

CRES 10
Policing Testimonial 2

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Over the course we have touched on many different ways race and policing intersect. My current understanding of these concepts places them within a context that is much larger and more complicated than any single individual or group.

Race as a concept and ideology has been deconstructed during this course, as a social layer on top of the physical reality. Race is not tied to biology or history or appearance so much as it is a social othering, the relegation of some to the bottom of society. Personally I understand the cause of this to not be any single person or group hating another, but of many groups and people taking advantage of previous othering.

When colonizing Africa the rhetoric of civilizing and savagery worked well in convincing people to visit upon others horrific crimes. When someone needs cheap labor it is easy to piggy back off of the previous rhetoric to build an idea of a lazy African who can only be civilized through hard labor. When trying to win the votes of the Irish it was useful to align yourself with them, and against the lazy savage Blacks. In that way I see race as the product of many cruel, apathetic decisions. Each step was wrong but each action made the following ones easier until Race and racial identity was a bedrock upon which so much stood.

In this framing the role of police is that of control. It is the means by which the rhetorical framework of Race is replicated. Black people must be criminal, so over policing and targeted laws ensure Black people fill up prisons. Black people are lazy and poor, so regulations like redlining and sharecropping exist which all but guarantee it. And the role of police in all these systems is to be the physical violence which makes the lines solid and meaningful.

As mentioned during lecture, one of the main benefits of whiteness was the suppression and subjugation of minorities. Its not necessarily about killing the non-white, but about exercising power, and fetishizing that exercise. That phenomenon is what I experienced in the first testimonial, I was watching the people around me be inducted into the worship and production of Race and legitimacy. Through that lens you can see how Racism and Policing perpetuate themselves. The system of policing cultivates the ideologies policing is meant to enforce. And those who are fully inducted end up joining the police.

When I was in school I was watching how kids are taught about race, both officially and by culture at large. The Cis-het White men, were educated into embracing race. They ended up hating the non-straight, the non-white, the non-cis people of the world. Some of them even ended up believing that trans people shouldn't get healthcare even as their friends came out as trans. As children grew into adults they were separated by ideology and social construction to more easily fit into society. They are made into vessels for the reproduction of Race and Policing as constructs.

Each of these social constructions feed into each other. When one of those kids I knew who idolized the police saw police brutality, individualism would assuage his worries. Homophobia explained why the world didn't seem all that good despite all the people they idolized holding all the power, classism explained why some should have so much but others should have so little. Misogyny lets them square away the questions about how women are represented to them.

To them, policing is about comfort and immersion, and that comfort makes them into part of the system of policing. They are alienated from everything and everybody they would need to hate in order to become the arm of the law and enforce the systems which shaped them. And the worrying thing is how efficiently and pervasive the systems shaping people's beliefs and thoughts are.

I am lucky, I was more like those kids than not. The difference was circumstantial. Much of my family is non-white, and a few are scholars of critical theory. Despite all that it was only the luck of randomly finding resources that presented critical ideas in a way I was receptive to. Because of this my relationship to policing is mostly a relationship to the kids who grew up to become Police rather than idolizing the Police myself.