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educate // empower // organise

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Who Polices the Police? An Introduction to Northern Police Monitoring Project

Katy Sian, NPMP Steering Committee

About us

The Northern Police Monitoring Project (NPMP) is an independent campaigning and advocacy organisation that functions to educate, empower and organise communities in Manchester (and the surrounding area), who are on the receiving end of police harassment, brutality and racism. NPMP was initially set up in 2012 to both challenge and respond to a history, and present, of ongoing problems and tensions between Greater Manchester Police (GMP) and local communities (Chowdhury 2017: 309).

As Chowdhury documents, key events that have severely strained relations between GMP and local communities include the uprisings in Moss Side of 1981, the Strangeways prison protest of 1990, the so-called 'Northern Race Riots' which occurred in 2001, and the summer riots of 2011 (Ibid). Residents of Moss Side in particular have felt the force of police occupation and negative media attention, as Fraser argues, the symbol of Moss Side as "the urban 'Other'" was furnished during the 1981 urban riots, which spread across the nation (1996: 52).

State and public responses sought to attach pejorative labels to Moss Side (among other 'inner cities') defining it as a 'problem' or 'no go' area, these depictions have saturated both

popular and political discourse. Such stereotypical analyses typically focus on the merging together of race, crime, and depravation, and have fed wider moral panics around social order. In recent times Moss Side has been on the receiving end of further negative media and political attention around so-called "gang-culture" and terrorism (Minott, Chowdhury and Williams, 2017).

NPMP operates to disrupt these all too familiar racist and criminalizing tropes, and seeks to establish alternative frameworks that empower young people and residents outside reductive and pathologizing narratives. We work with the communities in the area collaboratively as a way to collectively navigate the injustices that they have experienced with the police (both past and present).

In order for NPMP to provide a genuine challenge to the official narrative around crime and policing in these communities, as well as gaining the trust and confidence of those who have been impacted negatively by policing, we are independent from the police and any other state agencies.

The main thrust of our activity is therefore centred upon delivering workshops educating young adults on their legal rights, initiating campaigns to raise awareness, publicly

discussing policing in communities, and providing advocacy for people who have suffered at the hands of police contact.

Anti-racism is at the core of NPMP, which we understand as the dismantling of structures and systems that oppress, marginalize, and alienate people of colour, as Lentin suggests, anti-racism can be seen as a, “political project that engages directly with the structures into which it is built” (2000: 104). The police represent one such institution that is clearly organized by discriminatory structures; NPMP therefore understands racism in the police as a systemic issue rather than that of a ‘few bad apples.’ By rejecting accounts that understand police racism in terms of individual biases, we are able to critically locate the issue of police racism as belonging to a wider, racial history of Britain (and the West more generally).

Local context and activism

If we focus on the recent local context in which NPMP organizes, we can identify a landscape of staggering racial profiling. Stop and search data carried out by Greater Manchester Police in the months between September 2018 and February 2019 show that of the 2,464 stop and searches conducted within this period, only 660 (26.79%) had a police outcome, whilst almost three quarters, 1,804 (73.21%) had no further action taken.¹ As figure 1 shows (next page), the number of stop and searches per

1,000 resident population broken down by ethnic group, showed that the figure for the black community was 4.26, for the Asian community it was 1.26, and for the white community it was only 0.63.²

In addition to these figures, an alarming 89 per cent of individuals featured on Manchester’s ‘gang database’ are from a BME background, yet only 23% of those convicted of a serious violent offence came from a BME group (Williams 2015: 29). As Williams argues, the over-representation of racially marked populations serves to “facilitate the continuity and (re)construction of the Black folk devil” (Ibid: 32). The impact of the continued criminalization, vilification and demonization of racially marked people in Manchester has an unsurprisingly damaging effect on the community. NPMP is well aware that we cannot reverse this damage, but we can empower and educate the community by ensuring that they feel supported in a difficult and unaccommodating environment.

We attempt to give a voice and provide tools for those impacted by police racism and misconduct at three main levels, or what Chowdhury refers to as NPMP’s three-pronged approach (2017: 312). Firstly, by establishing local links with well-regarded legal practitioners who specialize in civil and criminal actions against the police, we are able to signpost individuals towards legal advice and

¹ See: <https://www.police.uk/greater-manchester/EC16/performance/stop-and-search/>

² See: <https://www.police.uk/greater-manchester/EC16/performance/stop-and-search/>

Number of stop and searches per 1,000 resident population broken down by ethnic group, between September 2018 and February 2019.

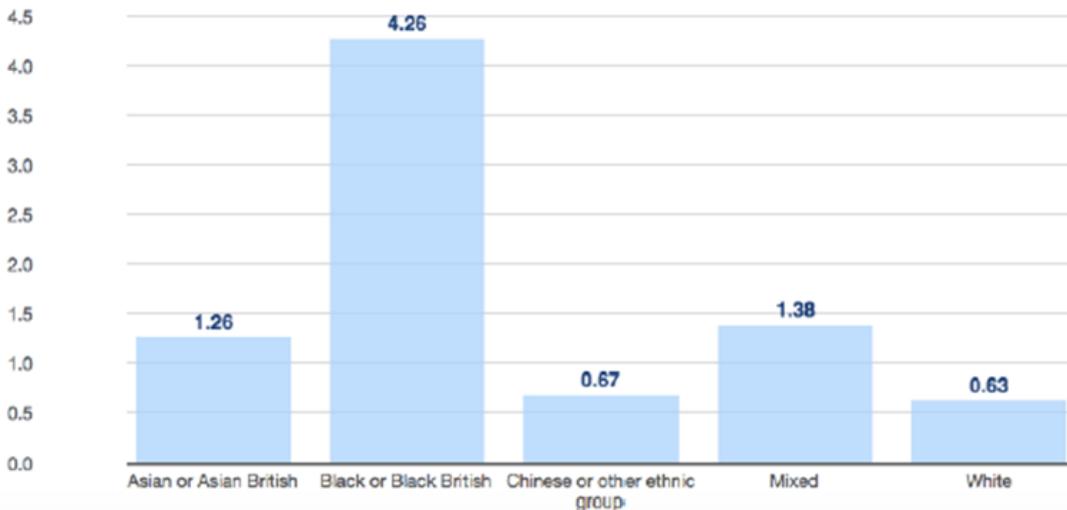


Figure 1: Number of stop and searches per 1,000 resident population broken down by ethnic group, between September 2018 and February 2019 (Source Police.UK)

