

# THE IMPORTANCE OF “US”

## THE FAILURE OF BEING CAST AS “THEM”



THOMAS J. LEMMER / CHICAGO FOP LODGE #7 MEMBER

In any serious discussion, we all know two things when the discussion has an “us” and “them” component. First, the discussion is not going well. Second, we should never choose to be in the “them” grouping. Knowing this, we must ask: **Is this dynamic playing out now relative to the policing profession?**

On January 13, during the final hours (minutes actually) of the Illinois General Assembly lame-duck session, a measure touted as a criminal justice reform package, known as Senate Amendment 2 to House Bill 3653, was passed. The amended bill was approved without any substantial opportunity to fully review the **764 pages** of proposed changes to state law, nor was there time to appropriately consider what far-reaching consequences the bill will bring.<sup>1</sup> The total elimination of cash bail was among the headline items, but the bill also further limits the use of force by police (including less-than-lethal force); and adds a confusing “cannot be apprehended at a later date” element to the complicated prohibitions on the use of deadly force with a fleeing subject who is reasonably believed likely to cause great bodily harm to another,

and who has “just” used or attempted to use force likely to cause great bodily harm, even when the subject is fleeing by the use of a deadly weapon or “indicates he will endanger human life.” The bill also strips the power of police to make physical arrests in Class B and C misdemeanor offenses, which includes trespass to real property; criminalizes as a felony offense when an officer fails to follow the state statute or their department’s procedures on the use of body cameras; removes statutory language allowing officers to review their own body camera footage before writing their reports; strips core protections from the Peace Officers’ Bill of Rights; establishes a task force to reconsider qualified immunity; and much, much more.

The Illinois Law Enforcement Coalition, which included the Illinois State and Chicago FOP Lodges, in a joint statement concluded: **“In the dark of the night, Illinois legislators made Illinois less safe.”** They noted that the

coalition had been **“working in good faith with the Attorney General on a bill that would make great strides to modernize law enforcement, but that legislation was dumped into this**

***We have been cast by increasingly successful political forces into the role of “them” — that is to say, the police profession is to an alarming degree being separated from the communities it serves.***

<sup>1</sup> Illinois General Assembly, 101st General Assembly, Bill Status of HB 3653, [www.ilga.gov/legislation/billstatus.asp?DocNum=3653&GAID=15&GA=101&DocTypeID=HB&LegID=120371&SessionID=108](http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/billstatus.asp?DocNum=3653&GAID=15&GA=101&DocTypeID=HB&LegID=120371&SessionID=108). Accessed 27 January 2021.

**monster bill and the result is a betrayal of the public trust that gives many more advantages to criminals than the police.”**<sup>2</sup> The haste by which the bill was drafted and rushed through the General Assembly — without being fully vetted — was even noted by the *Chicago Tribune*, which advised Governor J.B. Pritzker not to sign the bill.<sup>3</sup> For a detailed analysis of the legislation, I refer all to the “Reform Bill Resource Center,” posted by the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police, a partner association in the coalition.<sup>4</sup> My purpose here is not to go into the many details of the bill itself, but rather to place the bill into the context of our profession’s larger circumstances, and to provide a key reminder on the needed path going forward.

Where we are now as a profession, and where we are as local communities across the nation, is a place we have been headed for some time. However, **what we as a profession must remember now** is that our current challenges can be traced back to a more fundamental point. **We have been cast by increasingly successful political forces into the role of “them”** — that is to say, the police profession is to an alarming degree being separated from the communities it serves. If this separation continues, **the police will fail** in their mission to help foster safer and stronger communities.

### Just 10 of the Underlying Factors Leading to Where We Are

When a commercial airliner crashes, there is always a comprehensive investigation into why the plane went down, and the assigned investigators produce a long report with a list of contributing factors. These factors generally break down into three groupings: pilot error, mechanical malfunction or defect, and weather. After the investigation, some analyst inevitably comes along, sifts through all the factors and points the public to the single greatest underlying factor. The following list is provided to acknowledge, as with a major plane crash, there is a long list of contributing factors that set the stage for the legislation that passed in the Illinois General Assembly. However, it must be understood that the below factors, combined with others, merely helped to establish the environment in which the police were successfully cast into the damaging role of “them,” which then led to the metaphorical crash composing HB 3653.

