

# PROMOTION OF CULTURAL MINORITIES IN POLICING

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**Barry THOMAS\*<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Executive Director, Canadian Centre for Police Race Relations, Ottawa, Ontario

I would like to start by clarifying one point. I am not a police officer; I am not a police wannabe; and in the definition of myself in terms of my long-term objective in life I would like to be considered at the end of the day as a relatively good and relatively civilized community worker. I find myself in this position more as a quirk of fate than by design. Having said that, I would like to tell you what the Canadian Centre for Police Race Relations is all about and in that section of my speech, I will try to be relatively objective. After that, I will talk about some of the issues we are dealing with and there is no way I can guarantee to be objective about that. I have very strong feelings about the direction we ought to go in and I will try to provide some rationales for why I and the Centre believe that this is what we have to do.

The Canadian Centre for Police Race Relations is an autonomous entity overseen by a twenty-two member Board of Governors. We have just recently had our second Board meeting in Edmonton. Our staff commenced work on November 4th, 1991. The Centre is housed at The Canadian Police College. The Chair of the Centre is Mr. Donald Bondsman who is also the Deputy Minister for the Solicitor General of Ontario. The members of the Centre are drawn from three basic stakeholder groups.

The first is the police community, in order that we can provide them with the information they need to apply in the context of moving towards a long-term objective of anti-racist community-based policing.

The government and the academic community is the second primary stake holder; the government because they are our key funders at the moment for the Centre, and the academic community because that is the area from which we wish to draw the expertise and the research that is going to fuel the debate we are in the process of weathering.

The third and most important stakeholder in this triangular base of the Centre's working group are the aboriginal and visible minority communities. This in itself is a bit of a misnomer because, as I will outline later on, visible and aboriginal minorities cannot, by themselves, do

anything fundamental about racism and eradicating the barriers to discrimination that we see arising in a systemic institutional manner across the country.

The Board is managed by an executive committee which reflects the stakeholders' and the regional interests we serve. As Executive Director I manage a staff of six seconded professionals from police services, government and the communities. The Administrative Director of the Centre is a 25 year veteran of the RCMP whose last posting was Officer in Charge of the Ride program and who quite clearly makes no bones about the fact that his exposure to issues of discrimination was very marginal. One year after being in the job, he is now at the level of accepting our argument that what we are doing does not just involve changing behaviour but in fact has to involve changing attitudes. We have a sergeant seconded from the Ontario Provincial Police, another one from Metro Toronto and a library sciences person who is in charge of our data base and information resource management system, seconded from the Solicitor General.

The Centre is also managed, on a regional level, through a system of provincial links where we have people seconded from the respective police academies or ministries with relevant portfolios to assist us in operating as the barometer and the eyes and ears of the Centre with respect to the regions. This system keeps us in tune with what is happening across the country and allows us to assimilate the kind of information we want to make available to people.

The Genesis of the Canadian Centre for Police Race Relations is a direct result of a cross-country consultation which took place in the summer of '89, spearheaded by The Right Honourable Gerry Weiner for the Secretary of State. The result of his consultation was moved forward jointly with the Solicitor General of Canada, under the auspices of the National Action Plan for Policing Canada's Growing Visible Minority Communities. As you will recall, at the time, there was the situation of Quebec not talking with the Federal government, hence, the aboriginal communities were left out. They have been included since then and are a fundamental and integral part of the Centre.

The Centre's mandate is basically premised on three very broad primary objectives. The first one is to collect, analyze and distribute information on an "as need" basis to the policing services and the communities who may require it.

The first objective is the need to look into issues relating to the process of bias-free selection, recruitment, promotion and development of police officers. This is a very, very broad topic that, at the moment, we are not even going to touch. We will be focusing, in the initial stages of developing our foundation, more around the two issues I will talk about now.

The second is training, and looking at issues that affect training, and what police training ought to be.

The third is the notion of developing mechanisms, processes for liaison, consultations and communications with our vulnerable community groups who are stakeholders.

Now we will talk about the products, and this is where I will start to be a little more subjective. The booklet that was published under the authority of the Solicitor General of Canada in 1991, for the specific purpose of the Canadian Centre for Police Race Relations, was entitled *Issues in Police Inter-cultural and Race Relations Training in Canada* and was written by Dr. Charles Ungerleider from the University of British Columbia. This is, the first paper discussing the difference between inter-cultural and cross-cultural race relations and anti-racist training. It is also the first paper that seeks to look at everything from a national perspective. The objective in publishing this paper is that we will now disseminate it to police multi-cultural race relations trainers and begin getting their criticisms and comments. We will ask them what they think we now ought to do for the next stage of this particular project. We are anticipating being able, during the summer of 1993, to bring together key race relations and multi-cultural trainers in policing services across the country to further discuss the nuances and perimeters of this report.

