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The Importance of Aggressive Minority Recruitment of Police Officers

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by  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Law enforcement over the years has evolved into a complex profession requiring complex employees, diverse cultures and viewpoints, and representatives of all nationalities that are representative of our current society. Current workforces should be diverse; as diverse as the communities the department represents.

Education has been a growing concern within the law enforcement community. Research indicates that minority applicants of today are more qualified than minority applicants of the past; which could indicate a greater minority applicant pool to hire from. There are a number of recruiting techniques that will be examined to assist departments in the recruitment of qualified police applicants. The following techniques examined will be videotapes and ride-a-long programs. The necessity to formulate a departmental policy for recruiting purposes is critical. Issues that should be addressed within departmental policy are also covered within this report.

Through a survey it is determined just how diverse agencies across the state are and where departments feel they have shortcomings. The main emphasis and goal of the paper is to provide beneficial ideas and direction to departments who may lack the true minority representation that communities need and expect.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	
Introduction.....	1
Review of Literature.....	4
Methodology.....	10
Findings.....	11
Conclusion.....	12

## INTRODUCTION

The police industry is a very unique in many ways. The duties of a police officer can range from counselor to enforcer from plumber to dogcatcher and from doctor to travel agent. But what is most distinctive about the police officer is that he/she is the most visible form of government that citizens encounter on a day-to-day basis. Because of this and the diversity of our culture, a large emphasis has been placed on the recruitment of qualified diverse police officers. But this emphasis historically has not been instituted.

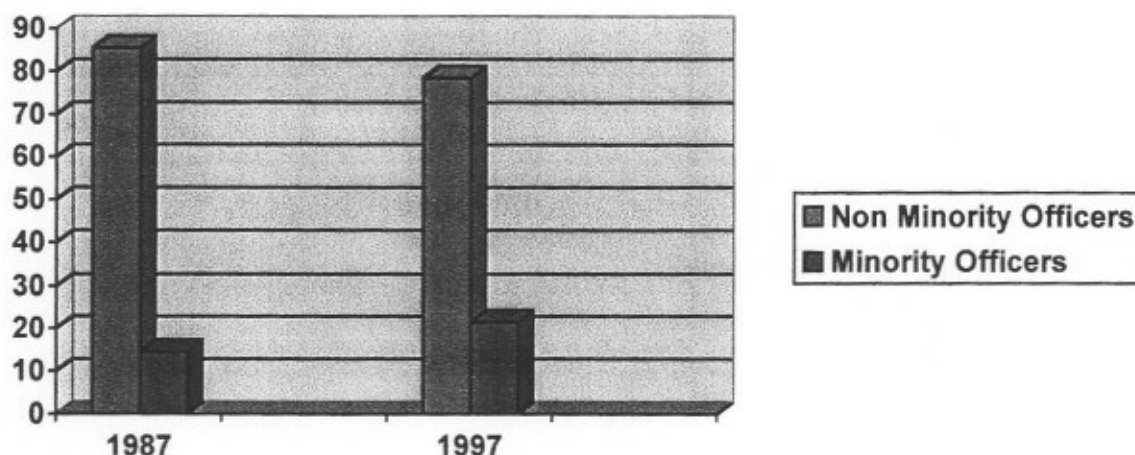
From the 1890's until the middle of the 1960's "Jim Crow" laws, which were prevalent in the southern portions of the United States, were being instituted and enforced upon the African American population in this country. These laws effectively enforced segregation of the "colored" and white races. It was not until the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that segregation was ruled unconstitutional and blacks were allowed the constitutional right to be treated as equals. Therefore, the African American police officer in southern law enforcement is a new concept. Initially, even when African Americans became police officers, they were only allowed to police within their own racial groups; an African American police officer could not police a white neighborhood.

There were few women in law enforcement and most were hired as clerical workers and assistants, not full-fledged police officers. It was not until the last couple of decades that the majority of women became recognized as officers and given the same tasks and recognition as their male counterparts in the profession as a whole. Every race has its own saga dealing with its acceptance into police work. The saga could be outlined by each individual race, while identifying and analyzing individually with respect to their niche in policing and their acceptance into our current-day police industry. However, the main focus and point is after analyzing the history of policing, which has been dominated by white males, minority participation in law enforcement is historically a new concept in this country. Minority representation and/or utilization have been

underrepresented for many years and a way to improve the disparity is effectively and aggressively recruiting minority police officers. Diversity within the police department and its importance to the community should be placed on a front burner.

