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July 5, 2015

Two: What is Justice?

Relevant Change in Oakland and New York

As Professor Bagbins discusses in our lecture for Unit 2, Oakland and New York have two exceptionally distinguishing histories with regards to the politics of crime. These cities have both experienced deep changes to their perception and treatment of criminal activity. Said alterations are largely accredited to the culture with which the mayor associates, and understandably so, given the local political leaders are responsible for those who deal directly with crime. Police behavior in these highly crime-aware cities truly reflects the mayor's beliefs on the treatment of crime. Oakland has a fairly long history of pervasively negative feelings towards the police department, while the New York Police Department has had an approximately thirty-year run of successful reduction of violent crime with a general feeling of support, and much of this is due to the mayoral culture.

Such developments are quite relevant to a course such as ours, as they truly capture the relationship between implementations of law, perceptions of society, and the evolutions of both. Societies such as ours have a collective hand in deciding the morality of actions as perceived and dealt with by creating and implementing new ideas and laws. These laws are recorded and will pass through time to have an effect on all future societies and their implementations of law. We experience the echoes of past societies and their laws in our current societies, such as ideas attributed to Plato and Aristotle, and on a larger scale, the values held by various religious systems. We see this often, in more chronologically local events, with various court decisions. When similar disputes of legality arise, prior and related official court rulings are cited.