

Challenge of policing brutality

By Hazel Trice Edney
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WASHINGTON — DeLacy Davis leads marches against police brutality. He embraces victims' family members and shouts through megaphones for justice and peace. And he testifies in courtrooms against rogue cops and holds seminars to teach people what to do when stopped by the police.

DeLacy Davis is no ordinary activist. In fact, he would be the last person expected to be involved in these activities. That's because Davis is a police officer. Twelve years ago, he decided he would stop tolerating unprovoked beatings and abuse of criminal suspects by police when he established Black Cops Against Police Brutality (B-CAP).

"Those kinds of practices shamed me. I wasn't a party to any of it. But as I traveled and moved around the country, I was seeing this as a pattern in law enforcement. And what I found shameful was that I, as a Black man, did not have the courage to publicly speak out about it," says Davis, a sergeant in the East Orange, N.J. police department. "And when I began to quietly ask questions about it, my colleagues — black and white — thought that was a taboo subject."

Police brutality is a topic that is no longer taboo. And from New York to California, cities are being forced to deal with brutal cops.

Earlier this month in

Louisville, Ky., Michael Newby, 19, was fatally shot four times in the back. Authorities said the shooting incident grew out of an undercover drug bust.

In Cincinnati, the beleaguered police department was in the news again over the beating death of Nathaniel Jones in Cincinnati, the 18th Black man to be killed by police in that city since 1995. In Columbus, Ga., police came under fire for the shooting death of 39-year-old Kenneth Walker. The unarmed man was shot twice in the head by a Muscogee County sheriff's deputy when he didn't show both hands inside his car.

Amadou Diallo, 22, was also unarmed in New York City when he was shot to death in a hail of 41 bullets on Feb. 4, 1999. New York police opened fire on him after they claimed to mistake his wallet for a gun. His mother was awarded a \$3 million dollar settlement this month.

The 1968 Kerner Commission, formed by President Lyndon B. Johnson to investigate widespread racial violence in major cities that erupted following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., reported that nothing was likely to spark an urban rebellion quicker than an incidence of police brutality.

Thirty six years later, authorities are still struggling to curb police brutality, trying everything from community policing to deployment of civilian review

boards.

"Civilian complaint review boards: They get sort of nervous results. But they create the sense in communities where they're working that there's someone looking over your shoulder," says Ronald Hampton, executive director of the Washington D.C. - based National Black Police Association. "Police brutality and racial profiling and all of these things would not even be an issue if there wasn't a place in policing in this country where they could exist and hide."

They can't hide in San Francisco, says Hampton. He points to Bay Area Police Watch, a citizens group that works to expose and challenge police violence.

"Due to the increased militarization and expansion of police presence in localities across the country, low-income communities and communities of color are routinely policed by heavily armed officers subject to little or no civilian oversight," the group says on its Website. "PoliceWatch is the only project in the Bay Area operating a misconduct hotline, documentation center, and lawyer referral service for survivors of police abuse."

A program of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Police Watch, a non-profit organization, has influenced the strengthening of San Francisco's Office of Citizen Complaints (OCC), the publicly-funded investigatory agency that has 15 investigators, subpoena power, and the authority

to discipline wayward police officers, including firing them. It answers to an independent, seven-member commission.

"The charter itself mandates that every city and county employee of San Francisco has to cooperate with us," says Kevin Allen, director of the OCC. "You can call in an anonymous complaint. You don't have to be the victim of whatever it was you perceived. What the charter mandates we are able to do is investigate any complaint by a civilian."

Anthony R. Scott, President of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Officers (NOBLE) and chief of the Holyoke, Mass. police department, isn't impressed with review boards, especially those that are not independent.

"They don't work. They end up being more lenient," Scott says. "Training is the answer in all cases of unnecessary use of force. It takes its directions from the top down. It's what the person at the top will tolerate and the message that is going to be sent from the top down," Scott says.

The person at the top is often the mayor, not the police chief, says Wellington E. Webb, the first Black mayor of Denver and former president of the U. S. Conference of Mayors.

"It's import for elected officials to stand up and say, in the event that a mistake was made, that, 'We made a mistake,'" Webb said.

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Paying attention to parents of attention-deficit children

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accompanying behavioral problems such as opposition defiant disorder (ODD) and conduct disorder (CD).

This finding was not surprising to several experts on ADHD. "Disorders tend to go together in individuals and families," says Stephen Faraone, clinical professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and author of "Straight Talk About Your Child's Mental Health" (Guilford Press, 2003). "Co-morbidity is the rule rather than the exception."

Why? According to Faraone, part of the answer lies in the genes. ADHD, he says, is one of the most heritable disorders in psychiatry: If you have ADHD, he says, it appears there's a 20 to 50 percent chance that you will pass it along to your child. The disorders that often travel with it — depression, anxiety, substance abuse — also have a strong genetic component.

But genes aren't destiny: "If the parent has [a gene for] alcoholism or depression or antisocial personality, the child is at risk for those," says Faraone, "but it doesn't mean the child will get [that] disorder. . . . Genes play a substantial role, but they may need to be triggered."

One trigger, he says, could be exposure to a parent's depression or alcoholism: "The additional chaos [caused by a parent's disorder] will [increase] the chances of getting the disorder."

Despite strong evidence that a disorder in one family member is a strong predictor of disorders in other family members, treatment traditionally focuses on the individual rather than the family as a whole.

This study is "a clear sign that a very comprehensive assessment of the family is needed," Faraone says. "A pediatrician is a very busy guy, but it's easy to ask some questions about [the parents'] past history of mental disorders, drinking, etc."

A simple paper-and-pencil test filled out in the doctor's waiting room could go a long way toward determining the parent's need for a complete evaluation, says Russell Barkley, a professor at the Medical University of South Carolina and author of "Taking Charge of ADHD, Revised Edition" (Guilford Press, 2000).

"It's not rocket science — any nurse or office secretary could [tally the score]," he says. Yet such assessments remain rare: "[There are] time limits due to managed care, but really it is the ignorance of clinicians that prevents them from getting this on their radar."

James Perrin, professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical

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