For as long as America has been a country, she has become a larger and larger melting pot. America has and continues to get a vast number of minorities and immigrants that come to the U.S. for a number of different reasons such as economic opportunities, political ramifications, etc. The state of New York is like many other states that border the oceans and seas and other countries. These states are meccas for immigrants that arrive in seaports and airports and bus stations and train depots. The immigrants are looking for better opportunities in a country that is termed the land of the free. However, not all of these individuals speak the English language. Texas has seen and continues to see a large number of Hispanics that come to the U.S. for opportunities and employment. Of these numbers, many do not speak English; this magnifies the necessity to have officers that can communicate with all citizens because the policing industry does not have the luxury of deciding whom it polices.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice there were approximately 738,000 full-time sworn law enforcement officers in the United States. From 1987-1997 minority representation among local police officers increased from 14.5 percent to 21.5 percent. In sheriffs' departments, minorities accounted for 19 percent of sworn personnel in 1997 compared to 13.4 percent ten years earlier (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1996).



This project is an investigation into reasons why departments should aggressively recruit minorities and to take a brief look at some of the myths involved in the recruitment of minorities, and provide some possible solutions to the woes of minority recruiting. Some myths that will be addressed are that there are not enough qualified minority applicants to hire from, or that minorities do not want to become involved in law enforcement. These issues will be looked at more in depth with an attempt to offer some insight into possible opportunities and/or options that may increase the applicant pool from experiences in recruiting. Some of the possible solutions that will be looked at are the ride-a-long program, open house at police facilities, recruiting brochures and/or slide shows or videos, targeting historically minority institutions for job fairs, awareness of minority target markets, and the possibility of establishing special benefits that would be available for single parents, specifically single mothers, that could increase the agencies minority pool. There will be a series of questions that will be asked of several different police departments to analyze their views on the recruitment of minorities. These views will be categorized with the intended findings that police departments should place an important emphasis on the recruitment of all minorities. These recommendations will not be “quick-fixes” nor

will they guarantee an increase in minority hiring. But, all these measures together will be a working example of a good faith effort and could be beneficial to the law enforcement profession.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

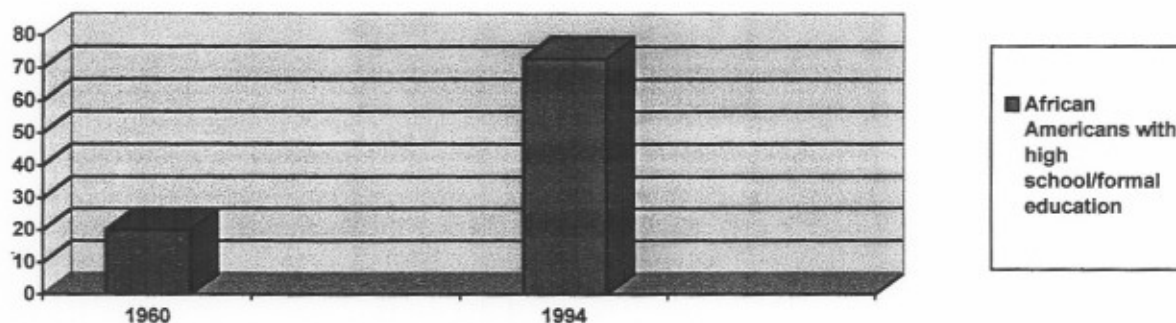
Agencies should look at what they have done in the past and focus on what can be done in the future to improve. A prime example of that is the New York City Police Department (NYPD), which is one of this country's oldest police departments and became one of the leaders in the recruitment of women. NYPD was formed on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1783, nearly two hundred and eighteen years ago. In the early days of the twentieth century, women police officers were termed police "matrons". In 1887, the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Women's Prison Association set out on a four-year crusade to appoint women to the police department. Women were needed to assist with the increasing number of female arrestees, not only the prostitutes and street thieves but also servants caught stealing from households. The first four police matrons were hired in 1891. By 1896 the number had grown to 30 women, one matron working during the day and the other working during the night in each of the 15 precincts. Isabella Goodwin, a police widow who became a matron in 1896, did undercover work and was eventually promoted to first grade detective in 1912. Reflecting upon the inception of New York City's Police Department, it was nearly one hundred and five years before women were considered and appointed to police positions within the City of New York's police department. It was one hundred and twenty-nine years from the department's inception until a woman was promoted to the rank of detective.