representation (Ibid). Secondly, NPMP provides a space to support local and national campaigns, and actively organizes events to raise consciousness and engage members of the community. Our third approach is a long-term goal to train members of the community to be police monitors.

NPMP adopts what could be broadly defined as a community-led approach, that is, centring community voices whose experiences are fundamental in influencing the practices of the organization (Ibid: 313). Our work has aimed to mobilize the energies of the community and collectively address the key issues facing them around policing. NPMP works collaboratively with members of the community and organizations, we value their input in shaping our activity and always

ensure that a range of voices are heard and represented. Overall, we understand our role as that which offers an independent, democratic, accountable and critical platform for members of the local community (Parkes 2000: 262). By working alongside the community, we are able to nurture collective bonds and cultivate a space to educate, empower and organize local residents in the fight against racist police brutality.

As we move forward, we hope to expand the geographical scope of NPMP. Linked to this we seek to establish connections with international grassroots organizations campaigning against police racism, this will enable the building of transnational solidarities (Davis 2016: 129-145), allowing us to understand the shared nature of our struggles and

he lessons that we can learn from diverse contexts.

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'Am I making you feel uncomfortable?'

Understanding the 'gang' narrative

Akemia Minott, Founder of 8 4 Youth

"Did I make you feel uncomfortable? Ok, well I'm not apologising. Try multiplying the uncomfortableness by maybe 100 and imagine feeling that every day and you'll have some idea of how we live."

There was a time when I wouldn't stick my neck out in a meeting with those deemed 'higher' than me. Now however, I represent myself, young people and the community I live in- rather than an organisation that would be concerned about the possible political backlash or potential funding problems that speaking out of turn could bring. This has made it easier to

be honest and allowed me to speak with passion and, dare I say it, anger.



Akemia with 8 4 Youth members, 2019



Others in the meetings seem fascinated by my passion, regularly remarking on it in- though in an almost amused way. The anger that sometimes peeks through the passion however makes people uncomfortable, at least most of them. Occasionally someone will try and respond in a patronising manner which, to be honest, always comes across badly. Most simply look uncomfortable, though one or two understand where the anger and passion come from. They may approvingly give me a nod and a smile as if to confirm my point. All but the secret smiler are, I assume, coming from a place of privilege, typically academia or management but most certainly not experience.

So why the anger and passion? If they had experienced the impact of institutional racism in the police or the criminal justice system, my anger and passion would be more understandable. I wouldn't be expected to apologise and its likely they'd feel angry too. If they knew first hand, rather than through the media or some distant person they heard about, the true impact and devastation that happens as a result of institutional racism they wouldn't feel uncomfortable. Rather, they'd join in on my anger too. If they knew the extent of the trauma felt by many communities as well as individuals, they wouldn't feel uncomfortable, they'd feel angry too. If they were then expected to sit in a meeting where attendees are usually in a position of privilege, not considering anyone close to them could ever be a victim of a gross miscarriage of justice, they wouldn't feel uncomfortable, they should feel angry too.

Anger is something that Black and Brown communities feel all the time but are forced to deal with daily; whether through overt forms or through microaggressions. A source of anger I experience often is the Gang Narrative. The Gang Narrative is the labelling of young (predominantly Black) men as potential or probable gang members based on little or no evidence and often supported by a 'matrix' or 'OCG' (organised criminal group) of very loosely associated names. Therefore, it is often based on mistaken beliefs and stereotypes rather than fact. For example, GMP have 89% Black British young men on their database yet 78% of Serious Youth Violence is White British.

For people living in these communities, this has long been known to be problematic. Along with this narrative are the real-life 'Threat to Life' notices, the Joint Enterprise doctrine of criminal liability, and the disproportionate use of Stop and Search against these young black men. The Criminal Justice System uses the 'Gang' as an integral part of trials, verdicts and sentencing, which disproportionately affecting Black Communities. The narrative therefore, is virtually impossible to disrupt due to its entrenchment and normalisation throughout the system.

Let me ask- how many people, when seeing a group of young Black Men, have crossed the street or held their bag a bit tighter or took any other 'precaution'? I'm not judging you if you have because the systemic portrayal of stereotypes of this group is historical and relentless. We need to be celebrating the reality, which is that the majority of young Black men are

leading positive lives in spite of all this, rather than judging them for the actions of a few.

Have you ever felt uncomfortable when passion seems to have some anger behind it? Don't feel uncomfortable. Listen and try to

understand because it's probably coming from a place of lived experience and pain resulting from the constant feeling of uncomfortableness. Try and understand because that's the only way we'll be able to move forward and create a fairer more just society.

Macpherson, 20 years on: Diversifying the police won't end institutional racism

Remi Joseph-Salisbury & Laura Connelly, NPMP Steering Committee

Article originally published in Red Pepper (07/03/19)

It's twenty years since the publication of the Macpherson report into the police handling of the murder of Stephen Lawrence. Macpherson's key finding was that the Metropolitan Police were 'institutionally racist', a charge that has been levelled at other forces, including Greater Manchester Police. Last month, the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, lauded the 'transformative effect' the report had on policing but lamented that 'we still have much more to do.' But the truth is, little has changed.

