

Putting Police Officers Back on the Beat

In New Haven, Conn., and across the nation, cities give community policing another try as tensions rise

By

Gary Fields and
John R. Emshwiller

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[79 COMMENTS](#)

NEW HAVEN, Conn.—William Walker waited on an ice-covered sidewalk for the two police officers who usually walk the beat in his neighborhood. He wanted to report a car that didn't belong there but didn't want to make a big deal out of it.

“You have somebody walking around, you can talk to them,” says Mr. Walker, 44 years old, who works at a local hospital. “They don't come in the neighborhood and treat everybody like they're the enemy.”

As tensions simmer from deadly police encounters—two officers were [shot early Thursday](#) in Ferguson, Mo., during renewed protests over the [death of an unarmed teenager](#) last year—law-enforcement agencies across the U.S. are taking another look at the philosophy known as community policing two decades after it was embraced as an answer to a crack-fueled crime wave.

In New Haven, the number of homicides, robberies, motor-vehicle thefts and other types of serious crime has fallen about 30% since the city, best known as the home of Yale University, put a big chunk of its officers on foot-patrol duty in 2012. More than one-third of officers in the typical evening shift walk a beat, as do all new police-academy graduates for at least a year.

[Community policing](#) relies on close, frequent contact with neighborhood residents, who gradually become more trustful of officers and more willing to help them prevent and solve crimes, supporters say. Because police officers aren't isolated inside cruisers, they learn faster who the troublemakers are and develop a personal bond with the neighborhood.

“Dear Derek,” says a handwritten letter from a 5-year-old girl that Derek Horner Jr., an officer who has worked in the same part of New Haven for the past two years, carries in his notebook. “Thank you for looking out for us and thank you for seeing if we [are] ok.”



Curt McElvey shook hands with Brendan Hawley while the police officer warmed up inside Cerda's Market, a convenience store in New Haven. Photo: Kieran Kesner for The Wall Street Journal

Earlier this month, a presidential task force [called for expanded efforts](#) to connect officers with neighborhoods as part of the White House's response to recent police killings of unarmed citizens and the loss of trust between the two sides. A [final report](#) is expected in April.

Ferguson's community-policing efforts "have [dwindled to almost nothing](#) in recent years,"

concluded a [Justice Department probe](#) of the St. Louis suburb. As a result, the police department lost “the little familiarity it had with some African-American neighborhoods.”

Attorney General [Eric Holder](#) called Thursday’s shootings “a pure ambush” by a “damn punk who was trying to sow discord in an area trying to get its act together.” The officers suffered serious injuries but are expected to recover.

New Haven Police Chief Dean Esserman believes the initial encounter between Michael Brown and Darren Wilson, the Ferguson officer who shot Mr. Brown, might have been different if they had been familiar with each other. A county grand jury [declined to indict Mr. Wilson](#), and the Justice Department [decided not to file civil-rights charges](#) against him.

“They should not have been strangers,” Mr. Esserman says. The tension between many Americans and the police exists because “we’ve become strangers.”

It isn’t statistically clear if walking the beat is more effective than other crime-fighting strategies. There are no firm numbers on how many officers do community policing, and its meaning varies from city to city. Most police departments combine it with other anticrime approaches.



ENLARGE

In New Haven, William Walker, right, got the phone numbers of Officer Hawley and Officer Brendan Borer. Photo: Kieran Kesner for The Wall Street Journal

In New Haven, though, the total number of crimes in seven categories shrank 17% from 2010 to 2013, according to Federal Bureau of Investigation data. The U.S. had a decline of 3.8% in the same period. Officials in Baltimore, Milwaukee, Philadelphia and Portland, Ore., also have used some form of beat-walking as part of their community-policing efforts.

A bad fit for suburbs

Walking the beat isn't feasible in spread-out rural or suburban areas. It is more labor-intensive than assigning officers to police cars that can zip from neighborhood to neighborhood, and officers on foot can't always respond as quickly to crimes. [Budget cuts](#) also have made it harder for some police departments to justify the cost of walking the beat.

Still, some supporters of community policing believe that cities have no alternative but to try it following last year's shooting deaths of Mr. Brown in Ferguson and [Tamir Rice](#) in Cleveland, the police chokehold that killed [Eric Garner](#) last July in the New York City borough of Staten Island and killings of New York City officers [Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu](#) in their squad car in December.

"It's absolutely malfeasance not to replicate it everywhere," says Connecticut Gov. Dannel Malloy, a Democrat and former prosecutor. The U.S. Conference of Mayors has urged widespread adoption of the concept, saying police need to interact "on a daily basis with the community to develop credibility," according to [a January report](#).

Policing in the U.S. began with unpaid citizen volunteers on watch. That changed in the 1800s as American cities followed the lead of Sir Robert Peel, who created the modern police department in London, complete with a beat system. Eventually, patrol cars and radios speeded officers to the scene of emergency calls and crime reports.

