

**Testimony**  
**National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE)**  
**Before the President Barack H. Obama Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing**  
**January 28, 2015**

Co-Chairperson Charles H. Ramsey, Co-Chairperson Laurie O. Robinson, and members of the Task Force, we bring you greetings on behalf of the Executive Board and members of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives – NOBLE.

It is an honor for NOBLE to provide written testimony on specific recommendations for the task force to consider in the following areas:

**Policy and Oversight**

- The role of police leadership (first-line, supervisory, managerial, and senior command)
- Influence of police culture
- Civilian oversight
- Early intervention systems
- Disciplinary systems
- Use of force
  - Policy
  - Reporting and investigations
  - Review and oversight
- Handling mass demonstrations and the use of military equipment
- Civil rights enforcement
- Research and data collection

**Technology and Social Media**

- Managing evolving technology and policy development
- Less than lethal technology
- Body cameras
- Social media
- Legal and constitutional issues
- Youth engagement

NOBLE's testimony comes from the perspective of a Law Enforcement Organization that has been in existence for nearly 40 years. NOBLE has nearly 60 chapters and represents over 4,000 members worldwide that is comprised of chief executive officers and command-level law enforcement officials from federal, state, county, municipal law enforcement agencies, and criminal justice practitioners. NOBLE's mission is to ensure EQUITY IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE in the provision of public service to all communities, and to serve as the conscience of law enforcement by being committed to JUSTICE BY ACTION.

## **Task Force Recommendations**

### **The Role of Police Leadership (first-line, supervisory, managerial, and senior command)**

Real and sustained reforms require on-going discussions, input, and commitment from police leadership. They must understand that positive police/community relations hinge on their ability to support each other in this engagement that benefits all. Any initiative that is started must have those in high command at the forefront of the change, which starts with basic education of the various roles. The leadership is responsible for internal education to ensure that everyone is on the same page with the mission, vision and values of the organization (that includes the union representation). At the same time, the organization has a responsibility to educate the public on what law enforcement does in order to begin the journey of building trust with the community.

NOBLE's recommendation is that the task force should expound on the correlation between a professionally trained supervisory staff and positive community relations. In essence, someone must ensure that the policies, regulations and interactions designed for improving relations with the community are followed and that there are consequences for deficiencies. Thus with appropriate supervisory training, they can become appreciative of their vital role and learn the elements of how to be accountable supervisors. Secondly, it is recommended that departmental leadership and supervisory assessments be performed. Thirdly, NOBLE recommends mandatory training starting with first line supervisors be performed in the areas of critical strategic decision making, cultural awareness, and negotiation best practices. Executive management should consider managerial training to enhance visionary planning and employee succession.

### **Influence of Police Culture**

Because of how hard-wired police officers sometimes are, it is vital that they undergo extensive cultural awareness and cultural competence education to learn more about the communities they serve. There has to be a strong emphasis on how to keep the officers safe as well as the community. This can only be done by positive, comprehensive interaction between both factions which begins to build the trust that ensures a win-win for everyone. When officers realize that their safety is tied to their positive interaction with the community, they will begin to understand what's in it for them - *their personal safety*.

The cultural shift must begin with the top command personnel which sends a clear positive message to ensure buy-in from the rank and file as well as the community. All training must be hands-on rather than online. NOBLE recommends behavioral / psychological assessments every 5 years to assist in determining opinions, environmental influences, and departmental influences. Secondly, there should be a

reassessment of field training officers assigned to new recruits. Lastly, there should be a post reassessment that would include the above referenced training to drive home the mission and goals of community policing throughout respective departments.

### **Civilian Oversight**

NOBLE recommends collaborative training and education to enhance the transparency of police operations. Oversight should be inclusive of law enforcement, civilian, corporate, and multiple disciplines in order to arrive at best practices for operations, hiring, retention, training, efficiency, etc. NOBLE does not recommend total civilian or total sworn police oversight.

### **Early Intervention Systems**

Early intervention assessments should be inclusive of recommendations from a behavioral psychologist team. Early intervention may necessitate psychological testing, drug testing, and situational exercises dealing with problematic scenarios. Proactive assessments every 5 years or so may identify problems early rather than responding with early warning mandates after a negative incident involving an employee occurs. Problems indicated could prompt specific training and correction measures.

