CRES 10
Policing Testimonial Part 3

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In my original piece I focused on a specific kid I had a relationship with. I focused on the ways others were changing. In my new response I have tried to build a narrative which includes me as someone not fundamentally different from the kids who became cops. I have kept much of the same framing and message because I think it is a good message. People often describe their relationship with police in terms of privilege, oppression, brutality, and specific incidents. I wanted to show how many have a relationship with policing whose nature is that of *recruitment*. And I also wanted to highlight how policing does not purely benefit the privileged and dehumanizes and separates us in the pursuit of *recruitment*. In pursuit of that I tried to draw on more examples, the kids who ended up being police weren't always "the bad kids" as I said in my first testimonial, but some of them used to be the kinds of people I would be friends with. And as I reviewed and expanded my testimony I found that the influence of policing was larger and more omnipresent than I originally thought, so that is also included as well.

Testimonial

My relationship with policing is not an uncommon one. I grew up in a very white community and with my dad's side being white I am often perceived as white by my peers. Because of that I grew up in an environment where police were not merely tolerated, but actively admired by many of the kids around me. Several times a year the sheriff's department would come by and do shows with their dogs, or talk about drugs, or just talk about being a cop. In sixth grade I ended up moving schools to a smaller and more rural school. Here many of the parents were conservative christians. There was a church right outside the school where many parents would attend with their kids. When I got to highschool many of the people around me at school were conservative Christians. My teachers had kids in the military, as did my swim coach, I had friends planning to join the military as well, and some wanted to become cops.

For the longest time, surrounded by all of this, I was tentatively positive about police. The culture of my family was such that I never really wanted to be a cop or a soldier but being a white boy in a white community I was bombarded on all sides by images of cops I was invited to project myself onto.

I would spend a day at school and see a school resource officer. I would sometimes have assemblies with cops telling us that the word "cop" was offensive and slang used by criminals. At home shows geared towards my demographic featured cops and soldiers as heroes, and aspirational figures.

I eventually began to be turned off the police by several things. The first was the kids I knew who wanted to be cops or soldiers. My brother came out as trans and I went out of my way to try and learn about it to be a good brother. As I learned more and tried to be more caring I started to notice the ways in which the kids who wanted to be cops and soldiers were becoming cruel. People who had seemed so nice began to say things which were sexist and bigoted. One of my best friends in middle school started saying that women belong in the kitchen and I couldn't believe that he would say that.

I eventually found myself in english class arguing about how trans people don't secretly control everything. I argued about how systemic factors in poverty were real and not everything was individual choice. The person I was arguing with wanted to be a cop, and as far as I am aware might be one right now.

As I met more LGBTQ people, and made friends with people with different perspectives I began to feel how omnipresent police are even for people with ostensibly no relationship to police. This omnipresence has changed the lives of everyone I know. My sibling hates most of their school life because of the casual bigotry he experiences, the kids I was once friends with are now full blown conservatives shaped into the kind of uncritically fearful people who love police. And I find myself increasingly only friends with the kinds of people who can accept my family for who they are, and refuse to engage in the bigotry and cruelty of policing.

The masses of cops and prisons and wars have to draw their manpower from somewhere. Nobody gets to escape the influence of policing, even the ones who are supposed to benefit still find their entire lives and social network shaped by the implied prescence of policing.

Now that I am older and more critical of my relationship with policing than ever I am worried. The ideological package of police has taken a lot of friendships from me, and I have young cousins who are in communities just like the one I was in. Not all of them are lucky enough to have friends or family who can push them to be critical of police. Even now the existence of police forces me to not only be critical of my own thoughts and influences, but the ways relationships and family might be made hostile.

In elementry school I had a friend who's dad was a cop. His dad was not a good person, he would berate his son for trying on earings, and didn't care if he would lash out as long as he wasn't "gay". In turn I eventually

couldn't stay friends with him, he would act out and hit me. In middle school I had a friend who's dad was a church pastor. By the time we got to high school he wanted to be a soldier and began saying to girls who were ostensibly his friends that women belonged in the kitchen.

When I was a kid and I looked at police I felt mildly positive. They were just professionals out to help people like fire fighters or paramedics. Now I feel anger, I hate how I can't even be around people who used to be my friends because of the machismo policing feeds off of. I hate how I have to worry about my non-white friends and family. I hate how so many familiar faces are now cops, and have dedicated their lives to opposing the things that would make the people I care about safer and happier.