1. What goes up comes down (unless it gets past the gravitational pull of the Earth — a discussion for another day). Policing was riding high in the afterglow of the community policing movement of the 1990s and the profession was strengthened by the national unity that existed post 9/11 — that is, until the 2014 officer-involved shooting incident in Ferguson, Missouri.
2. Discord has always sold better for newspapers than unity



— as the saying goes, “If it bleeds, it leads.” Such was the case even when the newspaper came out once a day, and now that we have the 24-hour news cycle of cable television and the always present internet, there is an endless need for “shocking,” “outrageous” and “click-worthy” content. Evidence of this factor has shown increased intensity since 2014.

3. Yes, sometimes the police are wrong — which helps feed an agenda-based narrative that focuses disproportionate and unrelenting attention to selected, highly-charged and controversial police–citizen encounters that are **not** representative of the millions upon millions of police–citizen encounters that occur each year. Even when the police are found in these incidents to have acted properly, the damaging narrative lives on.
4. Amnesia has set in among many civic leaders regarding how heavily our society relies upon the public safety services provided daily by our police officers, and how the overwhelming majority of police interactions take place consistent with community expectations. These leaders, including elected officials lured by the politics of the “defund” mantra, have an obligation to not only “hold the police accountable,” they also have a responsibility to constructively inform and guide the community. When civic leaders fail to meet these responsibilities, community support for the police is weakened.

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<sup>2</sup> Illinois Law Enforcement Coalition, “Illinois Law Enforcement Coalition issues statement regarding action taken by the State Senate during the Lame Duck session,” <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5516f090e4b01b711314608f/t/5fff13562557e379de06706f/1610552151566/ILEC+Lame+Duck+Statement.pdf>. Accessed 4 February 2021.

<sup>3</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, Editorial Board, “Policing and outrage at a rushed criminal justice reform bill,” 15 January 2021, [www.chicagotribune.com/opinion/editorials/ct-edit-crime-bill-illinois-cash-bail-20210115-dppzcwnborbxi43z4alagxxfa-story.html](http://www.chicagotribune.com/opinion/editorials/ct-edit-crime-bill-illinois-cash-bail-20210115-dppzcwnborbxi43z4alagxxfa-story.html). Accessed 15 January 2021.

<sup>4</sup> ILACP, “2021 Police ‘Reform Bill’ Resource Center,” [www.ilchiefs.org/2021-police-reform-resource-center](http://www.ilchiefs.org/2021-police-reform-resource-center). Accessed 27 January 2021.

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5. We often place unrealistic demands with unrealistic expectations upon our police officers. Our officers, while human, are expected to perform a wide range of duties without error (or even the perception of error). Given that the police are often the only access point to assistance immediately available, many tasks assigned to the police are ones involving questions of mental health and social service needs with limited law enforcement implications. Moreover, our officers often perform their duties during complex and confusing circumstances, often requiring urgency, and at times placing them in grave personal danger.
6. The cellphone is more than a phone; it provides the ability for anyone at any moment to take a photo, stream video and create and communicate news and fake news across the globe.

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7. Shortened attention spans among the population at large, where complex concepts, multilayered events with multiple simultaneous factors and a commitment to true factfinding before drawing conclusions are all reduced to 60-second soundbites, edited video clips and instant demands for the imposition of retribution under the guise of accountability.
8. A too often dysfunctional court system with misdemeanor courts that are more likely to dismiss cases without resolution than actually hear the evidence, felony courts known most for delayed and bargained outcomes, and courts overall that leave far too many victims feeling ignored and offenders simply processed along an assembly line without any effective intervention.
9. The deepest national political divisions since the 1860s, which at that time culminated in a civil war and the deaths of more than 640,000 Americans.
10. Robert Peele’s Principle #7, which advises “**the police are the public and the public are the police.**”<sup>5</sup> The police

<sup>5</sup> Durham Police, “Sir Robert Peel’s Principles of Law Enforcement, 1829,” [www.durham.police.uk/About-Us/Documents/Peels\\_Principles\\_Of\\_Law\\_Enforcement.pdf](http://www.durham.police.uk/About-Us/Documents/Peels_Principles_Of_Law_Enforcement.pdf). Accessed 27 January 2021.