At every level of policing, racism endures as a problem. From stop and search and inclusion in 'gang' databases, to the use of tasers and deaths following police contact, Black people are disproportionately likely to be harmed by the police.

One of the most common and seemingly well-meaning responses to police racism is to call for greater representation of Black and Brown communities in the police force. Given

that none of the 43 police forces in England and Wales currently reflects the racial demographics of their communities, this seems like a logical and relatively uncontroversial response to a long-standing problem. Last week, the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Yorkshire, Mark Burns-Williamson, called for legislative changes to enable the police to attract, recruit and retain officers from 'BAME' backgrounds. And just a week or so prior, the chair of the National Police Chiefs' Council, Sara Thornton, suggested that new laws are needed to enable positive discrimination in police recruitment. However, to view the racial diversification of the police force as any kind of meaningful solution is to fundamentally misunderstand the nature of racism. Such calls fail to take seriously the lessons of recent history, including those highlighted by Macpherson.

In recent years, we have seen a shying away from the idea that the police are institutionally racist. The Commissioner of the Metropolitan

Police, Cressida Dick, says that she doesn't believe the police force is still institutionally racist, and Sara Thornton says the term is unhelpful 'because it was misunderstood and taken as a slur on every officer'. Perhaps more surprisingly, despite finding racial disparities in policing, the 2017 'Lammy Review' 'avoids all mention of institutional racism' and instead uses the more 'palatable' term, 'unconscious bias'. While the concept of unconscious bias has gained traction recently, it 'moves the centre of gravity from institutions and structures to the individual and, unfortunately, to the unconscious.' It is by re-centring the concept of institutional racism that we can begin to understand the limits of calls for more Black police officers.

As the term itself implies, the problem with policing should not be understood as solely the fault of individual officers. This is not to say that individual officers shouldn't be held accountable for their actions but to recognise that racism also – and perhaps more perniciously – manifests at the level of the institution. It is, as Macpherson put it, 'the collective failure of an organisation'. Introduced by Kwame Ture (formerly Stokely Carmichael) and Charles V. Hamilton in their seminal 1967 work *Black Power*, the concept is important for anti-racism as it shifts our focus from the prejudices of individuals, to the systemic and embedded functioning of institutions. As Ambalavaner Sivanandan argued, 'institutional racism is that which, covertly or overtly, resides in the policies, procedures, operations and culture of public or private institutions – reinforcing individual prejudices and being reinforced by them in turn.' It is

imbued within the very fabric of society and a defining feature of the state apparatus.

In this respect, the concept of institutional racism allows us to challenge the dominant narrative which constructs police brutality and racism as something that is exceptional. It helps us to see that the problem is not simply a 'few rotten apples' but a rotten apple cart. If we only replace the apples and not the cart, the new apples will simply rot too. Such an intervention would be fundamentally misdiagnosing the problem: treating the symptom, not the disease. This is not only a hypothetical or theoretical point but one that is supported by empirical evidence.

For example, a 2017 paper examined the correlation between police shootings and the racial demographics of police forces in the United States. The report concluded that 'simply increasing the percentage of Black officers is not an effective policy solution'. In fact, the report found that fatal encounters between Black citizens and the police were more likely to occur in cities with higher proportions of Black officers. Based on the concept of 'critical mass', the authors tentatively suggest that a change in organisational culture might be possible when Black officers constitute at least 30% of a police force. But the authors are, quite rightly, reluctant to say whether or not this would reduce the number of Black deaths at the hands of the police.

Calls for more Black officers are flawed for a number of reasons. Firstly, they assume that racial solidarity exists between Black officers and the Black communities that they police.



Yet as Forman argues in *Locking Up Our Own*, many Black officers don't see their employment as racially significant. They do not take up their jobs in an attempt to rid the police force of racism. On the contrary, US research published in 2008 found that Black police officers were actually more likely than white officers to racially profile Black drivers. Findings like these expose the 'more Black officers' argument to be dependent upon an essentialist assumption that all Black people are inherently anti-racist. This fails to recognise the insidious nature of racism. An individual is not incapable of having racially-prejudiced attitudes simply because they themselves are racialised as black. Perhaps more importantly – given that racism can be perpetuated without individual intent – it certainly does not reflect an inability to reproduce institutional racisms.

Relatedly, the racial diversification of the police is not only likely to be ineffective in tackling institutional racism but it also operates to give legitimacy to racist policing. Without systemic change, replacing white faces with 'BAME' faces is mere tokenism: a superficial intervention that threatens to obfuscate the systemic nature of racism in the police. Like Trevor Phillips' 'work' condemning Black and Brown communities, Sajid Javid's role as Home Secretary shows all too clearly that Brown faces in high places can be used to disguise racist agendas. His appointment as part of Theresa May's ministerial reshuffle in early 2018 enabled her to make the (false) claim that the government now "looks more like the country it serves." But Javid's staunch advocacy of the hostile environment agenda serves as

a clear reminder that he should in no way be misconstrued as having the interests of Black and Brown people at heart. More Black officers would merely create the illusion of change, lending weight to the myth that we are on the path towards inevitable equality. We are not. More Black police officers might increase trust in the police for Black and Brown communities but, unless there is radical change, perhaps Black and Brown communities are right not to trust the police.

Thirdly, even if there was a way of ensuring that the critical mass of new Black recruits were all anti-racist individuals, the 'more Black officers' argument only becomes thinkable when we significantly underestimate the endemic nature of institutional racism in the police. Policing fosters an insular occupational culture which can operate to deter Black (potentially anti-racist) officers from straying outside of established norms. Given the role that policing has played in protecting capitalism and maintaining colonial regimes, it should come as no surprise then that, as Alex Vitale puts it, the 'police exist primarily as a system for managing and even producing inequality'. In this sense, even if anti-racist officers were recruited into the police, their individual agenda is likely to be supplanted by that of the institution.

