Department conducts or provides training opportunities to staff that interact with the community has contributed to the 20% decrease in overall citizen complaints and encountered no deadly use of force incidents in 2014.

Educational Background

An officer's ability to develop and exhibit exemplary leadership skills isn't defined by his or her pursuit of education beyond post-secondary school, but it speaks volumes about an officer's willingness to invest in himself. Studies have shown that approximately 16% of law enforcement agencies require an associate's degree, while only 4% require a four-year degree. In addition to the expenses incurred while pursuing a degree, a considerable amount of time and energy is involved. College graduates learned how to balance changing priorities and still remain focused on their overarching goal: graduation. Seeking a degree provides an opportunity to learn and view information from a different perspective, and the ability to think outside the box is a must for any police officer. A study conducted by Terril and Mastrofski in 2002 confirmed the notion that officers with a higher education degree were less likely not to use force. The notion was re-affirmed in 2007 study conducted by Terril and Paoline.

Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET) Curriculum

Basic law enforcement training (BLET) provides the foundation for aspiring police officers. Most law enforcement agencies require their police candidates to complete BLET prior to becoming a sworn police officer. Courses in the BLET curriculum vary from state to state, but they are designed to encompass skills officers need to transition into the field. Much of this basic training is directed to allowing the majority of candidates to successfully complete training rather than identifying those who

are most able to handle the rigors of police work. BLET often focuses on the physical tactics rather than communication skills.

Tension to fill the Ranks

The BLET curriculum is often developed by state training professionals who are not connected directly to the fast changing needs of the profession. Police agency leaders must balance the tension of fielding the best, most qualified candidates to simply filling "the seat" of a police car.

In-Service Training

In-service training courses are designed to make sure post topics are covered during the course of a year. Courses are designed and approved at the state level, and courses are aimed at the lowest common denominator of students. Firearms qualifications, legal updates, juvenile topics, etc. are standard topics covered annually with individual agencies left to determine additional needed training of those required, but that decision is left up to the In-Service Coordinator of that agency.

Recommendations for Leadership Development:

- **Mandatory or encouraged educational requirement for all police officers, to include possession of at least an Associate's degree with Bachelor's degree preferred:** It is becoming critical that officers obtain the critical thinking and analytical skills needed to fulfill the role of a police officer. The inability to process information from a variety of perspectives limits an officer's ability to lead others.
- **Begin leadership training immediately:** Tomorrow's police leaders are today's recruits: Identifying those who demonstrate promising traits that are necessary to lead police agencies and begin mentoring and formulate training to allow them to develop. Training must be affordable and accessible for every agency.
- **Federal or State assistance for federal student loans:** Federal loans received by students who obtain a degree in the criminal justice or law enforcement field and who commit to serving on recognized law enforcement agency as a full-time sworn public safety officer for five years. It is important that we break down any barrier that does not encourage officers to obtain higher education in the criminal justice field due to limited financial resources.

President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing
Fayetteville Police Department
Harold E. Medlock
Written Testimony 2015

Endnotes:

[1] Strategies for Youth fact sheet, <http://strategiesforyouth.org/resources/facts/>.

[2] Ryan Gabrielson, Ryann Grochowski Jones and Eric Sagara, "Deadly Force, in Black and White," ProPublica, October 10, 2014, <http://www.propublica.org/article/deadly-force-in-black-and-white>.