# The Power of the FOP Voice



*We want your input on the design of the FOP’s new biennial survey!*

Based upon the success of our 2018 Survey of Officer Mental and Behavioral Health, the National FOP recognizes the impact that our more than 356,000 members have had in shaping solutions for our profession. With significant lessons learned from your responses, the FOP has developed a robust program of wellness services and is leading the way in providing the best for our brothers and sisters.

With that in mind, we would like to announce the development of the FOP Biennial Issues in Policing Survey. To be rolled out at the 2021 National Biennial Conference in Indianapolis, the survey will once again provide our members with the opportunity to be heard regarding the issues that matter most to our profession.

We are calling on FOP members and leaders **NOW** to provide input as we design the survey. What do you want the FOP, the profession and world to know about your experience? Contact us at [officerwellness@fop.net](mailto:officerwellness@fop.net) to contribute your ideas!



are an essential component of the community. Whenever the police are viewed by the community — and worse by the police themselves — as separate and apart from the community, the police will fail in their public safety efforts, disorder and violence will increase and an increased frequency of incidents viewed as abuses of authority are inevitable.

### The Police As “Them”

When “ACAB” (all cops are bast\*\*ds)<sup>6</sup> is a popular rallying cry, clearly those supporting the slogan see the issue from an “us versus them” worldview — a view that places the police in the “them” group. By seeking public acceptance of the view that the police are outside the community of “us,” the activists then also seek to advance the narrative that the police (as “them”) are a threat to the community, cannot be trusted and must be tightly constrained, if not entirely abolished. This approach gained a substantial foothold within the political landscape following the Ferguson incident, and it has rocketed forward following the 2020 (a year like no other) incident in Minneapolis. “ACAB” has been spray-painted again and again on banners, walls and statues across the nation. The policing profession should not ignore the damaging effect that the status of “them” has brought forward. This status has been the key underlying factor active in Springfield that culminated in the passage of HB 3653. Had this groundwork in dividing the police from the community not been laid, the bill as written would **not** have passed.

“Winning the hearts and minds” is a concept that has been employed in a myriad of organizational, business, educational

and social contexts — including warfare. The concept holds that for an individual or external group to achieve a desired outcome with another individual or established group — beyond the use of a compelling external force — there must be developed within the other individual or established group an acceptance of the new leadership and new direction. The tools at hand are informational and emotional in nature, (in the negative, including misinformation and fear). Using these tools, changed beliefs and attitudes are to be internalized and serve as the catalyst for the desired changes in overt behaviors, actions and outcomes by the focus (or targeted) individual, group or population.

For several years now, there have been sustained “hearts and minds” efforts directed at creating a view within our communities that the police are in need of substantial reform.<sup>7</sup> Again, we saw these efforts intensify in 2020, with many activists openly advocating for the police to be abolished entirely. While the most extreme manifestations of the “abolish the police” effort occurred in cities like Minneapolis<sup>8</sup> and Portland,<sup>9</sup> there were calls for these actions across the nation,<sup>10</sup> including here in Illinois.<sup>11</sup>

Some of these efforts involved self-declared anarchists.<sup>12</sup> When forces that openly seek to bring about the destruction of our current society latch onto legitimate community desires to continue the drive toward the widely cherished ideal of “justice for all” — there is reason for concern. When these anarchist forces successfully co-opt legitimate community concerns regarding police accountability for their own destructive purposes, there should be great concern across the community.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Dictionary.com, “ACAB,” [www.dictionary.com/e/acronyms/acab](http://www.dictionary.com/e/acronyms/acab). Accessed 27 January 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Maya Harris West, “Organized for Change: The Activist’s Guide to Police Reform,” Policy Link, 2004, [www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/ORGANIZEDFORCHANGE\\_FINAL.PDF](http://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/ORGANIZEDFORCHANGE_FINAL.PDF). Accessed 27 January 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Ben Feuerherd, “Minneapolis City Council approves measure to abolish police force,” *New York Post*, 26 June 2020, [nypost.com/2020/06/26/minneapolis-city-council-approves-measure-to-abolish-police-force](https://nypost.com/2020/06/26/minneapolis-city-council-approves-measure-to-abolish-police-force). Accessed 27 January 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Marty Smith, “What Would Actually Be Required to Abolish the Portland Police Bureau?,” *Willamette Week*, 4 July 2020, [www.wweek.com/news/courts/2020/07/04/what-would-actually-be-required-to-abolish-the-portland-police-bureau](http://www.wweek.com/news/courts/2020/07/04/what-would-actually-be-required-to-abolish-the-portland-police-bureau). Accessed 27 January 2021.