Finally, calls to diversity the police force place the onus upon Black and Brown people for challenging racism and educating other officers. The responsibility for creating change becomes misplaced and, as Audre Lorde argues, 'the oppressors maintain their position and evade their responsibility for their own actions.' To

redress racism in the police – and elsewhere – it is important that those racialised as white, properly reckon with the inequities of white supremacy. The burden should not fall to those marginalised by the power structure, though it so often does, but to those who benefit from it.

To recognise racism as institutional therefore takes us to a difficult and

deeply uncomfortable position. We begin to see that there are no easy solutions: liberal reforms simply will not do. To tackle the deep roots of racism in the police, we need nothing short of a radical re-imagining of policing and criminal justice as we know it, or what Vitale speaks of as ‘the end of policing’.

Little if any evidence that stop and search can reduce levels of violent crime

Matteo Tiratelli, University of Manchester

Stop and search has been a controversial topic over the last few years. In 2014 the then Home Secretary, Theresa May, told MPs that as many as 250,000 street searches were probably carried out illegally last year and called for significant reductions in their use. In London these changes were already being championed by the commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir Bernard Hogan Howe, who boasted that they had been reduced by almost a third. But, recently, as violent crime has risen, there’s been a backlash. In 2017 the new Met chief, Cressida Dick, called for more stops and searches. And in 2018 London’s Mayor,

Sadiq Khan, went back on his election pledge and revealed that police would be ‘significantly’ increasing stop and search in London.

There are many different angles to approach stop and search form. Reports have shown a startling disparity in the likelihood of

black and Asian men being stopped and searched. There have also been investigations into its impact on communities, on trust in the police and its possible role in the 2011 Riots. But, it’s rare to see people explicitly assess whether changes in the level of stop and search deter people from committing crimes. This is the implicit, ‘common-sense’ idea that lies behind recent attempts to use the overall level of stop and search as a policy tool to reduce crime. But, despite a feeling amongst many officers and policy-makers that ‘it must have an effect’, there’s not much evidence to base these policies on.

Our study aimed to test this ‘common-sense’ assumption. Using ten years of Metropolitan Police data (2004-2014), grouped in months and weeks within each London Borough, we tested a large number of possible associations between stop and search under different powers and different crime types.

The central finding is that the effect of stop and search on crime is marginal, at best. Although you can never prove

a null hypothesis, there's precious little evidence of a meaningful effect. We find some associations, particularly suggesting that stop and search might be reducing the number of recorded drug offences, but the overall picture is of tiny and inconsistent effects.

Given recent trends in London, we were particularly interested in the connection between stop and search and violent crime. Looking initially at non-domestic violent crime we found no real evidence of an effect. The tiny association between section 1 and section 47 (weapon) searches showed that a 10% increase in stop and search would lead to a 0.01% decline in crime, but this effect disappeared when we looked across months and other search powers. When we tested the same models using ambulance incident data for calls related to 'stab/shot/weapon wounds', we found no significant effects whatsoever. This all suggests that, if there is any association between the overall level of stop and search and crime, it is likely to be at the outer margins of social and statistical significance.

This finding echoes earlier studies. A Home Office report into the impact of Operation BLUNT 2 (a knife crime initiative involving a large increase in section 60 searches in some Metropolitan Police borough) found no effects. There were similar findings from a variety of other studies looking at New York, London and Chicago, all of which we describe in our paper. If this is the evidence base for Sadiq Khan's policy proposals, then it's not a strong one.

What should we conclude from this? If we are interested in policy tools which will reduce the overall level of crime, particularly violent crime, then there's not much evidence to suggest that forcing/empowering officers to do extra searches on each patrol is going to be effective. But, this was never the legal justification for stop and search in the first place. The question should not be about if token stops and searches will deter potential offenders, but whether each and every stop is legally and operationally justified

Britain's schools need greater support and investment, not more policing

Remi Joseph-Salisbury (NPMP) and Roxy Legane, NPMP Steering Committee and Kids of Colour

Article originally published in Ceasefire (28/08/19)

In July 2019, the Home Affairs Select Committee released a report on Serious Youth Violence. Among the range of various suggestions it featured, the committee called for an increased police presence in schools, and a dedicated police officer in 'all

schools in areas with an above-average risk of serious youth violence'.

The committee's desire to reduce youth violence is laudable, and one that we share not only with the committee, but with nearly all of society. Like the committee's members, we are deeply moved by the harrowing stories of lives lost to

violence. However, we want to urge caution against knee-jerk ‘crime and order’ responses.

The report comes at a time when Boris Johnson has vowed to introduce 20,000 more police officers and enhance ‘Stop and Search’ powers; Priti Patel has expressed her desire to make the Tories the ‘party of law and order’, and the Labour party seem unwilling to articulate a bold response to this increasing authoritarianism. Coupled with the relative absence of critical voices in the media, this lack of political opposition seems to suggest a broad consensus over the need to increase the role of the police in our society, and in our schools. Evidence given by Cressida Dick, the current Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, reveals that there are *already* 280 officers in London schools, and clear impetus to increase those numbers to 500 officers by 2020.

The widespread political consensus around introducing more police in schools is premised upon an entrenched, albeit massively distorted, view of the police as a benign institution interested only ‘in serving the people’ and keeping us safe. As Professor Alex Vitale argues, however, ‘the reality is that the police exist primarily as a system for managing and even producing inequality by suppressing social movements and tightly managing the behaviours of poor and non-white people’. Looking through such a lens casts a markedly different light on the prospect of police in schools, as do the perspectives of young people of colour.