"Cars and radios were helpful in policing, but it began isolating people from the people they serve," says Jim Bueermann, president of the Police Foundation, a police research group. "The thing we forget a lot in policing is it is a people business."

A community-policing comeback was at the center of a 1994 federal law that has provided more than \$14 billion to police, including grants to hire tens of thousands of officers. According to some studies, the grants added the equivalent of 98,000 officers nationwide.

It is hard to know how much the law actually added to the number of officers patrolling neighborhoods on foot. Studies by the Justice Department and Government Accountability Office offer only estimates, because the grants didn't specify whether an officer walked, biked or was assigned to a patrol car.

"Everybody was doing community policing, but nobody really knew what that was," says Kim Lersch, director of the University of South Florida's school of public affairs.

George Kelling, senior researcher and law-enforcement expert at the Manhattan Institute, a

conservative think tank, says many police departments used the new officers simply to beef up arrest tallies.

Mr. Kelling was an early proponent of the “broken windows” theory, which includes police going after low-level offenses in the hopes of deterring more serious ones. New York City Police Commissioner [William Bratton believes in the same approach](#).

“If a few stops and frisks were good, then a few more stop and frisks were better—and a few more were even better,” Mr. Kelling says.

Milwaukee embraced the use of foot patrols until the drug epidemic hit in the 1990s. Beat officers were pulled off walking patrols, put in patrol cars and sent to other districts to help. “Every urban place had the same problem: not enough officers to respond to calls for service,” says James Harpole, assistant chief of the Milwaukee Police Department.

After the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, federal grant money shifted to homeland-security efforts. “We had the war on crime, the war on drugs and now the war on terror,” says Sue Rahr, the former sheriff in King County, Wash., which includes Seattle.

Mr. Esserman brought the idea of walking the beat to New Haven when he was hired in 1991 as assistant police chief. A former prosecutor, Mr. Esserman is an acolyte of Mr. Bratton and former New York police commissioner Lee Brown.

New Haven had 34 homicides in 1991, its highest total on record. Mr. Esserman hoped putting officers in position to know who was upstanding, who wasn’t and which services were available to residents would lead to more cooperation with police.

He took the philosophy with him to police chief jobs in Stamford, Conn., and Providence, R.I. Overall crime in Providence fell 30% during his eight years there. In New Haven, officials largely abandoned walking the beat, and the city tied its old homicide record in 2011.

[When he returned as police chief in 2011](#), Mr. Esserman vowed to veer back to the past. He reassigned 20 of the 40 officers stationed at headquarters to street duty. All new officers must walk a beat for at least one year.

Last year, New Haven had 12 homicides, down 65% from 2011. The number of nonfatal shooting victims and shots fired each fell by more than 50% during the same period.

New Haven Mayor Toni Harp credits community policing for at least some of the improvements, which also have exceeded [those for Connecticut overall](#).

Walking a police beat “becomes a priority when you’re a small town and you see more of your kids getting killed” or community angst grows because “it thinks things are out of control,” says [Ms. Harp, a Democrat](#).

Herbert Sharp, a New Haven police lieutenant who is commander of the Newhallville district, says extensive background checks of recruits and police-academy training allay concerns that officers might be too inexperienced for community policing or susceptible to corruption

because of close contact. New Haven has 451 sworn police officers overall.

In Milwaukee, 58 of the 1,300 police officers walk or bike their beats. The total will climb past 130 this summer, says Mr. Harpole, the assistant police chief.

Since 2009, more than 700 officers in the Philadelphia police force of about 6,500 have walked beats for various lengths of time, and police-academy graduates are assigned to community policing. Philadelphia Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey is [co-chairman of the White House's task force](#) on police procedures.

Jerry Ratcliffe, a Temple University professor who studied an earlier community-policing pilot project in Philadelphia, says the crime rate went down but arrests climbed. The split underscores one of the strategy's inherent tensions, especially when police walk the beat in high-crime areas.

"It can be negative for police-community relations" if residents feel officers are too focused on things like making arrests, says Greg Stewart, a Portland, Ore., police sergeant. A program begun last year sends officers as part of their regular duty to traditional trouble spots and other locations, aiming to get police out of their cars to walk around and interact with people who live or work there.

In New Haven, more than 70 people from federal, state, local and college law-enforcement agencies, social-services providers and community groups meet every week to review the previous week's crimes.

Trust brings in tips

A meeting in February described the tips officers got from neighborhood residents about a shooting. The victim wouldn't cooperate. In a separate case, officers Derek Werner and David Diaz chased down a shooter by foot while patrol cars closed in.

The work can be a slog. While many people spoke politely to Brendan Borer and his partner, Brendan Hawley, while they walked a 30-square-block area one night, others glared at the two men, especially at an apartment complex where a narcotics unit ran a drug bust earlier that day. The district has New Haven's highest violent-crime rate.

The two officers warmed up inside Cerda's Market, a neighborhood convenience store where Curt McElvey greeted them at the door. He provides security and said their presence makes his job easier and keeps loitering down.