<sup>10</sup> Rachel Fairbank, “Let’s Abolish the Police Force,” *Life Hacker*, 5 June 2020, [lifelifehacker.com/lets-abolish-the-police-force-1843922788](https://lifelifehacker.com/lets-abolish-the-police-force-1843922788). Accessed 27 January 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Lee V. Gaines, “A Debate Over Defunding the Campus Police Takes Root at the University of Illinois,” *Illinois News Room*, 25 January 2021, [illinoisnewsroom.org/a-debate-over-defunding-the-campus-police-takes-root-at-the-university-of-illinois](https://illinoisnewsroom.org/a-debate-over-defunding-the-campus-police-takes-root-at-the-university-of-illinois). Accessed 27 January 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Jay Greenberg, “Portland Leftists: Abolish the United States of America,” *Neon Nettle*, 13 August 2020, [neonnettle.com/news/12306-portland-leftists-abolish-the-united-states-of-america](https://neonnettle.com/news/12306-portland-leftists-abolish-the-united-states-of-america). Accessed 27 January 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Gregory Scruggs, “Activists take over a Seattle neighborhood, banishing the police,” *The Washington Post*, 11 June 2020, [www.washingtonpost.com/national/activists-take-over-a-seattle-neighborhood-banishing-the-police/2020/06/11/7172e1e6-ac24-11ea-a9d9-a81c1a491c52\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/activists-take-over-a-seattle-neighborhood-banishing-the-police/2020/06/11/7172e1e6-ac24-11ea-a9d9-a81c1a491c52_story.html). Accessed 27 January 2021.

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The response to these deliberate efforts to divide the police from the larger community must be built from the foundational principle that the police **are** part of the community. For policing to work, the community must see the police as part of the “us” group. The solutions to the consequences that will come with legislation like HB 3653 will not be found by the police profession working alone. The needed solutions will be found only through the power of the community of “us.”

### The Police Are Part of “Us” — the Community

There is actually very little evidence to suggest that the police are a community threat and mountains of evidence to indicate that the police are essential to maintaining a safe and just community respectful of the rights of all. Further, as a community, we allow

the police–community bond to be broken at our own peril.<sup>14</sup>

Were we not instructed: “**Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends**”?<sup>15</sup> As of February 6, the Officer Down Memorial Page had chronicled 24,721 law enforcement officers who died in service to America’s communities since the nation’s founding.<sup>16</sup> Were not these sacrifices from within the community of us? Was this not done for us? Who among “us” dares to say otherwise?

It also bears noting that the FOP, other police organizations and law enforcement agencies from across the nation have continued to work to improve the quality of policing. National FOP President Patrick Yoes reminded the nation of this commitment in his June 2020 testimony

before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, stating: “... **we stand ready to work with anyone, speak with anyone and cooperate with anyone who genuinely wants to work collectively, in a fact-based way, to improve policing in our**

*As a profession, it is essential that we fully reawaken our community policing roots and engage in active problem-solving directly with community residents and stakeholders.*

<sup>14</sup>Thomas Lemmer, “It’s High Noon for American Policing,” *Forum*, Illinois Law Enforcement Training & Standard Board, Executive Institute, December 2015, [www.researchgate.net/publication/290991205](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/290991205). Accessed 27 January 2021.

<sup>15</sup>The Bible, King James Version, John 15:13, [www.biblehub.com/kjv/john/15.htm](http://www.biblehub.com/kjv/john/15.htm). Accessed 6 February 2021.