Take Kids of Colour, a Greater Manchester-based community project which aims to support young people from racially minoritised backgrounds to challenge issues of racism and

inequality. In stark contrast to the Home Affairs Select Committee, Kids of Colour positions young people (of colour) as the experts of their experience, and provides a platform for their voices to be heard.

At a Kids of Colour event earlier this year, attendees heard from young people whose interactions with the police — including those on school grounds — only worked to, quite inevitably, amplify existing mistrust. Attendees heard from a young Black boy who — after officers attended his school in response to an altercation over a £1 coin — was told by an officer that they would ‘lock him up’ if they so much as saw him on the street. A young woman, educated in Chester, shared her experience of being interviewed by police at school, aged 13, without parental consent, while another young person recalled being stopped and searched for merely fitting the description of a ‘Black high schooler in a hoodie’. Kids of Colour has also heard worrying accounts of police restraint being used on school grounds.

These perspectives point towards some of the dangers inherent in placing more police in schools. Black and Brown youth — as well as (always overlapping) working class communities — are already subject to the over-encroachment of police into their lives and communities, and the committee’s intervention seeks to extend over-policing into schooling. The normalisation of police in schools threatens to irreparably transform school dynamics, turning what should be a place of learning and growth, into a place of hyper-surveillance and trauma.

From stop and search statistics, to school exclusions, all the evidence



suggests that Black and Brown students will be most harshly impacted. This is exacerbated further when we realise that those areas most likely to meet the ‘high risk’ criteria are the ones where young people — disproportionately from racially minoritised groups — are already subject to over-policing. As with the rebranding of youth jails as privately managed ‘secure schools’, this is a further step towards the solidification of a (racialized) school-to-prison pipeline. Whilst the prison-industrial complex ensures that many have vested economic interests in the maintenance of this pipeline, it should be seen as an affront to the liberal values Britain allegedly holds so dear.

Whilst many tout this intervention as having the potential to improve ‘community relations’, young people’s negative interactions with the police, both within and beyond the school gates, will not be rectified by something as simple as a police presence in schools. The relationship between the police and over-policed communities cannot be changed by the presence of one ‘good’, ‘relatable’ police officer in schools: ‘such an intervention would be fundamentally misdiagnosing the problem: treating the symptom, not the disease’. It would be to misunderstand and elide the true nature of a police force that is institutionally racist, and fundamentally concerned with the maintenance of an unequal status-quo. As grassroots activists have long argued, community policing, despite its liberal appeal, acts only to further entrench policing, seeking to gain trust for an institution that — particularly for marginalised communities — remains deeply untrustworthy.

Investment elsewhere is imperative. For example, when pupils are having

to wait an inordinately long time on Children & Adolescence Mental Health Services (CAMHs) waiting lists, it is abundantly clear that significantly greater focus on improving mental health provision would be one of the more beneficial approaches. Investment in this area would, in turn, work to break the cycles of trauma that are a consequence of living in communities where young people are more likely to be exposed and desensitized to violence, loss and the multiple forms of distress now caused by austerity (as well as over-policing). Yet mental health provision receives far less attention in the report. Sadly, mental health support is a discussion so often ignored in regard to *these* young people, whose demonisation rarely allows for them to be viewed as victims of state violence or deserving of empathetic solutions.

Calls for more police in schools rely on an assumption that criminalisation is a useful and effective way to tackle social ills. Whilst there is political currency in these knee-jerk ‘tough on crime’ responses, the reality is that they are — like chicken boxes — inadequate in tackling the roots of serious youth violence. Looking at the root causes would turn our gaze to the role of the state: decimating cuts in education, in youth and social services, and an ideological assault on working class young people.

The solutions lie not in the expansion of the police, but in investing in schools to increase the teaching force, to reduce class sizes, to increase the provision for extra-curricular activities and pastoral support, and to support (rather than criminalise) young people. The solutions lie not in prison expansion, but in investing in youth services, in community centers, and libraries: the solutions lie in repairing

communities that have been under

attack for far too long.

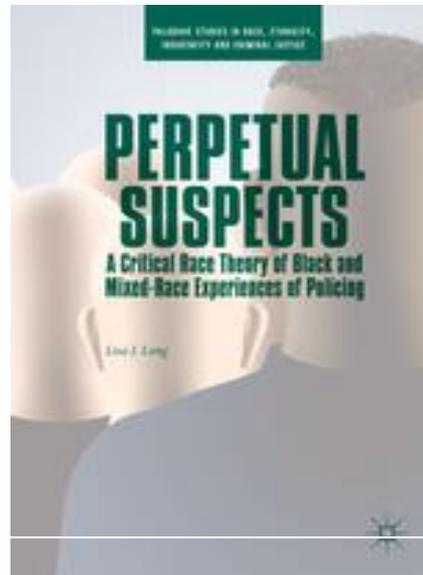
The Angiolini Review

Dr Lisa Long, Leeds Beckett University

The long-delayed report of the Independent Review of Deaths and Serious Incidents in Police Custody, chaired by Dame Elish Angiolini is far-reaching in scope and sets out some brave and necessary recommendations for urgent change to policy and practice. The recommendations pertain significantly to the police, but also to the NHS, Local Authorities, Coroners Investigations, The Health and Safety Executive and the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC).

The use of restraint is one of the key issues for the review, in particular the convergence of policing with management and treatment of mental health conditions and the exacerbation of risk of death posed by a mental health crisis. Angiolini should be commended for recognising the role that stereotypes play in shaping the experience and outcome of policing contact for those deemed to pose an exceptional risk. Those experiencing mental health crisis are one such example and those from Black and ethnic minority communities are another. It acknowledges that issues of stereotyping surrounding risk and threat shape police responses and indeed, this recognition is long overdue.

The report evidently draws from the experiences of the families of those who have died in police custody and their welfare and role in the investigation is central to the report



Dr Lisa Long is the author of *Perpetual Suspects: A Critical Race Theory of Black and Mixed-Race Experiences of Policing*

and its recommendations.