"The neighborhood is all right, but bad things happen when too many people are just standing around," Mr. McElvey says.

Nearby, New Haven police officers Mr. Horner and Jinette Marte made their rounds along Grand Avenue, part of a 16-square-block area packed with small businesses. They walked through the area 10 times during their eight-hour shift, varying the route so it didn't look

predictable.

One man approached with questions about a court summons. Mr. Horner told him to explain his situation to a judge, who might let him pay fines for a string of traffic violations rather than go to jail. The man thanked the officer.



ENLARGE

Jinette Marte and Derek Horner Jr. turned down a chance to move into patrol-car jobs so they could keep walking a beat in New Haven. Photo: Kieran Kesner for The Wall Street Journal
Mr. Horner, 24, and Ms. Marte, 28, graduated from the police academy together and have

finished their required community-policing duty. They recently turned down an opportunity to move into patrol-car jobs.

Ms. Marte grew up in a part of Brooklyn, N.Y., where police were “not well-liked,” she says. “Some of my cousins and siblings used to think: ‘Here comes the cop. She is going to give me a ticket. He is going to give me a ticket.’ I wanted to go out to the streets and change what people think of us as police officers.”

The neighborhood has improved since officers began walking the area, says Michael Como, 30, who works at the G.I. Package Store owned by his father. “You need them out there,” he adds. “It’s better than just driving by. You have to wave your arms and nearly fall on the ground to get a patrol car’s attention.”

After visiting another business, the two officers spotted a Honda speeding away from a green light, sliding dangerously on the ice but accelerating anyway. The car was gone before Mr. Horner could get a license-tag number.

“That’s the disadvantage of walking a beat and not being in a patrol car,” he says. “You can’t run them down.”

There are 79 comments.

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[Robert Cote](#) 16 minutes ago

My dad was a cop in a small Massachusetts city from 1958 to 1989. Until this mid-70s this was the standard way of policing. He knew the people, the neighborhoods and the businesses. And everyone knew him. When he died in the early 90s it was amazing to see all the people from those neighborhoods and hear the stories they told about things he did that never showed up in official reports.

Now some consultant has discovered this, branded it and is charging municipalities for the

idea.



[Paula Dowling](#) 9 minutes ago

@Robert Cote The police in my town are also great cops. Sounds like your Dad was a fine man and a very good police officer.



[gardner morris](#) 17 minutes ago

I find the tone of this article highly biased...The liberal media is concentrating on holding the police solely to blame for the disconnect with the Black community.. Its not objective, its not accurate and its just plain wrong. The investigation of the Brown/Ferguson shooting proved that members of the Black community lied about what happened because of pressure from their peers...The shooting of the two Ferguson police officers was obviously witnessed by many members of the Black community and none have come forward to identify the shooter...Black leaders like Sharpton and Jackson are not condemning the police shootings. Obama's comment was wishy washy..That only encourages further violence and an open season on cops....If the Black community wants our respect they first have to learn to act as responsible citizens....The media should acknowledge this fact and stop the cop bashing.



[Marshall Dillon](#) 18 minutes ago

Jury is still out on this one, i.e., policing on foot.



[Michael Scheer](#) 20 minutes ago

"The death of an unarmed teenager." The press is irresponsible in calling it that. It is the death of a large thug who was trying to take the officer's gun. He was a soon-to-be-armed teenager.



[Greg Liataud](#) 52 minutes ago

Connecticut had a near record snow year along with record cold weather. Any chance this drop in violent crime is the result of it being too cold for mischief? Like every other state?



[PETERL BLACK](#) 45 minutes ago

[@Greg Liataud](#) The big decline was last year, which was warm and dry in New Haven. This year have been cold and snowy, which should depress crime even more.



[David Cousins](#) 52 minutes ago

I am glad to see the police de-evolve back to peace officers instead of law enforcement. The police have isolated themselves so much from the communities that they are suppose to serve and protect that criminals know that they are free to harass and take neighborhoods hostage without fear of retribution. There will always be bad people, but walking the beat is the best

way to identify those bad people. I hope this type of policing will take off across the country because I for one would like to know the officers name that is suppose to protect my neighborhood.



[John Canfield](#) 57 minutes ago

In those neighborhoods where police could walk a beat, many of the inhabitants hate anybody who represents law enforcement since it interferes with the primary economic engine of selling drugs.

The other issue is police agencies are usually spread so thin, they are running from call to call and have little time for proactive activities.



[PETERL BLACK](#) 52 minutes ago

[@John Canfield](#) That one reason many states are realizing drug laws. They create unnecessary friction between government and the governed.



[Rob Lawton](#) 47 minutes ago

[@PETERL BLACK](#) [@John Canfield](#) So drugs for everyone! Is that your answer?



