

2016

## Have We Reached the Point of Critical Mass in Community and Police Relations?

Richard C. Lumb

*The College at Brockport*, rclumb@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/crj\\_facpub](http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/crj_facpub)

---

### Repository Citation

Lumb, Richard C., "Have We Reached the Point of Critical Mass in Community and Police Relations?" (2016). *Criminal Justice Faculty Publications*. 23.

[http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/crj\\_facpub/23](http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/crj_facpub/23)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Criminal Justice at Digital Commons @Brockport. It has been accepted for inclusion in Criminal Justice Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @Brockport. For more information, please contact [kmyers@brockport.edu](mailto:kmyers@brockport.edu).

# Have We Reached the Point of Critical Mass in Community and Police Relations?

By

**Richard C. Lumb, Ph.D.**

**The state University of New York at Brockport, Emeritus**

---

The increasingly malicious killing of police officers has acquired absurd status. The point of “no return” has arrived. Elected and appointed officials must stop empowering, through tacit acceptance, the behaviors now emerging in society. This destructiveness is polarizing, creating socially unhealthy separation and it must not be allowed to continue. Within the veiled silence, all across our land can be heard the words, “*We condone murder!*” Do we? What if the attention was focused on you? A different story would emerge with the velocity of lightning.

Elected and appointed officials, hiding in silence, are reckless when we consider the responsibilities they have placed upon police employees, some of which are not within their role, but positioned there nonetheless. Police must handle under-funded mandates, address social issues outside the realm of actual police responsibility, respond to frivolous calls, and act as society’s conscience, one that is ever more clouded by the day. Under their direction, police officers are required to ensure that job duties are carried out fairly and impartially and with officer safety at the forefront. Those who should stand with them, participating in the examination of social issues and engaging in finding solutions, are curiously absent to avoid attention. This behavior is cowardly.

When community issues and complaints arise, we need to step up and assist in finding sustainable solutions. That responsibility cannot and must not be avoided! When you circumvent inclusiveness in the operation of any department under your direction, you are part of the problem if you fail to engage. You cannot transfer blame as an executive, for the old saying, “*The buck stops here!*” ends with you.

All citizens should engage in an ongoing examination of all elected and appointed officials, especially if they are not actively involved in addressing the serious issues facing society and law enforcement. They must be held accountable for their action and their inaction, and be able to explain. The same accountability, too often blamed on police chiefs or sheriffs, also refers to the civilian leadership. Your oversight responsibility exists each day, not when the scramble to place blame arises. Become knowledgeable, pay attention, work to support and engage in problem-solving, which will reduce most of the simmering issues that often end up suddenly going ballistic.

People call the police, as they are unwilling or unable to confront whatever threat or problem presents itself. We are more than happy to push the danger and responsibility onto them. Given the current trends, we must no longer tolerate social upheaval. Silence is not a choice, and you are being called to engage, act responsibly and start fixing long-existing problems. At all levels of society, we the people must be more active players in our daily quality of life issues. There is a sense of increasing

demand that we citizens display real courage, step out of the shadows and assume more responsibility and accountability. Doing so will bring about better solutions to persistent problems.

We must demand that elected and appointed officials come out from behind these closed doors and personalized agendas and work on finding solutions in collaboration with others. To not do so, may result in finding yourselves with diminishing barriers to the crime and violence that lurks just beyond that door you find so comforting. Their law enforcement role in the community is critical. This alone demands your engagement. Time to step up or step out!

No police officer should be subjected to assault and injury, threats by violent people or murder. As police have a social responsibility, so, too, do the elected and appointed officials. No longer can we abrogate social control to particular topic agendas. Everyone has a duty to the greater society, and that expectation should be present as well. Importantly, all citizens of this country have an obligation to live according to the rules, and when they do not, we have many who look the other way. Social accountability pertains to all people who claim this country as their place of residence. To all stories, we must reinforce this rule equally.

As a party to the problem, you have a duty to help find solutions that resolve and improve conditions. Moreover, we must insist on local solutions to issues where engagement in the problem-solving activities includes all stakeholders. Casting blame is not a solution; it is inflammatory. Silence is a catalyst to more accusation without a solution. If you continue to hide from demanding that it stop, and remain silent, then the consequences are yours to bear as well.

No more posturing, it is time for accountability by all segments of government and the community. This escalating violence will continue, greater push back will occur, retrenchment is and will continue to happen and the slow disintegration of society the outcome. We need to find solutions to the issues and get to it!

All humans at every level of society experience problems as part of life. Thus, social issues, involving questions of behavior and actions need sustainable solutions, not silence or promotion of veiled interests as a focus. The need to bring about appropriate change has arrived as the aggrieved now face an increasingly hostile civil society that is fed up with all the dysfunction the country now experiences.

Without question, change is needed, and the current trend if left unabated, will lead to even more meaningful outcomes. We have reached that decision point where the police must take action to stop their being killed, assaulted, and treated as they are, simply for survival. Want to take a chance of no police presence? I bet not, for the majority of you realize that anarchy is always a potential outcome. There is a better way!

We, the people of this country, are concerned at the inertia of government, the individual agendas at play, of being ignored, and of the discrepancies that exist. A huge

citizen majority has waited and now chooses to force change. It will be better served as a collaborative effort.