Unsurprisingly, it finds that the families of those who die in police custody have little faith in the Independent Police Complaints Commission with its independence brought into question by the number of former police officers who act as lead investigators. Further, the perception of a failure in accountability is compounded by unnecessary delays in the process and a lack of information about the investigation.

The reviews 110 recommendations are most importantly aimed at preventing future deaths in police custody, through the appropriate use of restraint techniques and an awareness developed through mandatory and

standardised training including a focus on de-escalation particularly in response to those most vulnerable. When death follows police contact, the recommendations focus on expediency of the investigation, relieving the emotional and financial burden on the family and loved ones and ensuring transparency and accountability through the established processes.

The Government's initial response to the report indicates that change in some areas will follow. For example, the government has made a commitment to phasing out the use of police stations as a designated place of safety for children detained under Mental Health Act. However, it appears less committed to the provision of automatic access to non-means tested legal aid or a dedicated counselling service to support families to deal with the trauma. It highlights that, in cases where charges of murder or manslaughter are likely to be brought, the family will be eligible to access the Ministry of Justice funded National Homicide Service. Indeed, if the likelihood of criminal investigation continues to follow the current pattern, most families will remain ineligible for support.

Crucially however, the government has so far failed to respond to or acknowledge the claim made in the

review that 'deaths of people from BAME communities, in particular young Black men, resonate with the Black community's experience of systemic racism, and reflect wider concerns about discriminatory over-policing, stop and search, and criminalisation (5.6)'. In response to ethnic disproportionality, the government refers to the rolling out of unconscious bias training. This approach focuses on the individuals unconsciously held attitudes and beliefs but avoids dealing with the entrenched institutional racism within the police service. Lessons must be learnt from the failure of the post-Macpherson reform to result in any meaningful and sustained change in how Black and ethnic minority communities experience policing. This highlights the risk posed by defensive or denial responses in mitigating against meaningful and sustainable change.

It is imperative that this government responds with urgent legislative and policy responses and investment in services in order to prevent further deaths in custody. One death is one death too many. As argued by Stafford Scott, if the government fail to act in the face of these robust evidence-based recommendations, the Home Office will be to blame for likely future deaths in custody- they will have blood on their hands.

Against engagement with the police

Tanzil Chowdhury, NPMP Advisor

To many, the 'ACAB' slogan may seem like little more than radical posturing. The prospect of a police-

less future is so impossible that it exudes pharaoh-nic levels of naivety. So naturalized has the existence of the

police become, that many think *reform*, rather than abolition, is the only way to advance beyond racist policing. It is akin to when Friedrich Jameson, the famous cultural theorist, once said 'it has become easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism'.

Part of the difficulty many have in accepting calls to abolish the police, seem to lie in the absence of practical, short-term solutions towards abolition. However, there has been serious engagement on police and, relatedly prison, abolition in both activist, academic circles and even popular press. This post, largely aimed at communities and campaigning groups, argues for a more modest but related position against engagement with the police. By no means exhaustive, these are not purely positions of principle but rather concrete arguments that demonstrate how engagement can and has undermined the ability to hold the police to account.

Before detailing these positions, largely restating things written and heard elsewhere, it is worth recognising the strategic position that other groups and individuals may have in specifically-targeted engagement with the police. However, this article briefly argues for a general default position for non-engagement with the police and locates itself within the larger anti-racist tradition of prison and police abolition.

Vulnerability to police intrusion and intelligence gathering

Underlying much of the argument against police engagement is the false presumption that it is a safe and effective way in addressing and

resolving concerns around police racism, brutality, harassment and impunity. The argument here is that engagement invites infiltration. The police, as an institution, are largely not interested in dialogue but information gathering. Perhaps most importantly, once a person, community or organization is exposed to dialogue with the police, it leaves them vulnerable to data gathering. The nature of data gathering is such that it becomes part of a permanent archive that can be exploited and used for other security imperatives when necessary and convenient. This is painfully apparent in how disparate and entirely innocent pieces of information are pulled together to create profiles of risk about individuals in determining their potentiality to commit crime.

The police have a history of using 'dialogue policing' to gather intelligence. Police Liaison Officers (PLO), created in light of the appalling policing of the G20 protests and police killing of Ian Tomlinson in 2009, emerged following a report by the Joint Committee on Human Rights. The parliamentary group argued for greater dialogue with the police and criticized police units, such as the protest-intelligence gathering team FIT, for being more interested in surveillance than engagement with those exercising their right to assemble. The formal role of PLOs therefore, is to engage in a more dialogic approach with protestors.

The Network for Police Monitoring produced a report providing compelling evidence that many former FIT officers had gone on to become PLOs. The report contains several admissions by



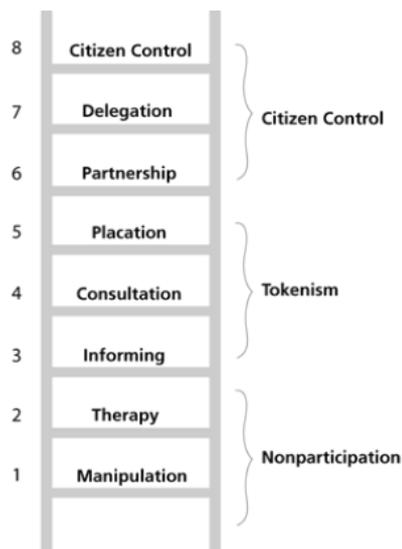
senior officers that PLOs were less concerned about dialogue and more about intelligence gathering. Among a litany of failures, Chief Inspector Sonia Davis, head of the Police Liaison Teams (PLT), gave evidence as a prosecution witness in the trial of an environmental cyclist group who were arrested on the evening of the Olympics opening ceremony in 2012. She admitted that PLTs gathered information on protesters and had been deployed at previous mass bikes rides to try to identify 'leaders'. PLOs illustrate why dialogue and engagement with the police, more generally, is problematic and can potentially incriminate communities and individuals while posing serious challenges to the integrity and functioning of campaigns and organisations.