[PETERL BLACK](#) 38 minutes ago

[@Rob Lawton](#) [@PETERL BLACK](#) [@John Canfield](#) Colorado will show us if the harm caused by prohibition is greater or less than the harm caused by legalization. It is a matter of having laws that reflect community values. In many states, the drug laws do not reflect community values, but criminalizing drugs gives employment to both the dealers and an expensive law enforcement apparatus.



[JIM SHULER](#) 58 minutes ago

It is odd but we don't have much need for the police in my neighborhood. We are about 99.9% percent law abiding citizens.

The police come here only occassionally, but keep wondering why others can't have neighborhoods like mine. What is their problem?



[robert skotnicki](#) 1 hour ago

This sure sounds like "we need more money...a.k.a. higher taxes"

Let's take the money out of the welfare entitlement programs. And to you liberals who want to

say, "you mean social security?",NO, I don't mean programs that working people have paid into. I mean giveaway programs that people who won't work are living off of.



[Rob Lawton](#) 43 minutes ago

[@robert skotnicki](#) You are trying to preempt the foolish return quips of a liberal since they always try to group Soc Sec as a government freebie program. But despite how many items you say up front, they will ALWAYS add something more dumb to try to twist your words. Liberals are pretty diabolical that way.



[Greg Liautaud](#) 1 hour ago

Police can walk a beat all they want. At the end of the day, when a 300 pound career criminal stoned on drugs attacks the police officer and tries to take his gun, the officer needs the wherewithal to shoot him dead on the spot.

Even if he's unarmed black teenager.



[Rob Lawton](#) 1 hour ago

New Haven, a horrendous pit except for the Yale enclave of Ivory Tower liberals - the only thing staving off Detroit syndrome after DECADES of liberal policy ravages. The irony of

taking credit for applying non-scalable liberal touchy-feely solutions to a horrendous problem created by liberals in the first place is incredible.



[Todd Granger](#) 1 hour ago

[@Rob Lawton](#) All real people like touchy feely liberals. It works best with a billion dollar daddy.

Look at what you can do with 19 weapons of mass distraction, sold at K-Mart, at the discounted box knife sale.

G.I. Joe's favorite! Community policing; Drunk.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osama bin Laden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osama_bin_Laden)



[ENID HINKES](#) 1 hour ago

A lot of people on both sides of the argument are forgetting that the crime rates went up and down because of a lot of factors, such as demographics, and the drug trade (especially for homicides). D.C. has seen its homicide rate plummet, not because of any change in policing, but because the city has seen a rise in young professionals who have moved into the formerly bad neighborhoods. The people who moved out have gone to Prince George's County, where

the homicide rate has risen. Still, the combined rate is not as high as it was in the late eighties, when the crack trade created gang wars.

The one city that saw its homicides and major crimes plummet far in excess of any demographics, and the general decrease in the country, was in NYC, where Giuliani instituted the broken windows theory. That is now being abandoned. The people in the neighborhoods may feel better with community policing, but will they act better?



[James Fay](#) 1 hour ago

[@ENID HINKES](#)

The same thing, re: demographics, is happening in Brooklyn.

However, while these newly-changed demographic parts of Brooklyn are popular with the hipster and newly-rich crowd, their brownstone apartments, and their contents, have become popular with those who live in less-desirable neighborhoods a few blocks away.

As Willy Sutton once said about why he robbed banks, "Because that's where the money is...."!



[PETERL BLACK](#) 1 hour ago

[@James Fay](#) [@ENID HINKES](#) Lower crime and changing demographics go hand in hand. City living has lots of pluses: access to cultural activities, night life, jobs, short commutes, etc. but none of that will motivate someone with means to live there if they feel it is not safe. New York, Brooklyn, and New Haven are all attracting wealthier residents after crime has gone down. The wealthier residents are less likely to commit crimes than the poorer folks they

displace, and can afford better policing as well. It is a virtuous cycle, with each trend strengthening the other.



[ALSTON ANDERSON](#) 1 hour ago

If Holder & Co. continue to put pressure on police, eventually white officers will stop answering calls in areas where blacks live. Why bother putting your life and your career in danger when the DOJ is standing around looking for examples to make of white police officers? Blacks, once again, will be the cause of their own problems. And black neighborhoods will become even more dangerous.



[Paul Lombardi](#) 1 hour ago

[@ALSTON ANDERSON](#) The last I remembered, the DOJ decided not to indict (or even charge civilly) any of the police officers involved in the most recent controversies. Not exactly sure what you are referring to...



[Rob Lawton](#) 57 minutes ago

[@Paul Lombardi](#) [@ALSTON ANDERSON](#) You're not sure? Let me refresh your memory: Darren Wilson, forced to quit his career after being so severely tainted by personal attacks and villainization from Obama/Holder that his very life was at risk AGAIN by the whole gang of racist thugs after almost being snuffed out by the Gentle Giant in the first place.

Let's not forget the 2 dead NYC officers. And then there's the 2 Ferguson officers ambushed

by militant sniper demonstrators just the other day.