When we published the report in Edmonton in September of 1991 we received some slanted press from the Edmonton Sun which has increased the demand for the document more than we had anticipated. Another paper which might be of interest to lawyers is a paper by the Commission of the Edmonton Police Services Board called *Confession of White Male Lawyer* written by Mr. Wayne Drury which is available from the Centre and specifically relates to his involvement in the legal system and his re-evaluation of his own values, norms, cultures and customs and how he is looking at things from a different perspective in his capacity as Chair of the Edmonton Police Services Board.

The third product is a document called *Taking Stock*. It deals with the jurisprudence of the Charter on minority rights and is a paper produced by the The Canadian Inter-cultural Council (CIC) in Ottawa and is available from the Council or from the Centre.

This will give you a fair idea of the kind of documents we are working with. We have a data base at the Centre that is now reaching up to a thousand pieces of Canadian only information. The operative and key word at this stage of the game is that we are only going to stock Canadian material in this data base, for the moment. We will use 1992 as a bench mark year, when the issue of anti-racism or race relations in policing began to permeate the national consciousness. This is when the whole debate began, especially around British Columbia and the conference which took place in 1984, organized by the multi-cultural committee of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP).

When I talk about the work we are engaged in, we operate from the perspective of it being non-rank specific. When I sit down with my staff to deal with issues affecting the police community, such as, incidents of race relations or incidents that clearly have a racial overtone, such as a police shooting, we need to go through an analysis process and begin objectifying what we think happened to explain it further and to learn from it, and there is no rank in our Centre. We talk about it; we involve all the police community organizations; and we get them to the table. The

idea is that racism, by and large, is not something that we can describe as being genetic. You are not born a bigot, for example.

Having said that, you also have to recognize that the best way to affect the process of changing people is through working the behaviour construct, for example through policies, laws and legislations and so on. In fact, this is the Canadian way of doing things and we have come a tremendous way since 1982 just in the area of police and community. However, when you talk about policing and about a shooting situation in the context of policing, it takes only 10 or 15 seconds for the police officer to actually pull the trigger. The process of change is going to depend upon attitudes. If we don't understand this and we think that we just can write policies and hope and pray that nothing will happen, we are barking up the wrong tree.

Taking that understanding into account, what we have seen in institutions, in cities across the country which have, in the late 1980's, attempted multi-cultural change projects is that a fundamental problem exists. It relates to management issues such as how institutions and organizations and systems begin to deal with the notion of moving forward the reality of an anti-discrimination agenda within the construct of their organization. In the past, our experience has been that rather than finding a way to make the organization as a whole change to the reality, this task has been assigned to individuals, in particular to people who are very eloquent, very articulate and who believe in the process. In other words, the people who are committed within the organization took up the banner of that particular issue and at the end of the day, when they discovered that moving it through the organization involved fundamental organizational change, the bottom fell out. Organizations I can allude to are the WMCA in Metro Toronto and the Children's Aid Societies which have approached this problem very clearly. The one organization at the moment which is still ahead of the game, and I think ought to be looked at by all of us collectively, is the United Way of Greater Toronto. Their major rationale for being able to push this thing further is that they are a funding body. They can write into their clause that if you don't have an anti-racist, or race relation or multi-cultural policy as part of your organization's operating mode, you will not receive funding. This is the carrot they dangle in front of other organizations.

Other organizations such as policing services who are now struggling with this do not have a similar carrot and have not figured out how they, in fact, manage people. They have discovered that sending people off on courses like the Kingswood Course in Toronto, the Hasting Institute Program in B.C. really begins to advance personal change on an individual level. But the poor sucker who goes away for a week and basically bears his or her soul spending ten hours a day breaking down the stereotypes, myths and everything that is part of everybody's orientation in the kind of society we live in, comes back to work next Monday and finds an `IN' basket that is stacked and this `IN' basket needs to be attended to immediately and in the process of doing so, which takes two or three weeks, goes back to the old way of doing things.

The problem resides in management of this person when he or she comes back, especially when his or her colleagues are saying "what are you talking about, here get the job done, we have eight hours, we have to get this thing going and we have bottom lines to consider".