It's also worth saying something about the 2015 Undercover Policing Inquiry because it also shows how engagement and working with the police can leave individuals and groups vulnerable to infiltration. There have been many shortcomings with the inquiry which, though extremely important, are not the focus of this post. Generally however, there are fundamental problems with undercover policing. One famous example, which only came to light many years later, was the infiltration of the Stephen Lawrence Justice Campaign in which police spies tried to gather information about the Lawrence family. While the family were grieving about their son who had been murdered in a racist attack, they were also trying to persuade the police to properly investigate their son's racist murder. Police spies tried to gather information

about the parents of Stephen Lawrence, including the breakdown of their marriage. They used this information to try to deflect criticism that they messed up the investigation - an investigation which, coupled with mass mobilisation from the community anti-racist campaigns, prompted an inquiry that showed the police to be institutionally racist.

Political groups have also been infiltrated. Many women have provided testimony to the undercover police inquiry that they had been tricked into having sexual relationships with people they believed to be activists but later turned out to be police officers. Police officer Mark Kennedy had lied about being an environmental activist and infiltrated many left wing groups, providing intelligence which led to the arrest of several activists at demonstrations and direct actions. During his time undercover, he had formed close friendships and sexual relationships with activists. In a legal case which eventually collapsed, involving a group of environmental activists trying to shut down a coal station in Ratcliffe-on-Soar, one of the protestors, Danny Chivers, described Kennedy not just as an observer but as an agent provocateur.

Ultimately too, dialogue provides an invaluable 'PR win' for the police as they are being seen to engage with communities which illustrates the police's desire for resolution and assuages their often violent and long-lasting interventions into those very communities. It provides the illusion that they are doing something, whilst in fact they are often entirely unwilling to make any meaningful change.



Arnstein's Ladder (1969)
Degrees of Citizen Participation

Non-effectiveness of Dialogue

It must be said from the outset that when you enter into dialogue with a state institution like the police, the difference in expertise, in resources, in well-curated legitimacy, will always create an imbalance of power than can inform discussions and dialogue. Thus engagement is typically rendered meaningless. Consider the role of independent advisory groups (IAGs) whose role, among other things, is to 'improve communications with groups not usually in dialogue with the police.' In the conversations that we have had with members of the Independent Advisory Group in Greater Manchester, they have seen it as a powerless forum. To help illustrate the ineffectiveness of engagement, we can refer to Sherry Arnstein's (see diagram above) level of citizen participation which looks at the different levels of involvement that public and community forums can have in decisions that impact them.

This can range from *manipulation* at the bottom, where the forum is used as

a means to dictate the responses and framing of communities concerns, through to *consultation*, or, right at the top, *delegated power* and *citizen control* where communities actually dictate, implement the agenda and action policy. The sense that many people get is that IAGs are more about therapy and informing at the very least, though are often about manipulation, with the police often steering the conversation. While members from the community get understandably angry and upset and are able to vent at the police, which is important, little gets done. Again, however, it provides the police with an absolutely vital opportunity to demonstrate that they are sincerely committed to listening, engagement and reform.

Compromises Community trust

Central to any community-led organization or campaign, is securing trust of individuals and impacted communities. It is important, not only that independence from the police is done but also that it is seen to be done. Anxieties are often stirred by working with the police, particularly in communities that have been criminalized and over-policed. Many people within impacted communities reasonably see the police as an antagonistic force and perceive any organization working with them as merely being interlocutors of the police rather than impartial brokers. It is not merely that communities hate the police (often with good reason), but that dialogue can often trigger traumatic episodes. An organization that works with the police therefore may be perceived as trying to appease the damaging work the police do and often soften the trauma they have



imposed, rather than genuinely being committed to supporting individuals and families. Much anecdotal evidence gathered through protracted conversations with impacted families have spoken to this effect, often creating a deep sense of mistrust in police investigations into their own wrongdoings and a general hesitancy of the state in conducting public inquiries and inquests.

Limits Radical imaginations

Finally, engagement with the police limits our imagination. The arguments for abolition of the police are not pie-in-the-sky fantastical thinking, but well researched, forensically thought out positions. It forces us to reflecting on the role and need for the police and thinking about alternative forms of public safety. To do otherwise can blind us to the contingency of the police force. In other words we think of them as a 'natural' institution rather than a relatively new institution in the UK that emerged around the time of 19th century capitalism and that imported and exported expertise from the colonies in how it has policed communities of colour.

However, arguments of police abolition are not isolated and they necessarily require engagement with wider social structures that control racialized, gendered and classed populations. Abolition of slavery for example, required more than just disappearing enslaved people from plantations. It required society to eliminate its reliance on forced and brutal racialized labour. A similar logic is needed here. In his recent book, the End of Policing,

Alex Vitale makes a broader argument against social and economic injustice, and against criminalisation and racism. He locates these injustices in the neoliberal exploitation and its spiraling inequalities of wealth and power- of which the police have a role in socially reproducing. The solution isn't just about abolishing the police but restructuring society in such way that doesn't require them as an institution.