Your weasel answer simply does NOT cut it. As your hero Malcolm once said "the chickens are coming home to roost". So unless you libbies want to put down your latte in favor of doing your OWN security, you should wake up and STOP your nonsense of dismantling civil society.



[Robert B Miller](#) 23 minutes ago

[@Rob Lawton](#) [@Paul Lombardi](#) [@ALSTON ANDERSON](#) Could you please provide links for personal attacks from Holder and Obama about Darren Wilson? I don't recall anything from Obama, but Holder's words are not reported as closely.

The recent DOJ report fully exonerates Wilson and largely agrees with his version of events.



[Paul Lombardi](#) 18 minutes ago

[@Rob Lawton](#) [@Paul Lombardi](#) [@ALSTON ANDERSON](#) Haha what a simplistic response. I love how politics in the current climate has turned into a left vs right mentality. You have chosen the easy way out by antagonizing and insulting me as opposed to coming up with solutions to the problem.

In regards to the substance of your argument, I believe that the reasons these police officers were shot was due to the fact that the police force they work for has discriminated and antagonized (similar to the way you operate) the people that they serve for decades. Instead of protecting its people, they imprison, impoverish, and demean as opposed to protecting and serving.

The violence that has ensued is a result of anger and frustration over a history of corrupt policies. To bring it down to your level for a second, "conservatives" always argue that we need to arm ourselves and form militias against a totalitarian government. That is exactly what these people have done. You can thank yourselves.



[Rob Lawton](#) 1 hour ago

Let's consider New Haven. Yale University, where the bleeding hearts are. And YET when someone from the ivory tower gets raped or murdered all HECK breaks loose. Liberals just can't stand reaping the "fruits" of their own tragic policies so they steal public funds to insulate themselves. Their model doesn't scale since it's meant to serve ivory tower philosophies out of touch with reality.

Then there's the previous mayor for nearly 20 years, John DeStefano. He's basically a small town DeBlasio. New Haven remains one of the country's most dangerous cities.

School performance is lackluster DESPITE a \$1.5 Billion school construction plan - 30% of students don't get through high school. 25% or 3 times the national average are unemployed.

He provided legal IDs to illegals, steered big construction projects to fellow cronies at Fusco

Corporation despite town council desires to do otherwise.

There is really too much to mention but the phrase "liberal Democrat" says it all.



[Todd Granger](#) 1 hour ago

[@Rob Lawton](#) You just explained Bin Laden.



[RICHARD OCONNOR](#) 1 hour ago

I love it . Cities and Towns voted this out over 30 years ago to save money . Now look at them ... Perfect example of messing with things that work . Going back to the old ways ??? During this one cop one cruiser philosophy : Crime rose by seeing : murder rates rose , illegal guns rose , Breakins , drug use etc . Rocket science People commit crimes , and people can solve crimes . Old ways are sometimes the only way ! Why ? Because they THOUGHT about things before opening their mouths ...



[Todd Granger](#) 1 hour ago

And that upstanding citizen in the White House?

Cash for Clunkers, where upstanding citizens means clueless, and cannot count to 3 at GM.

Hope and Change you can run some guns into Mexico?

Got Drones, community policing from NYPD, and why wonder George Washington and the boys burned it down in '76.

"Three generations of imbeciles are enough."



[James Fay](#) 1 hour ago

Such "feel good" policies such as this have one fault in them: they cost money.

A police department, usually already understaffed at the patrol level, has little manpower to use to roam a neighborhood freely.

The basic job of a police department is to answer 911 calls. If officers are taken from their cars, particularly in a "busy" neighborhood, the backlog of serious calls to the police can become seriously overwhelming. Officers who are schmoozing local residents and shopkeepers cannot run a mile or more to a serious crime of apprehending a felon.

Of course, the politicians will tell you that these officers will have a car nearby to handle these serious jobs, but once they respond to one serious incident, they will most likely not be available for anymore schmoozing for the rest of their tour of duty.

The results will be, if history of this type of patrol is any indication, that this feel-good schmoozing policy will continue on paper, but all but abandoned in practice.



[RICHARD OCONNOR](#) 1 hour ago

[@James Fay](#) Understand that for many years and I was there first hand to see this work : Cops were either paired up with each other in a cruiser or they walked the beat . And guess what happened when they were more involved and walked the beat ? Crime rates were lower , More community involvement , more people involved in solving crimes . So all the facts in the world do not show one thing : Human intervention works ONLY when it is not managed by humans !!!



[James Fay](#) 1 hour ago

[@RICHARD OCONNOR](#) [@James Fay](#)

That was all find and dandy when the radio runs in themselves were rare. While you were on a foot post for eight hours schmoozing, the sectors were running from pillar to post all night handling ten to 20 radio jobs a night.

They went home exhausted (if they went home at all, having caught an arrest), while you told your locker buddies what a great night you had.

This "park, walk, and talk" nonsense was put into practice 30 years ago, and quickly disbanding in big cities, because while the cops were shaking hands with the owner of the pizza shop and helping little kids fix their bikes, there was some guy bleeding to death with a bullet in him or an old lady laying on the sidewalk have just been robbed, and no cars available to respond.

