

Whose Voices are Heard in the Police Reform Process?

by Frank Anechiarico

Convener, College-Community Partnership for Racial Justice
Maynard-Knox Professor of Government and Law, Hamilton College
fanechia@hamilton.edu
202-641-4489

By April 1st next year, every local government in New York State is required to send to the state budget office a plan for reforming its police department by adopting policies that ensure both public safety and racial justice. This is to be done, the Governor's executive order directs, by reviewing "evidence-based strategies" in coordination with, not only police officials and community leaders, but also "members of the community."

At the end of August, Zogby Strategies conducted a survey of public opinion and experience with policing and criminal justice more generally. The results of the survey are being analyzed by the College-Community Partnership for Racial Justice, a coalition of all six colleges in Oneida and Herkimer Counties, the Community Foundation, the United Way and a number of other community groups. The results will be reported at the end of this year, along with an analysis of best practices in the following areas:

1. Treatment of people with mental illness
2. Patrol, traffic and other stops; de-escalation
3. Oversight of the police and complaint processing
4. Domestic dispute intervention
5. Diversity recruitment and retention

6. Police training and education; racial sensitivity

... and several others that are less related to policing, but critical to racial justice, like the trial process and plea bargaining.

But whatever reforms local governments decide to adopt will be unlikely to succeed with buy-in by those of us who live here.

In order to expand the reach of the survey and make it possible for as many people as possible to have their voices heard about police reform and racial justice, the Community Foundation and the United Way have made it possible for anyone with a phone to take the survey by **texting MVJustice to 898-211**. You'll be anonymous but asked to enter your zipcode so that those responsible for police reform in your town, village or city will get the message.

Another way to be heard is by participating in the webinar series organized by the Partnership. Every Wednesday at 7pm through November 11th, a specific issue related to policing, racial equity and criminal justice reform is addressed by area specialists. Registration for the webinar is at community4justice.org which includes a Q and A function. The series is also broadcast on WPNY-TV.

It's never clear just what politicians in Albany really understand about the Mohawk Valley. We know it as a great place to live, where we deal with problems reasonably through cooperation.. and by April 1st we can prove it.

