ABOLISH, DEFUND, RE-IMAGINE, OR REFORM: Reflections on the past and future of MPD for the University of Minnesota Retirees Association

Gregory Hestness: Deputy Chief MPD (ret), AVP/Police Chief UMPD (ret)
February 9, 2021
Immediate Consequences of the Killing of George Floyd:

- Protests became riots of a magnitude not seen since 1967.
- Police use of force is increased.
- City leaders abandon the 3rd Precinct.
- Violence erupts in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and first ring suburbs for two days.
- Minnesota National Guard, State Patrol, and others respond.
- Violence erupts nationally and is watched worldwide.
- Nine members of the city council announce their intent to “begin the process of abolishing MPD”.
- Support for MPD plummets both as result of the killing of George Floyd and MPD response to protests and riots.
Additional consequences of the killing of George Floyd.

- Police officer resignations, retirements, and skyrocketing disability.
- A force that stood at 840 at the time of George Floyd’s killing is now close to 600.
- In my opinion, the loss of officers plus widespread hostility toward officers sparked a violent crime rise.
- Crime rose to levels not seen in 25 years.
- We ended 2020 with 82 homicides and carjackings citywide, which have continued into 2021.
- Left to respond---a depleted and demoralized MPD
What is the nature of a police officer? Was Officer Clarence Pedersen MPD? (Images from the 1950s and early 1960s.)
or is Derek Chauvin MPD?
How did we reach this point of estrangement between the police and community?

• How has the city changed?

• How has the community changed?

• How have police changed?

• What is the path forward?
Policing and racial discrimination.

- Police often find themselves on the raw edge of race and racism in America.
- Race is often a factor in major police incidents and day-to-day interactions.
- It was clearly a factor in the death of George Floyd.
July 1975 to July 2015, where did 40 years go?
Minneapolis Central High School, 3416 4th Avenue South, 1913-1981.
Central Produced Distinguished Alumni
Disorder at Central High Leaves 1 Hurt, 4 Arrested

Fights and racial disturbances at Central High School resulted in four arrests and at least one injury Thursday. Later, tensions spread to Bryant Junior High School, about three blocks from Central and across S. 20th St. From the Suburban Community Center, police were sent from Central to calm the crowd.

Disorder at Central High Leaves 1 Hurt, 4 Arrested

Disorder at Central High Leaves 1 Hurt, 4 Arrested

Des Moines Register, Nov. 12, 1968

Mr. Kim Workcuff; Liaison Officer.
The MPD Recruit Class of 1975 Graduates
First Assignment 6th Precinct, Model Cities, 2639 Nicollet Avenue South.
My Partners: Bob Thunder and Manny Granroos
1975 to 1980: the Directionless Years for MPD

• During my first five years there were five police chiefs, ending with the hire of Tony Bouza in 1980.

• With every mayoral change, there would be a new police chief and an entirely new administration.

• Leadership assignments were made on the spoils of politics, not ability.
1977: the Creation of the Peace Officer Standards and Training Board (POST)

- After years of debate, the legislature established a licensing and governing board for police officers.

- One of the biggest changes was the requirement that candidates seeking a license must complete an AA or BA curriculum, specifically in law enforcement.

- Upon completion of that curriculum candidates could then take the licensing examination
1977: the Creation of the Peace Officer Standards and Training Board (POST)

• After passing the examination, a candidate was eligible to become licensed upon hire by an agency.

• At that time, Minnesota had the highest entry standards in the nation.

• It proscribed elements of the curriculum statewide.

• It set out required ongoing training and required policies.
1977: the Creation of the Peace Officer Standards and Training Board (POST)

• The creation of POST had one unintended negative consequence for Minneapolis, the pool of candidates of color shrunk precipitously.

• To the degree that Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities had fewer financial resources, college was difficult.

• With few police role models in their communities, targeted recruitment efforts became critical.

• POST has been criticized for rarely revoking a license.
Creation of the Minneapolis Cadet Program

• To increase BIPOC hires, the program was begun.

• A candidate with a BA in any discipline, would be hired and placed in an accelerated law enforcement curriculum, with faculty from the community colleges contracted to provide instruction to the cadets.

• This helped increase the pool of diverse candidates. Chief Arradondo was in the first cadet class in 1989.
A Major Impact on the Community: the crack epidemic.

- In 1980, crack cocaine was first found in Los Angeles.
- By 1987 it was in all but four states, Minneapolis was not spared.
- Relatively inexpensive and highly addictive, the impact on BIPOC communities was devastating.
- Get tough policies like ”three strikes” and the disparate penalties between powder and crack cocaine further exacerbated the impact.
Police Response: to crack and the impact of tactics on community.

- All communities affected demanded relief

- However, most enforcement involved undercover buys and high risk warrant service, by the Emergency Response Unit (SWAT)

- This also added to the strain with BIPOC
Minneapolis Police Athletic League Mentoring Minneapolis Youth Since 1990

- Volunteer officers
- Coaching Sports
- Banquets & Awards
- Trips to pro-events
- Children’s Theater
- Volunteer teacher tutors
The Minneapolis Police Activities League
How has Minneapolis changed in the last 45 years? (my opinion)

- A predominately white city has become much more diverse.
- New migrant communities have joined the fabric of the city.
  - Vietnamese
  - Latino
  - Hmong
  - Somali
  - The continued great northern migration of African Americans
  - A number of progressive people, who seem to believe the police do more harm than good, have been elected to the city council.
How has policing changed in 45 years on the human side? (my opinion)

• MPD has grown far more diverse, but has not caught up with the city profile.
• New officers are well educated in the required law enforcement curriculum, but it is a narrow focus.
• It is rare an officer lives in Minneapolis, they are unfamiliar with the city and it’s communities.
• The current hostility toward police, engenders a bunker mentality.
• Lack of support from the city council will keep officers from risk-taking on behalf of the community.
How has policing changed in 45 years? (my opinion)

- The "warrior" self image is pervasive.
- We used to be police officers, cops, peace officers, not warriors.
- Militarization reinforces that self image.
- At this moment MPD is depleted and demoralized
  - Staffing is in the low 600’s compared to 840, before George Floyd’s death.
Recommendations:

• Support Chief Arradondo, he knows exactly the change in culture needed.
• The depleted force is an opportunity, give the Chief the latitude to select officers that share his vision.
• From the academy on, emphasize a culture of accountability.
• Connect those officers to the community, like Chief Jack Jensen in 1975, foster empathy.
• The Mayor and Council need to openly call out good performance of the MPD.
Recommendations:

• Routine psychological evaluation. Officers are screened before hire. The job often changes people. Early warning of negative impacts and assistance.
• Community involvement in the selection and on-boarding of officers.
• Provide the Chief time to be personally involved in recruitment and training.
• Emphasize and train for “peer intervention”
  – Ethical Policing is Courageous (EPIC)
MPD/UMPD: It was always an honor and privilege to be of service.
Thank You UMRA!