They can't have it both ways.



[Rob Lawton](#) 1 hour ago

[@James Fay](#) In other words, liberalism doesn't scale well. It may work well in a few enclaves, or in a few Vermont cheese communes, but when forced on the whole country at HUGE expense from funds stolen from people who actually produce, we get abominable results such as Obama's "fundamental transformation."



[Michael Pastore](#) 2 hours ago

If it contributes to cops losing weight, I'm all for it. A lot of those guys are heart attacks waiting to happen.



[PETERL BLACK](#) 1 hour ago

[@Michael Pastore](#) Yes, it is disheartening to see these too young officers, Marte and Horner, in such poor physical shape. In my opinion, many police officers quickly resort to firearms because they are too physically weak to otherwise protect themselves.



[Warren Hall](#) 2 hours ago

I can't help but think that Obama and Holder have made this situation much worse than it should be.



[Jerome Abernathy](#) 2 hours ago

[@Warren Hall](#) That's because you biases cloud all rational thought.



[Todd Granger](#) 2 hours ago

[@Jerome Abernathy](#) [@Warren Hall](#) You mean like running guns into Mexico? Or the Middle East? Or Vietnam? Or Normandy? Or Chicago?

Community Policing? It's working out so well, from the Bozo's in Congress.



[Timothy Boucher](#) 2 hours ago

[@Warren Hall](#)

That's because you see Black people.



[Rob Lawton](#) 1 hour ago

[@Timothy Boucher](#) [@Warren Hall](#) It's pretentious to think you know what someone else thinks. That's why a common question asked of liberals "What are you thinking!"

It's easier to attribute projected intentions on others when they deflect the need for self-reflection and personal responsibility for one's own shortcomings. Thus liberals use phony labels of racism, kitten killers, misogyny, children haters, etc. on anyone who holds a mirror up to the liberal.



[robert skotnicki](#) 2 hours ago

Warren: that's because you are correct .

Btw Timothy & Jerome: you may want to review some FBI crime and demographic statistics , if you'd like to work from actual facts.



[ENID HINKES](#) 3 hours ago

The comment that police should not be focused on making arrests because it is bad for community relations makes me wonder if this is another downside of the "community policing" philosophy. The police are not out there to win votes. They are out there to stop crime. Are they supposed to ignore people who are committing misdemeanors or violations because it is bad for the image? Sounds like the same mentality of those who view the army's purpose not as a fighting force, but as a means of implementing all the social agendas of the left.



[Jerome Abernathy](#) 2 hours ago

[@ENID HINKES](#) The fact that you would mention the "army's purpose" in a comment about policing indicates you don't know what the police are supposed to do.



[ENID HINKES](#) 1 hour ago

[@Jerome Abernathy](#) [@ENID HINKES](#) The police are there to keep the peace and enforce the

law. What do you think that they are supposed to do?

The fact that I mentioned the "army's purpose" in an article about policing is that there is a similarity in taking the focus off of the main purpose of the institution, not in their goals. Sorry if it was too subtle for you, but I didn't think I had to first issue a disclaimer in the WSJ. This is not the Huffington Post.



[PETERL BLACK](#) 55 minutes ago

[@ENID HINKES](#) [@Jerome Abernathy](#) Have you ever gotten a warning from a police officer, rather than a ticket or arrest? If we enforced all our laws to the maximum, our courts and jails would be 10 times as clogged as they are now. Discretion is part of a police officer's job. Using it wisely can help keep the peace, as police are something more than outside persecutors.



[James Fay](#) 1 hour ago

[@Jerome Abernathy](#) [@ENID HINKES](#)

Just what ARE they supposed to do, Jerry?

I don't see schmoozing of residents in any state criminal laws. The politicians today would be more than happy if the cops locked up NO ONE. No one of a protected group, anyway.

Police were never meant to be an arm of the government's community relations department and, because of that, they have fallen from their core responsibilities, resulting in the overwhelming crime epidemic we have in this nation today, which will probably get worse as the warm weather kicks in up in the Northeast, and as the morale of uniformed police officers plummets from political interference, criminal pandering by the politicians, and the death and serious injuries to cops on the front lines.

"A people get a government they deserve."



[ENID HINKES](#) 3 hours ago

I am always suspicious of these panacea articles. Usually the rosy statistics

don't pan out when looked at more closely. There could be many reasons that New Haven is beating the national average, such as changing demographics.

The down sides are there. If you are on foot, you can't get to the problem six blocks away very quickly. You can't chase someone who drives away in a car. You are also an easier target. If people are seen talking to the police in many neighborhoods, they are labeled as snitches. It can supplement having squad cars, but not replace it.



[Eileen Weber](#) 3 hours ago

[@ENID HINKES](#)

New Haven is a big sanctuary city for illegals. Not too good being a town with \$65K per year Ivy League Yale.