### **Disciplinary Systems**

NOBLE recommends continued progressive disciplinary measures. The creation of a national disciplinary database is recommended that could be shared between law enforcement HR professionals to assist in mitigating negative hiring of problem employees.

### **Use of Force**

**Policy** – It is recommended that the law department conduct a periodic review regarding the use of force policy to include demographic data from use of force incidents (even those from less than lethal force). **Review and Oversight** – A review of periodic policy recommendations could include public town hall meetings to solicit public input and dialogue before a policy becomes final. The review process should always lend itself to transparency and include community representatives. **Reporting and Investigations** – NOBLE recommends the consideration of the reevaluation of sample use of force cases (by outside agencies). Reevaluation would redact names of individuals involved. A process using the same or similar disciplinary and correction standards could determine irregularities in findings and subsequent recommendations on training and disciplinary/corrective measures.

The use of force policy should provide a provision for an external investigation to ensure greater transparency and trust with the community.

### **Handling Mass Demonstrations and the Use of Military Equipment**

The Pentagon militarization of police program was authorized by Congress in 1990 to help fight drugs, with terrorism fighting a more recent objective. The program has handed out more than \$5.1 billion in military property since it started, primarily as a way to get rid of equipment it no longer needs. Equipment, much of it non-tactical gear such as sleeping bags and filing cabinets, is provided first-come, first-serve. NOBLE feels that training is a key component of ensuring the correct application of this type of resource. This training would be mandated by the Department of Justice. The training would include best practices for the use of military equipment as well as tactical measures utilized. Rules of engagement should be evaluated by the Department of Justice and local law enforcement agencies.

Mass demonstration training should be collaborative to include College Police and local agencies.

### **Civil Rights Enforcement**

NOBLE recommends that training be administered by the Department of Justice to include historical civil rights incidents and responses. Additionally, there should be an orientation on non-violent methodology.

### **Research and Data Collection**

NOBLE feels that there are collaborative opportunities between the public, private, and educational institutions. A key resource within African American communities is Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) that can assist with research and data collection as well as strategic solutions once data is analyzed.

### **Technology and Social Media**

NOBLE feels that technology can be leveraged to support the effective implementation of community policing and ensure maximum transparency to the public. Through technology, partnerships with communities can be strengthened in the areas of problem-solving and partnership initiatives. Likewise, there is an important role in applying technology in improving the effectiveness of law enforcement training.

Listed below are technology recommendations:

- Requirement of body cameras for law enforcement officers.
- Deployment of various social media platforms to allow law enforcement departments to better communicate and interact with local residents.
- Use-of-Force and Firearms Training Systems.

**Managing Evolving Technology and Policy Development, Less than Lethal Technology,**

**Body Cameras:** Law enforcement must embrace 21<sup>st</sup> century technology that reduces human error and ensures consistent application and enforcement of the law.

Instruments such as body cameras are a great equalizer for objectively capturing the action of officers in the performance of their jobs. When protocol is followed, it reinforces professionalism of the officer. When it is not followed, it highlights the deficiencies in training and education. NOBLE recommends the establishment of partnerships with leading technical institutes of higher learning, leading technology companies, and governmental entities to assist in guiding and shaping law enforcement technology (in all areas) and policy. Additional recommendations are to ensure diversity in sourcing suppliers to deliver the technology products and services.

**Social Media:** It is critical that at the highest levels of law enforcement that social media is embraced and leveraged. NOBLE recommends the development of partnerships with IT, public relations, marketing professionals, colleges and universities to assist in developing social media platforms, best practices, and policy.

**Legal and Constitutional Issues:** NOBLE proposes that agencies receive training and orientation from law departments on a regular basis, particularly post state legislative sessions.

**Youth Engagement:** NOBLE recommends sustainable collaborations with youth advocacy and mentoring groups in local jurisdictions. Organizations we propose for consideration are Boys and Girls Clubs, 100 Black Men of America, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Pan-Hellenic Councils, and various other local and regional mentoring organizations. Presently, NOBLE partners with many of these organizations to deliver ***The Law & Your Community Program*** that is funded by the Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services Office.