A number of police departments, in an attempt to mirror the business and professional world, including the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards, are requiring that officers have more formal college education prior to becoming a police officer. A myth relating to minority recruitment that has been circulating

for many years is that African Americans do not have the same educational background as their Caucasian counterparts; therefore there are not enough qualified minorities in the recruiting pool. The attainment of education has made, and continues to make, a big impact in the field of law enforcement. In 1997, 14 percent of local police departments and 11 percent of sheriffs' departments had some type of college education requirement for new officers. One percent of departments nationwide require a 4-year degree (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998). Arlington police department is the only large Texas agency that requires a police related four-year degree prior to the application process.

According to an article written in 1998 the level of education obtained among African Americans has improved substantially in recent decades, increasing from 20.1 percent that complete high school or go on to more formal education in 1960 to 72.9 percent in 1994 (Zhao, 1998). The rate of increase in education was much higher than that of any other ethnic group, including Whites. Therefore many minorities are qualified based upon the educational standards, and based upon these observations, it would seem reasonable to assume that the African American applicants applying for police jobs today are more qualified than their peers and counterparts were thirty years ago. Therefore, the myth of lack of formal education from African American applicants no longer has validity. The National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE) has recognized the need for minority recruitment. NOBLE recommends the recruitment of minorities at historically black colleges, which ensures your applicants have the formal education desired.





Another myth to address is that minorities do not want to become involved in policing, which has some validity. The myth lends more credence than non-qualified applicants. As an inner-city youth, you are subjected to violence, prostitution and drugs among many other forces. These are common standards and/or occurrences or ways of life for inner-city citizens. Most adolescents and teenagers have witnessed the clashes between law enforcement and local hoodlums in the inner cities. It is common talk to discuss the brutalities and the inequities that occur in the policing industry as it relates to the inner city. There are so many different rap songs that discuss the violence that occurs between minorities, more especially African Americans, and the police. This does not preclude the same discussions from occurring in the suburbs or small towns, but it appears to be more prevalent in the inner city. James McIver of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives says there are studies that show that when a police force is reflective of the community in which it serves demographically, it is less likely to have accusations of police brutality or police misconduct lodged against it (Greenberg, 1999). Due to such inner city problems many inner city youth do not want to become associated with police officers because they despise the police uniform or what the uniform represents. However, there are youth that see law enforcement as their friends, not adversaries, and only need to have a hand reached out to them; a life-line so to speak.

There are a number of different tips for recruiting in any given field. The policing industry, when compared to civilian industries, is not that different when it comes to recruiting. There is a ten-step process that is recommended for recruiting. The industry is not policing; however, the process or steps suggested provide insight into minority recruiting and are applicable to Law Enforcement. Those steps are:

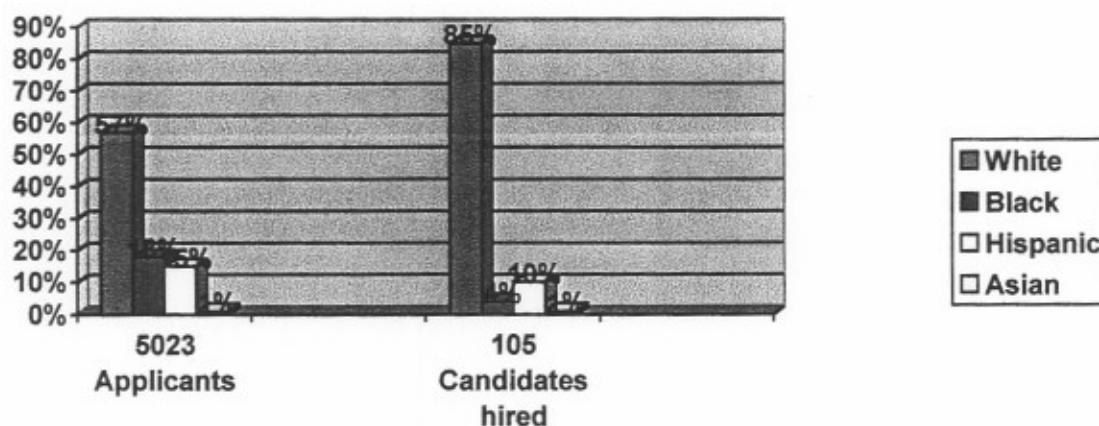
1. Attend regional job fairs.
2. Contact colleges and universities with large minority enrollments.
3. Work with local community organizations to identify recruiting prospects.
4. Get help from minorities already on your staff.
5. Network with other regional offices.
6. Advertise your internships in all the right places.
7. Use job banks sponsored by minorities.
8. Follow up on the contacts made at the minority job fairs.
9. Develop a long-term strategy.
10. Treat applicants the same.

