



Public Hearing Opening Statement of Jonathan S. Aronie,
Consent Decree Monitor Over The New Orleans Police Department,
Before The U.S. District Court For The Eastern District of Louisiana
16 August 2018

Good afternoon, Your Honor. As you said in your opening, we are here today to discuss NOPD's efforts in the area of Community Policing. Unfortunately, over the years the terminology used to describe this concept has been misused and watered down to such an extent that few people know what the term really means. People talk about Community Policing, Community & Problem-Oriented Policing, and Community-Based Problem Solving to mean a host of different things. Whichever term one uses, however, to the Monitoring Team, they all refer to a coordinated effort to meaningfully involve the community in deciding how they want to be policed and to effectively engage them in fighting crime in their neighborhoods.

An article in *Police Chief Magazine* back in 1975, reprinted in the current edition, offered several interesting observations regarding Community Policing. Here's one:

Citizen involvement in community-based crime prevention represents the greatest challenge . . . , as well as the greatest potential for combating crime [W]here citizen groups, private industry, and even private citizens have attacked the problem of crime prevention . . . , the results of their efforts have been, almost without exception, startlingly better than those of the formal criminal justice system.

The Monitoring Team agrees with this observation. And we know the United States and NOPD agree because the principles of Community Policing were incorporated into the Consent Decree.

NOPD's efforts in this area over the past five years, however, have been inconsistent. The Department has tried many different things, but the goal of true Community Policing has remained elusive. We are pleased to report today, though, that through a coordinated effort of NOPD's Compliance Bureau, its Field Operations Bureau, the Academy, the DOJ, and the Monitoring Team, NOPD now has an integrated plan that shows promise. My team has reviewed it closely and is optimistic.

That it has taken NOPD a while to get to this point does not reflect a lack of effort. Cities and police departments across the country have struggled with the same thing for decades for several reasons:

- **First**, doing it right takes a coordinated effort across many local, regional, and state agencies, which takes time, effort, and money.
- **Second**, a successful program takes a realization that different communities want different things from the police.
- **Third**, many police department across the U.S. continue to confuse community policing with community engagement.
- **Fourth**, and finally, many departments across the country have had trouble overcoming a long-standing bias that only the police know how to solve crime.

The New Orleans Consent Decree clearly was drafted with these lessons-learned in mind. Consequently, the Decree doesn't simply direct officers to attend community meetings and say hi to passers-by on the street. Our Consent Decree directs NOPD to develop and implement a meaningful, problem-solving-oriented strategy that treats community members as true partners.

Through the Consent Decree, NOPD specifically agreed to

- Promote and strengthen partnerships with the community,
- Engage constructively with the community to ensure collaborative problem-solving, and
- Build community confidence and trust in the Department.

The importance of community confidence and trust cannot be overstated. Indeed, it probably is not an exaggeration to say that, at the end of the day, it will be the Department's success in building confidence and trust that ultimately will lead the NOPD out of the Consent Decree. The Department can re-build every one of its institutions — which it is in the process of doing very well — but if the Community doesn't trust the Department, then its work will have been for naught.

I am excited to participate in this discussion today Your Honor, and look forward to hearing what the Department has to share. Thank you.