[Janet Wheeler](#) 2 hours ago

[@ENID HINKES](#) Obviously, walking or riding a bicycle is a supplement; not a replacement for patrol cars. And, no it is not going to immediately change gang mentality that people talking to police are snitches, but it could be a start. Again, if the residents have an opportunity to meet, talk, and get to know the police as a resource for safety vs. the adversarial relationship that exists in so many places, things just might change.



[ENID HINKES](#) 1 hour ago

[@Janet Wheeler](#) I know that is the theory and the hope, but I also know those neighborhoods and the people who live there. It is worth a try, but I would not put all your eggs in that basket. When they make an arrest of someone, the "Officer Friendly" image goes out of the window.

If it is a supplement to patrol cars, it is going to be quite expensive.



[David White](#) 3 hours ago

It has been proven over and over that community policing works, so it is something that should especially be done in cities. But I believe it has merits in rural or suburban areas where there are clusters of homes as well, officer can drive to neighborhoods park there cars and go for a walk, introducing themselves as they move around, letting people know they are there, and that they are there to provide assistance when necessary.



[James Wilmore](#) 4 hours ago

Good intentions to put police on foot patrol, but not so good for the police where they could be found in some very vulnerable situations to be ambushed, outnumbered, outgunned, in unfamiliar terrain. If this sounds like a military mission, it is absolutely comparable, for the gansta' thugs that live in the high crime areas have little use for police.

The progressives that instigate much of the protest and hatred are winning the war on police, and using poor inner city kids to do their dirty deeds by keeping the poor dependent on "everything".



[Carolyn Field](#) 4 hours ago

Geography plays a role in feasibility of community policing. In compact cities, walking a beat makes great sense. In sprawling cities and suburbs, hard to see how it can work. I would hate to see the Feds promoting community policing as a one-size fits all solution.



[David D Vanhooose](#) 4 hours ago

This is an economic issue, and the article ignores this fact. Community policing makes perfect sense in more condensed, high-population-density areas in which the population is not changing much over time or even is shrinking somewhat. It makes much less sense in sprawling areas with expanding populations that are spreading geographically. I am not an

expert on policing, but my take on this article is that is written from the perspective of the economically stagnant Northeast and has little relevance for the rest of the nation, particularly growing states such as Texas or North Carolina. I would love to see police walking the beat in my neighborhood, but I would not want to pay the huge taxes to hire the massively largely police force required to make this approach to policing feasible in the fast-growing town and state in which I reside.



[PETERL BLACK](#) 1 hour ago

[@David D Vanhoose](#) Actually, the article states, "Walking the beat isn't feasible in spread-out rural or suburban areas." New Haven is a pretty stable community, with most of the town closely packed, one to three dwelling buildings with a front porch culture. Downtown, there are a few high rise market rate, middle income buildings, and there are some high rise elderly housing units. All the non-age restricted subsidized housing, however, is low rise town home types complexes.



[Michael Nahra](#) 5 hours ago

I think it will be helpful to stop misrepresenting the shooting of Michael Brown. I was surprised to hear on the news this morning that he was shot while attacking a police officer since that is a drastic departure from the lie that has been reported.



[Ronald Horner](#) 6 hours ago

Police Unions have driven the wages, benefits and retirement expenses for a city so high that they simply cannot afford to have cops walk a beat. They are driven instead to use newer technology to boost their efficiency and mobility. Now all you see are the armored cruisers/

lockup vehicles with cameras, computers and sterile looking, heavily armed men in black.



[Eugene Windchy](#) 7 hours ago

Police do not like to do community policing. They want to sit in a car, sit at a desk, or sit at a lunch counter. My local police announced big plans for community policing. It never happened.



[michael ohara](#) 10 hours ago

If I were a policeman in one of the war zone cities of the US, I'd report to work, put my feet up on the desk, drink coffee and tell stories to the other cops doing the same thing.



[Jerome Abernathy](#) 2 hours ago

[@michael ohara](#) ...and eventually get your lazy, incompetent, unprofessional self fired.



[David Dartley](#) 11 hours ago

Alone it's not a panacea, and I always acknowledge I don't know the first thing about police work. But if you felt you needed to talk to a cop, who would you rather approach and speak to--a cop standing on the street? Or a cop inside a patrol car, windows rolled up, engine

running, and (I don't fault them for this) looking at their phone? (Yes, no offense, that's the usual setup in NYC.) Also, and maybe more importantly, which of those two cops do you think would rather be approached and spoken to? The one who's just had his window knocked on, inches from his face? You wanna knock on that window?



[Leszek Chrostowski](#) 11 hours ago

A while ago (1987), in NJ, we never called "the police". It was "Call Bill". He was our friend, participant of our parties, and (for some) a wailing wall. The guy was great, we all appreciated what he did. Nobody would hesitate to call him when something was going on. Where is that Police now?