Nine of the ten tips are crucial in the recruitment of minorities; number seven being the only non-applicable in the field of law enforcement because law enforcement does not typically draw applicants from job banks. In another process, Six-Step Process For Multicultural Recruiting, the same issues are discussed, developing a targeted recruiting strategy, maintaining a recruiting network, establishing cross-cultural relationships, but the most important point is it emphasizes non-traditional recruiting resources/techniques.

Historically the minority recruiting pool has been lower in most cities. For example, the city of New York's police force is currently comprised of 66 percent white, 18.5 percent Hispanic, 13.7 percent black, 1.7

percent Asian and 0.1 percent American Indian or other ethnicity. However, the city is comprised of 43 percent white, 26 percent black, 24 percent Hispanic, and 7 percent other ethnicity (De La Cruz, 2000). This infers that the racial make up of the police department is not representative of the city.

The problem of departments being true representations of the communities they serve is not an easy one, nor is it one that will go away overnight and it is not isolated to one particular geographic region. For example, the New Jersey State Police department has problems with their minority recruitment just the same as New York or Sugar Land Police Department. Of 5,023 candidates applying for a job in the New Jersey State Police Department this past fall, 57 percent were white, 18 percent were black, 15 percent were of Hispanic descent, and 3 percent of Asian descent. With the smaller number or percentages of recruits, after the traditional hiring processes, fewer minorities are being hired. One hundred and five (105) recruits were chosen for a cadet class; eighty-five (85) percent were white, four (4) percent were black, ten (10) percent were Hispanic, and one (1) percent were Asian (Diamond, August 2000). These figures show a greater percentage of African Americans not completing the entire process through to the hiring stage.



The lack of minority applicants is recognized as a problem, but how is it addressed? To begin with internally, there must be a commitment. A departmental or governmental policy typically is created because

the agency or entity has recognized a legitimate need and is putting forth the required resources. However, policies alone do not increase your minority applicant pool, nor do they enforce themselves, but new policy does produce a foundation to be improved upon. In the state of Pennsylvania, the Governor created a grant to assist police departments with the recruitment of minorities. In creating this grant the Governor stated that the reason for this policy is that the departments displayed a disparity between the makeup of the community and the police force (Charles, 2000).

Assuming there is an agreement for the need of a policy related to recruiting, there must be certain information within policy. Included within your policy there must be an emphasis placed on the proactive recruitment of minority officers. For example, in New Haven, Connecticut, Kay Codish, director of training and education, stated that the department wanted populations that in the past had been traditionally undeserved by police and underrepresented within the police department. Codish went on to say that at a time when images of police brutality have been seared into the American psyche, the police department is recruiting the very people who have been seen as the victims of that treatment (Greenberg, 1999).

The Sugar Land police department currently has a policy outlining the recruitment of police officers. The policy states the officers that are associated with recruiting should have special training that deal with recruitment issues. According to the departmental policy, "Officers assigned to recruiting activities are to receive training, coordinated through Human Resources, in the following personnel areas, at a minimum: 1) Equal Employment Opportunity as it affects the management and operations of the department; 2) department career opportunities, salaries, and benefits; 3) Cultural awareness; 4) The department's selection process; and 5) Requirements and disqualification's of prospective candidates." Also included within the policy is the regulation that the department will "ensure that a recruiting plan for the department is to be in place at all times. The plan will contain, at a minimum: 1) a statement of objectives; 2) plan of action designed to achieve

the objectives; and 3) a procedure to periodically evaluate the progress toward objectives and revise/reissue the plan.” (SLPD, Chapter 5, Directive 10, pg 2). The best part of this policy is that it outlines the need for a plan, not blind recruiting. No idea is functional without a plan, without some form of measurement to ensure plan implementation, and without some form of evaluation to ensure the plan is working.