Another example appears when you look at organizations in the private sector whose responsibilities, unlike those public institutions we are addressing right now, include basic, fundamental, bottom-line concerns. If they don't address the need for selling their products to the broader society which, as Haroon Siddiqui mentions, in places like Toronto and in a couple of years places across the country, will be reflecting 25 per cent (on average) of visible minority communities, they will go bankrupt. They won't serve their bottom line.

In my previous incarnation as Executive Director for the City of North York in Toronto, I discovered that we have these great policies. The first race relations committee of its kind in North America assisted the 35 major organizations in North York to develop these policies, hanging them up on the walls in great frames. But those policies really had no hook and no grounding into the organizations they were purporting to serve. They in fact ended up being an insurance policy for the respect of institutions in case something happened, so that they could say "we do have a policy".

When we hire and get people into the system, this is when we actually begin to see what we define as the 'culture clash' begin to happen. I remember in the early days when the Metro police force came to me as the Executive Director of the North York Race Relations Committee and said: "You know, we need some more African Canadians, more blacks, into the Metro Police force." The guy sitting across the table from me, a black police officer who had been on the job for about 15 years, had no idea where I was from and could not understand that, for me, it was an incredible feeling to be sitting across the table from a black police officer talking to me about recruiting black kids when my origins lie in South Africa. I was kicked out of South Africa for political involvement that involved a very serious attitudinal problem with police, and here he is asking me to come and help recruit.

Let me tell you something about the Dudley Laws situation in Toronto right now. I am asked consistently: "What do you think of this jerk, Dudley Laws?" Well let me tell you something. Dudley Laws is the reason I have in fact had the confidence to become a community worker in the black community. That does not mean that I agree with Dudley Laws' political stance or his abilities as a politician. In that very context Haroon Siddiqui was talking about how the media deals with people like that. They go and get a quote from Dudley Laws because, at that stage of the game, they have already called me in the wake of a public police shooting and I have said "there is no bloody way I am going to comment." So they go to Dudley Laws who likes to see his name in the press, so he comments. The next thing I know, I am sitting here and people like you ask me: "What do you think of your leader, Dudley Laws?" Well, Dudley Laws became the leader of the black community more by an act of default and as a consequence of his police association in Metro Toronto and the media, than we in the black community had anything to do with. The reason I am saying that people like Dudley Laws gave me the confidence to pursue this kind of a career is because he is a very good community worker. That's his bottom line. For example, when the hurricane happened in Jamaica a couple of years ago, Dudley Laws would be driving a truck at 4 o'clock in the morning and I would be loading and packing stuff in a barrel and sending it down to Jamaica.



One more comment I would like to make on the black community, specifically for people from the Law Societies, judges and so on, is that when I look at the Black Law Society that is currently operative in Toronto, (and I have been invited to several of their functions) you look at that group of people numbering in my count about 120, and discover that about 20 to 25 of them are of the old school, Charlie Roach type lawyers, male, fifty and over. Then you look at the other people coming up the ladder, about 30 to 35 years of age, coming through law schools into your system. In fact, they are about 30 per cent male and the rest are female, with an incredible level of intellect, and an incredible level of frustration. My warning to you in the legal system, relative to training and the other issues you ought to confront, is that you don't do it, and we have a whole bunch of sisters coming down after you. You have time, but you are running out of it. If you don't do it now, they will come and do it for you. They are angry and frustrated and they have found a way to challenge the system just the way the aboriginal communities are doing now under the leadership of people like Ovide Mercredi, and just as the other ethno-cultural communities like the Jewish community discovered at the end of the second World War here and other places such as Montreal.

I would like to end on a couple of points. The first one I alluded to is the notion that racism is not a genetic trait. It is a process that is learned so it is therefore a process that can be unlearned. It is stupid, though, to blame the education system for inculcating racism, or any other system for doing so, because the bottom line is that kids are racists and bigoted by the time they are 2 and 1/2 years old. So they are getting it at the breakfast table.

The final thing is, in that same vein, that I have never not gotten a job because of my culture. It is nice to talk about culture and it is nice to understand culture. I have always been refused a job because of what I look like, because of my race. This is the thing we need to confront. That is the barrier and all I, and people like me can do, is stand up here and articulate the frustration, the pain and the process of the victimization we experience. It is up to the white community, the mainstream community to complete the other half of the picture.

As judges, you sit here with your hands on the system, on the access to the levers of the system. We are not saying fire all judges. We don't want that to happen. But, we do want changes to happen and we are available to help that process happen in here. Last, but by no means least, is the point I started making earlier. If you want to take the geneticist view of the world, you have to bear in mind that everybody in the world is at the very, very most, a 50th cousin. So what are we really talking about?