[David Hosmer](#) 11 hours ago

Using police as a revenue producer causes people to resent the officers. In 1998, I moved to the area I live in now and I seldom seen anyone pulled over. Now, I can't go to the store without seeing at least 1 person or sometimes 2 or 3 people being pulled over for one thing or another. All I get from the local authorities is don't break the law and you won't have to worry about it. There are so many laws where I don't think they need to look very hard to see someone doing something wrong.



[Janet Wheeler](#) 11 hours ago

Police used to regularly "walk the beat". They got to know the residents and vice versa. Conversations, face-to-face communication, and getting to know the kids, teenagers

(especially) as a positive - there's a "novel" thought. Walking probably wouldn't hurt the waistline either.

Being visible to the community is a lot less threatening than always cruising around in a patrol car. I understand there may be safety issues to deal with, but what many police departments are doing is not working. Getting back to basics could be most beneficial.



[Maria Bonanno](#) 12 hours ago

While you're at it, put politicians back on the soapboxes.



[MARK BOSSINGHAM](#) 12 hours ago

Eric Holder, with his indictment of the Ferguson PD, is personally responsible for the shooting of those two cops.



[MARK BOSSINGHAM](#) 12 hours ago

Isn't "... death of a teenager who assaulted a police officer ..." more accurate and less inflammatory than "... death of an unarmed teenager ..."?



[Eileen Weber](#) 3 hours ago

[@MARK BOSSINGHAM](#)

You might offend the suspects family. Really?

We have excelled at word play in this country, ugly is pretty,
yellow is purple..



[Tommy Butler](#) 12 hours ago

Law enforcement works best when the community not only accepts and obeys the laws, but accepts that cops are people, too.

This is difficult in places nick-named "Fort Apache".



[Dom Fried](#) 13 hours ago

“It can be negative for police-community relations” if residents feel officers are too focused on things like making arrests

I thought the function of police is to respond to crime or severe danger to be present as a deterrent. In the former, the objective is to apprehend the criminal and provide testimony to the judicial system, and the latter to use the threat of apprehension. Also, where there is a very serious crime or crime spree, to investigate.

It sounds like, from the quote, they are expected to be a PR or marketing department. Police should strive to not be excessive, as they sometimes are. I understand that is difficult in the most dangerous areas, where a thug may charge an officer and fracture his eye socket, or perhaps just shoot him in the face or shoulder from a distance in an "ambush."

In any area, there are criminals and law-abiding persons. The former aren't susceptible to PR and the latter don't need it. Who is in between? Those who tolerate or cheer for the thugs.



[PETER L BLACK](#) 12 hours ago

[@Dom Fried](#) BTW, no one fractured Wilson's eye socket. In fact, the photos showed little injury whatsoever. After the shooting, he consulted with his union rep. Only then did he go to the hospital to have his minor injuries attended to.

As far as controlling crime, it's pretty hard to get cooperation from any one in the community when you are unknown. If officers walk the beat and get to know folks, and are trusted by them, some will volunteer information.



[JOE O'LEARY](#) 14 hours ago

Ugghhhh....some merit to this idea, but I see some problems.

If you're walking around unarmed and playing cop, uniformed or not, that makes you a target. And your average criminal is likely to not respect your authority as much as he would a genuine officer of the law.

And if you carry a gun, that protects you, but it also puts you at risk of suffering the fate of George Z when you're forced to defend yourself.

O.J. case detective Mark Furhman said that he was against the idea of citizens carrying guns for two reasons:

- 1) Anyone can learn to fire a gun, but it takes a tremendous amount of situational training to teach someone when to pull a weapon. Cops have this training, citizens do not.

- 2) A cop has City Hall behind him when he threatens or uses force, or god forbid kills someone. A citizen has no such legal protection.

These citizen patrols should be restricted to "if we see something, we say something -- to the police, not to the criminal.



[PETERL BLACK](#) 14 hours ago

[@JOE OLEARY](#) What "citizen patrols" are you talking about? The article is about citizens who are sworn police officers patrolling communities on foot, not untrained citizens.



[Harvey Lyon](#) 15 hours ago

"Walking a beat" is a great idea. In fact assigning a certain geography to an individual officer works even better. That officer becomes known throughout his community and becomes a known point of contact to provide information to as well as for police to gain a sense of community concerns.



[PETERL BLACK](#) 14 hours ago

[@Harvey Lyon](#) This program does both: the officers walk the same beat regularly, although New Haven police change shifts every few weeks, so I am not sure how that works with this program.



[XAVIER L SIMON](#) 15 hours ago

"That's the disadvantage of walking a beat and not being in a patrol car," he says. "You can't

run them down.”

I wonder if in certain communities they would consider that to be the only disadvantage. There are some I wouldn't drive by myself and I bet policemen wouldn't be so willing to walk either.



[Jerome Abernathy](#) 15 hours ago

[@XAVIER L SIMON](#) For policing to work, they have to be considered part of the community, not an alien occupying force. Similarly, the police need to feel that they're protecting their neighborhood rather than patrolling some enemy territory.