

Dhrumil Patel

ENG3U3

Thematic Text-to-Text Connection

Other text:

<https://www.themarshallproject.org/2017/09/27/how-bad-apples-spoil-the-whole-bunch>

Andrew Cohen's article, *How Bad Apples Spoil the Whole Bunch*, explores the dangers of willfully ignoring systemic issues in policing. The dangers of such a solution are made painfully clear throughout *Somebody*, as an attitude of hiding systemic issues from the public further drives racial disparities in law enforcement with black citizens in Chicago.

In one of Shapearl's interviews with the police, Shapearl asks, "Did my son call 9-1-1?", and the officer yells back, "You tell me!". While his reply could be attributed to incompetence or willful ignorance, it instead points to a larger attitude of defending, justifying, and excusing the actions of other officers, no matter how egregious. Cohen explains the invalidity of these differing positions by stating how "so many 'good apples' spend so much time defending the 'bad apples' that it becomes hard to tell which apples are which." The focus of defending other officers' actions, regardless of how much collateral damage it does to the perception of law enforcement and the consequent erosion of public trust, makes it clear to Shapearl that she is not exactly fighting an institution of unaccountable officers, so much as she is fighting an ethos of anti-black sentiment held by those with power. Shapearl knows first hand why "the average black family trying to fight against the city in every way [they] can" is unsuccessful because they "hear the doors being slammed in [their face]" when they seek justice and fairness in the systems that govern them. It is exactly this division that encourages an "us vs. them" mentality within black communities against law enforcement.

Initially, I believed that an approximate answer to a question from one of our conversations, "why might police officers stand by while their superiors abuse their power?", was that, in high-danger situations like shootings, officers must be efficient about executing a strategy and cannot afford to waste time questioning orders when they can be saving lives. After listening to the *Somebody* podcast and reading *How Bad Apples Spoil the Whole Bunch*, I realize that the answer is, as it often is, far more nuanced than I realized. If "bad apple" officers can expect to be defended when abusing their power with citizens, they can likely expect to face very little resistance mistreating other officers, which turns the discussion from one about morality to one about personal safety. In a moment in which a superior is abusing his/her power as a state agent, a police officer may feel pressured to do nothing to guarantee his/her own safety, possibly at the cost of another's life. The phrase "bad apple" is in itself a willful admission of a system that excuses this behaviour - it's a misnomer that distracts from the meaningful conversations that broken families like Shapearl's deserve.