

LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

A REPORT WITH METHODS AND PROGRAMS FOR
INCREASING THE NUMBER OF AFRO-AMERICANS IN POLICE MANAGEMENT

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OUTLINE

I. Introduction

- A. The Reason for Underrepresentation
- B. Cultural Differences Within Different Cities and Communities
- C. The Internal/External Barriers
- D. Department Strategies
- E. What the Black Officer Must Do to Prepare For the Future in Law Enforcement

Introduction:

Opportunities for advancing or increasing the Afro-American Police Officer into the executive level positions can be increased by the various chief executives in the different levels of government. Increasing the number of Afro-Americans at the executive levels can only come through the understanding of why Blacks are not presently adequately represented in the top levels of policing. Only through an understanding of the situation concerning Black under representation and why it occurred, can administrators and chief executives begin to develop and implement ways in which the Black police officers can advance to the executive level.

There are numerous reasons why Afro-Americans are not represented in sufficient numbers in all levels of law enforcement. In this paper, examples will be provided to give the reader an idea of the problems that contribute to the lack of Blacks in the executive levels of policing. By no means are the reasons expressed here intended to be all inclusive for the lack of Black representation in adequate numbers in the executive level of policing.

One reason for the under representation of Afro-Americans in Policing is that Black Americans have not viewed police employment as a job of acceptable status. Many Black Americans believe that employment within the law enforcement arena symbolized the act of selling out the Black community to the White establishment. Such employment has subjected the

Black police officer to ridicule by his community. For these reasons, the number of Blacks compared to Whites interested in careers in law enforcement has been low.

Another reason for the lack of interest by Afro-Americans in law enforcement is that many departments suffer from an image problem with the Black community. Blacks sometime view police departments as places that fester and support "Racism". They believe that the departments really do not want Blacks to become part of their departments. Also, the many incidents of racial conflict and abuse in the departments past have contributed to the negative images of the departments. This negative image hinders a police departments efforts in recruiting Blacks as police officers and the department's ability to be effecting in doing so.

Another problem is the cultural differences that exists within the cities themselves. Most law enforcement agencies are made up of people that are predominately White or Caucasian descent. They bring to the department their cultural values, norms and behavior standards. The Anglo-American culture dominates the departments philosophy and methods of operations. Many times the cultural differences between Whites and Blacks add to the problems of the chief executive in his recruitment efforts. An administrator should seek to create a sense of balance between the different cultures that are represented within his department.

Police administrators and chief executives of the various levels of government must begin by identifying what barriers exist that contribute toward limiting opportunities for Black police officers within their departments. These barriers must be dealt with by the administrator and chief executive to make progress in their agencies. 1

Some internal barriers that exist within the various agencies are the promotional systems, number of qualified Black applicants, present employees and Police Unions. The promotional systems of most departments use some form of testing to determine the future supervisors, managers and administrators of the department. Some promotional systems use a combination of performance evaluations, written tests, oral interviews and/or seniority. These methods have proven to be adequate in providing an opportunity for Blacks to rise to the higher levels within their departments. It is clear based on the low representation of Blacks in the executive levels of the nations police agencies. 2

The performance evaluation system has subjected Black officers to average scores regardless of their rank or level in the various departments. When you add to this traditionally lower scores than Whites on written tests for promotion, it is no wonder that very few Black police officers reach the executive levels of law enforcement. 3

Many departments practice of limiting the number of qualified applicants for consideration to executive positions by limiting to presently employed personnel, creates a small pool of Blacks who may qualify. The department adds more restrictions by requiring a minimum rank and time in the grade to the criteria add to the problems. 4

In many departments, the racial make up of the department does not mirror the racial make up of the communities they serve. The number of Blacks within the department percentage wise, is far less than the percentage of Blacks who reside within the city.

In Terrell, Texas Blacks represent 40% of the population and has only two Blacks out of 28 officers and one Black superior. The numbers are even more drastic for Black executives once we look at the racial make up of the administrators presently in law enforcement at the executive levels.

Many urban city police departments, with a few exceptions, are far from having a department whose percentage of racial diversification in the city mirrors what is reflected in the department. Administrators, supervisors and employees often become concerned with maintaining the status quo within their departments. It is very difficult at times to initiate change and create new ways of thinking within the departments whose environment supports keeping everything working the same. In many

cases the placement of Black police officers into executive roles would cause a tremendous adjustment within the department.

Some departments have yet to hire their first Black police officer. It is still a new experience for many other departments to adjust to the Black police officers serving in the first line supervisors positions. It has become a dilemma for some chief executives to find ways to introduce changes that would increase the Black officers opportunities in the executive levels of policing. The chief executives may harbor some of the same perceptions regarding Blacks being placed in executive levels of policing as seen in other members of the department.