The kinds of 'short-term' measures or 'non-reformist reforms' we can make, away from police engagement and toward abolition require both a discursive battle as well as a material one. The former, which has already been touched on, is questioning the presumption that the police are invested in preventing crime (what is crime? does it prevent crime in particular communities and spaces?) and that societies need 'law and order'. The latter alternatives to policing may include initiatives such as community monitoring, divestiture (particularly toward social infrastructure like youth clubs, social and mental health care, education, sports etc), decriminalization and restorative justice. Many abolitionists have argued that we need to see policing as a public health issue not a criminal justice one. Thus, perhaps an often ignored focus on some anti-police brutality organisations is articulating and working toward these alternatives. The position of non-engagement therefore is not esoteric, ivory-tower thinking, but one which is necessary to maintain the integrity of our campaigns which works toward a more just and realizable future.

STOP the SCANdAl

Remi Joseph-Salisbury, NPMP Steering Committee and Racial Justice Network Trustee

The Northern Police Monitoring Project fully supports the STOP the SCANdAl campaign launched by the Racial Justice Network and Yorkshire Resists.

The stop and scan initiative allows police to check people's fingerprints in the street against immigration and crime databases.

As the STOP the SCANdAl campaign has argued, the introduction of this scheme acts to 'turn the UK police into a border force'. This scheme has been introduced without due consultation with the public, and there is no indication of: any checks against officer discrimination, checks against (racist) issues with the biometric technology, and checks of the accuracy of Home Office immigration databases. Given robust evidence of racism at all levels of policing, including evidence of racial discrimination in biometrics and data, stop and scan will undoubtedly impact most harshly on Black and Brown communities.

The interlocking of policing and immigration control agencies is likely to perpetuate racism and contribute to what is already a 'hostile environment'

for People of Colour who live with the ubiquitous threats of detention, deportation, criminalisation and incarceration.

We encourage people to support the STOP the SCANdAl campaign, and particularly its demands that the Home Office:

- **End the racist stop and scan initiative immediately**, before it irreparably further damages relations between police and communities;
- **Sever all connections between police activity and immigration databases**, to prevent the police becoming an extension of border forces;
- Keep fingerprint scanning a step that **only happens in police stations following arrest**, in order to protect citizen privacy rights;
- And publicly **release the data captured in the West Yorkshire pilot**, including its impact on axes of race, age and gender.

To find out more or support the campaign, visit the website:

www.stopthescan.co.uk

Recent Events

CAMPAIGNING AGAINST DEATHS IN POLICE CUSTODY

an afternoon of community discussion, network building (and food)

This is the first in a series of events in 2019 on policing, racism and injustice. There have been at least 1684 deaths in (or after) police custody since 1990.



Campaigners speaking:

- Lisa Cole (sister of Marc Cole)
- Janet Alder (sister of Christopher Alder)
- Gail Grainger (partner of Antony Grainger)
- Germaine Phillips (mother of Adrian McDonald)

food and light refreshments will be provided

1:30pm – 4:30pm

Saturday 2nd of February

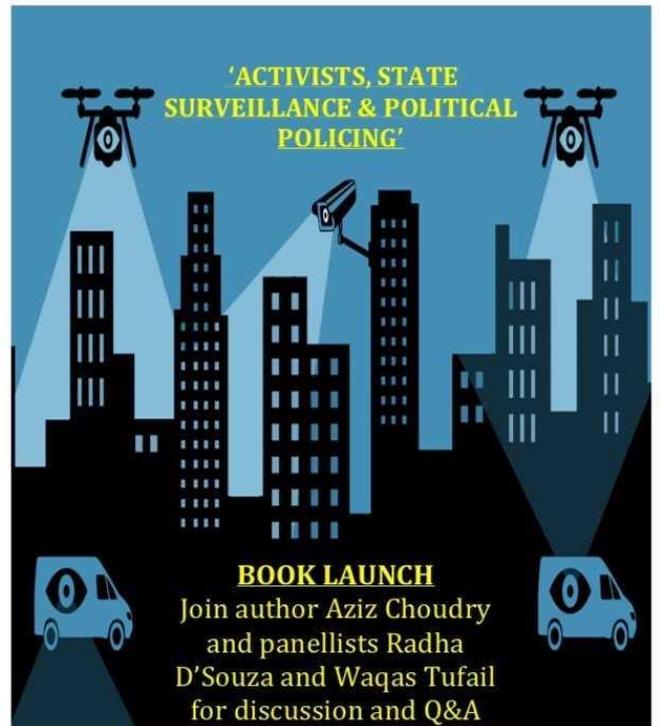
Moss Side Millennium Powerhouse

(140 Raby St, Manchester M14 4SL)



Campaigning Against Deaths in Police Custody, 2019

Activists, State Surveillance & Political Policing, 2019



When: 8th March 2019 @ 5.30-7.30pm

Where: Uni of Manchester, University Place, Theatre A

Organized by Northern Police Monitoring Project



KIDS OF COLOUR & NORTHERN POLICE MONITORING PROJECT

KIDS OF COLOUR ON POLICING

29th April | St Peter's House, Oxford Road, Manchester | 6-8pm

@kidsofcolourhq | @npolicemonitor | Tickets on Eventbrite

Kids of Colour on Policing, 2019



Know Your Rights
stop and search
training

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Know your rights when stopped by the police. Join us for a free workshop.

- 17TH AUGUST | 2 SESSIONS AVAILABLE
- 10.30AM-12.30PM OR 1.30PM-3.30PM
- HULME COMMUNITY HALL | M15 5FS
- LUNCH INCLUDED



CONTACT US FOR PLACES VIA SOCIAL MEDIA OR WHOPOLICESTHEPOLICE@GMAIL.COM



@NPOLICEMONITOR WWW.NPMP.CO.UK



Northern Police Monitoring Project

is an independent, grassroots collective that aims to educate, empower and organise the people of Greater Manchester in the face of police harassment, intimidation, violence and racism.

For more information about NPMP check out:

Website: www.npmp.co.uk

Twitter: [@npolicemonitor](https://twitter.com/npolicemonitor)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/npolicemonitor/

Or email: whopolicesthepolice@gmail.com