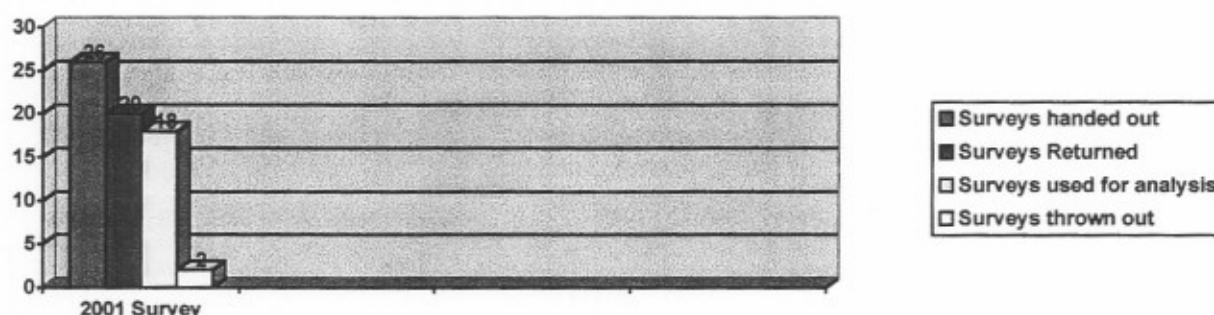
## **METHODOLOGY**

Should there be an emphasis placed upon the recruitment of minority police officers? There was one survey handed to twenty-six (26) different police agencies that were represented at LEMIT Module II (Oct 2001). Each administrator from his or her respective departments completed the survey and returned it during the module. The following five core questions were asked of each respective agency. The questions are as follows:

1. Do you feel police departments should be representative of the community in which they serve and why.
2. Does your departmental employee ratios of minority officers reflect your respective community demographics?
3. How important do you feel is aggressive minority recruiting for police agencies? Why?
4. What does your department do to aggressively recruit minorities? How can what you do be improved.
5. Do you know what the approximate percentages within your department regarding African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Women, and other?

There were twenty-six (26) surveys handed out. Of that number, twenty (20) agencies, seventy-seven (77) percent returned the survey. Two were thrown out, one for not responding appropriately to the questions and the other because it was only a one (1) person police department, which did not have any intentions upon

hiring additional personnel at this time. The police departments, which were represented in the survey, ranged in size from five (5) sworn personnel to over two thousand (2,000) sworn personnel.



## FINDINGS

From the survey conducted, it was discovered that ninety-five (95) percent of the officers felt that their police department should be representative of the community in which it serves. Reasons given for why departments should be representative of the community ranged from it being a good business practice to being able to appreciate different perspectives and ideas within the department. Some of the reasons given included; the department and community will be able to identify with each other better, it will enhance public confidence, the department will be culturally diverse, and the department would be able to provide a better overall service to its citizens because of such diversity.

Only five (5) percent of those officers responding said that they felt their department did not need to be representative of the community. Thirty-three (33) percent said they felt their department currently represented the community, in which they served, while the other sixty-seven (67) percent said their departments were not representative of the community demographics. Seventy-eight (78) percent stated it is important to aggressively recruit minority applicants within the department. Only twenty-two (22) percent said they did not feel it was important. However, most did state they wanted qualified applicants, regardless of race or gender.



Only twenty-nine (29) percent of the departments surveyed admitted to aggressively recruiting minority applicants. The other seventy-one (71) percent stated their departments did not aggressively recruit minority applicants.

When asked how each agency could improve their recruiting of minorities some of the responses were:

- Newspapers- using the newspaper to reach a greater minority population, which should increase the applicant pool;
- Attending job fairs at predominately minority institutions- this would ensure the majority of the applicants encountered would be minority; and
- Attendance at any gathering where minorities are prevalent- which will promote the department's position and desire for the recruitment of minority officers.

Twenty-nine (29) percent of the departments reported their current percentages of employees within their department were above seventy-five (75) percent minorities. The other seventy-one (71) percent had minority percents ranging from six (6) percent to forty-four (44) percent.

## **DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION**

A number of police departments have a vast majority of marketing tools at their disposal and are not aware of them or do not feel they would be effective. Marketing tools are objects or things that can be done to enhance your standing with potential employees and/or your business. Kids, as they grow, are fascinated with the police uniform, the police car, and the many toys and/or gadgets of the police profession. A large number of agencies when they recruit do not use these tools effectively. One reason the agency may not use a particular marketing approach correctly could be the agency does not recognize it as a marketing tool. Some such marketing tools are: new state of the art facilities and/or equipment; computers in the cars, also known as

mobile data terminals (MDT), special SWAT type divisions and/or functions such as bicycle patrol, motorcycle patrol, etc.