<sup>16</sup>Officer Down Memorial Page, [www.odmp.org](http://www.odmp.org). Accessed 6 February 2021.

## FOP Approved Wellness Provider Facilities

### Chateau Recovery: First Responder Resiliency Program

Midway, UT

[chateaurecovery.com/programs/first-responders](http://chateaurecovery.com/programs/first-responders)

### FHE Health, Inc.: Shatterproof Program

Deerfield Beach, FL

[fherehab.com/services/first-responders](http://fherehab.com/services/first-responders)

### Transformations Treatment Center: Help for Our Heroes Program

Delray Beach, FL

[helpforourheroes.com](http://helpforourheroes.com)

### Warrior’s Heart

Bandera, TX

[warriorshheart.com](http://warriorshheart.com)

country.” He added: “We cannot do it alone, but it must be done.”<sup>17</sup>

What can FOP lodges, and every police chief and beat officer, do to help improve the path forward? As President Yoes stated in his January message: “**To overcome the divisive rhetoric from some elected officials and the media, we must do two things: acknowledge the opportunities to improve and be a viable part of a path forward.**”<sup>18</sup> Wherever needed, the first task is to remind the community that the police are part of the community. A powerful tool in this outreach effort is the FOP’s “Community and Media Relations Tool Kit,” particularly the kit’s guidance on creating a “center of influence.”<sup>19</sup> As described in the tool kit, these are policing’s strongest community partners, the key stakeholders and community organizations — including groups that may have previously expressed concerns about policing, but through active engagement have established a renewed trust with their local police. A trust gained through an appreciation of the commonalities (including the desire for a safer community) that the police share with the larger community and these key stakeholders. What we must all remember, when we are working with the community, we are working from within the community — as the police are a part of “us.” Without question, as a community, and as a profession within the community, we are facing exceptionally challenging times. The

way forward must be a proactive one. The way forward must be one with broad outreach across our community partners. We must reawaken the active engagement of veterans’ groups, churches, civic organizations, neighborhood organizations, community groups, youth centers and more. As a profession, it is essential that we fully reawaken our community policing roots and engage in active problem-solving directly with community residents and stakeholders. We must reach the hearts and minds of our community and call them to action. If we seek to regain the support in Congress and the legislatures necessary for us to meet our public safety mission — the media and our elected officials must hear the voices of support for the police from our “centers of influence” and across the community of us. **FOP**

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Thomas Lemmer is a member of the FOP and has nearly four decades of experience in public safety positions, including extensive experience as a law enforcement supervisor and executive. Most recently, he was a deputy chief for the Chicago Police Department. He has served in ethnically diverse and predominately minority communities, as well as within college, military, public transportation and public housing settings. He holds B.A. and M.A. degrees in criminal justice, and for seven years was an undergraduate instructor at Loyola University Chicago. He has expertise in addressing the complexities of community policing, juvenile crime, gangs, violence, patrol operations, police policy development and management accountability.

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<sup>17</sup>National Fraternal Order of Police, Press Release, “National FOP President Testifies Before Senate Judiciary Committee,” [fop.net/CmsDocument/Doc/pr\\_2020-0617.pdf](https://www.fop.net/CmsDocument/Doc/pr_2020-0617.pdf). Accessed 5 February 2021.

<sup>18</sup>Patrick Yoes, “Communications Tool Kit Helps FOP Deliver a Unified Message,” *FOP Journal*, January 2021, p. 8, [pubs.911media.com/flipbook-fop/2021/01/#p=8](https://pubs.911media.com/flipbook-fop/2021/01/#p=8). Accessed 5 February 2021.

<sup>19</sup>FOP National Lodge, “Community and Media Relations Tool Kit,” [national.fop.net/toolkit](https://www.national.fop.net/toolkit). Accessed 5 February 2021.

## SHARE YOUR STORY!

So many of us learn from the experiences of others, especially others with whom we share things in common. Do you have a story to tell of overcoming adversity in your own life? The National Officer Wellness Committee would like to hear it!

Whether you would just like to share your story privately with peers on the Committee or are willing to share with readers so that all can learn from it and celebrate with you, we want to hear from you! Contact us confidentially at [officerwellness@fop.net](mailto:officerwellness@fop.net).