External barriers can also inhibit the opportunities of Black police officers to reach the top levels of law enforcement. One such barrier, the political climate, the majority population and employees might be White or of Caucasian descent. They may choose to overlook the ideas and desires of the minority of the department and citizenry. The old adage of the "Majority Rule" might not be the most efficient way of operating the department. Policy decisions concerning recruiting, hiring and promotions can easily be used to maintain bias against Blacks by using the majority rule concept. If no one is concerned about the policies impact on the hiring of minorities, then, the results normally lead to lower number of Blacks being hired compared to Whites. This leads to lower numbers from which to choose. Cultural differences within the community to be served have an impact upon administrators

decisions to select Black police officers as police executives. Chief executives who are aware of the difference should use this knowledge to develop strategies to approach the problem with effective solutions. Weakness and cultural bias in the selection process can be eliminated by a knowledgeable administration who is aware of the signs to look for in a negligible system. An improved selection system can be designed in many cases to overcome the identifiable weakness and cultural bias in the system. Administrators and chief executives should select alternative methods to be used in the selection of supervisors, managers and executive level administrators. Most departments are controlled by some form of federal, state or local controls, regulations, statutes and laws. Many of the rules, regulations, statutes and laws have been contributing factors in the law recruitment, hiring and promotion of Blacks within the policing field. With the passing of federal and state laws in the past twenty years or so the number of Blacks have begun to increase in many urban cities. Administrators and chief executives were forced in many cases to comply with imposing guidelines to provide equal opportunity to Blacks and other minorities. As a result some administrators have been forced to create different promotional systems within their departments. Some police departments have created "exempted" positions within their departments to allow them to appoint Blacks into executive level positions. This appears to be a very effective method to insure that Blacks are given the opportunity to serve in high level administrative positions. Other departments have implemented a "Rank-Jumping" system. A rank-jumping system allows an

officer to compete for a higher rank, normally two steps above his present position. Some departments have combined "Banding" of the candidates for positions. In banding, all of the candidates who pass the promotional test are considered jointly for each opening by the chief administrator and chief executive for the opening. They are allowed to pick from any of the candidates who pass the test. In the city of New Orleans as a result of a lawsuit, promotions are made on a one-for-one basis under the combined system. One Black officer must be promoted for each White candidate promoted to a higher position. The use of an assessment center to determine which candidate will be promoted is being used more and more in policing by chief executives to fill vacant administrative level positions. The assessment center concept has greatly increased the opportunities in some departments for Blacks to be selected for executive level positions. A few departments have expressed some concern about the cost and time it takes to use the assessment center approach for promotions. However, most departments who have used the assessment center approach have given it high marks for its use in policing. The assessment center is in its infancy stage of use in policing and can still be an effective tool used to select qualified Blacks for executive level positions.

The chief executive could expand the traditional "Rule of Three" to a rule of ten or twenty when choosing candidates for promotions. The rule of three allows the chief administrators to choose from the top three candidates when considering promoting individuals who have been tested

for promotions. By expanding the rule to a larger number the chief administrator is given greater latitude in choosing individuals to be promoted.

The Black police officers should not overlook what they can do themselves to improve their opportunities to be selected for executive level positions. They must recognize the barriers that limit their chances for selection and promotion to the executive levels of policing. The Black police officer must realize the impact that affirmative action and the external political process have on the majority political power base, especially in the urban cities. Finally, the Black police officer should realize the role that an active Black community may have on the political systems within their department. By joining forces with the Black community, Black police officers would be in better positions to influence change. The change that is necessary often occurs with the assistance of the Black community leaders, especially in urban cities. Police administrators and chief executives should review the assignment of Black police officers suitability in enhancing the Black police officers training for future promotions. Administrators and chief executives should not overlook the role that institutions of higher educational learning could have on the development of Afro-American officers as future executives. Administrators should jointly develop plans with institutions in their area so that Afro-American officers could receive management training. Executives should not overlook established institutes that specializes in training management and

administrative level personnel in policing. The F.B.I. National Academy and the Southern Police Institute and the Law Enforcement Institute of Texas are three law enforcement institutes in the management field. Most important the Afro-American police officer must recognize their roles and responsibilities toward their own development for the executive police level positions. They must prepare themselves for the executive role by examining the past history of the policing field to evaluate what actions would be necessary to improve their opportunities for success. They must become politically astute and use the education institutions to gain entry into the top levels of policing. Administrators and chief executives who make decisions regarding promotions should remember that their role in the selection process is very important in the final outcome of any process. They should never forget that their responsibility is not only to the majority section of the community and department, but to the minority who may be very much under represented at the decision making levels. The Afro-American police officer can help the administrator in making the chief executives choices easier by doing all things necessary to prepare themselves for the executive level of policing. The ultimate decisions, however, to increase the number of Afro-American police officers at the executive levels lies with the chief executive in the various levels of government. Only with a joint effort will the policing field begin to change and the numbers of Afro-American executives increase.

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