When recruiting is performed away from the home department, take with you a video that outlines all the positive aspects of your department, what your department is about. Videotape would be a preferred tool because it would allow for narration, but a brochure could also be effective because it can be taken with the recruit. Use your departmental mission statement to show a sense of pride and belonging. A portion of the Sugar Land police department's mission statement is "To enhance the quality of life in the community to the commitment to excellence in the courteous and professional delivery of police services" (Taylor, 1995). This should assist in the potential recruit buying into your philosophy, your plan, and your department prior to his/her arrival to the agency. Include in the video what your police department looks like, inside and out. Most people have never seen the inside of a police department, so the video could be very educational. However, spend the necessary funds to have the video professionally done. The cost of the video, when compared to its longevity and effectiveness should be minimal. Nothing looks more unprofessional than a video that has amateur mistakes throughout the tape.

If you are recruiting at your department provides tours of the department. Use a recruiter who is knowledgeable about the goals and the functions of the department. Show the potential recruits what the department has to offer to them, show them state of the art equipment, facilities, and other employees. Your goal should be to make them want to be a part of the organization.

Another program is the ride-a-long program. Ride-a-long programs can be excellent opportunities for minorities, who typically and historically have not had positive interactions with the police. It is an opportunity for them to meet police officers in a non-confrontational situation and have the opportunity to ride with them as observers. They will get a chance to observe the officer in the functioning of his daily duties.



Ride-a-long programs can be the chance for youth to interact and learn from the police and for the police to interact and learn from the youth. Most departments have a program for ride-a-longs already established. The Sugar Land Police Department's Ride-a-long program offers the program to members of the Citizen's Police Academy or the Police Alumni Association as well as to students who are currently enrolled in criminal justice / law enforcement programs (SLPD, Chapter 24, Directive 13). This program can be a very effective recruiting tool as well as an educational experience. It allows insight for so many people who only know police from the popular shows that are played on nightly sitcoms.

The ride-a-long program cannot be totally and measurably effective without taking the process a step further and implementing the program in conjunction with some form of mentor or explorer program. Depending upon the type of mentor or explorer plan the department chooses, and as the program comes to an end, which typically could last up to three to four years, most graduates of the program ideally will have a strong interest in the department and the policing industry. The departments could look at possible entrance requirements such as the youth being trouble free, so that you could guide or mentor that individual into a career within your police force. Through interactions, ride-a-longs, videos, and brochures, the youth should be totally knowledgeable of the application requirements and process to be hired at your particular police department.

A recommendation of benefits that would assist in the recruitment and retention of minority officers is a college incentive program for dependents of all employees. A recommendation of tuition reimbursement for one semester of school, at an accredited university, for every two years of service by the employee. Of course tuition at different universities will vary, and there could even be a cap on the cost of the university with a "we will pay up to" clause leaving the officer free to choose but he /she will pay the difference. Historically

minorities have not had the same opportunities or finances to attend college. The program could become a valuable benefit to help with the recruitment and retention of officers, minority and non-minority.

What type of price tag is your department or community willing to put on the diversity of its department? Reflecting upon the message from information from James McIver, NOBLE, which states there are studies that show a diverse police force is less likely to have accusations of police brutality lodged against it (Greenberg, 1999), one might say that brutality complaints are a precursor to litigation. Remembering that this litigation can come from within your department as well as from outside. Minorities can feel that there is not fair and equitable treatment throughout the department. Generally one of the main areas to look at is the hiring practice of the department. Litigation can be costly between attorney fees and/or fines imposed by the courts as well as judgements against the city and agency.

Through the survey it is apparent that recruiting and retention of minorities is an issue for small-town-Mayberry and for growing metropolises. Most agencies recognize the need for community representation and for the need to aggressively recruit minority officers, but most said they do not aggressively recruit or are their respective agencies as diverse as the community it serves.

Sugar Land, which is expected to reach a population of approximately 180,000, and who over the past 5 years has doubled in size departmentally, should establish recruiting programs that exhibit good faith endeavors into the recruitment of all minorities; establish and develop future recruits with an emphasis on minorities, and become the frontrunner in the show of community-strength through its diversity within the department. With the explosive growth of the city in the past and the projections for the future, the demand to have diverse, qualified applicants and minorities should be on the front burner.

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