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Prepare Now to Pass: The Acid Test of Human Diversity

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prepare now to pass . . .

The Acid Test of Human Diversity

By Patrick Oliver, Ranger Chief
Cleveland Metroparks Ranger Department

In the state of Ohio, both the Peace Officer Training Council and the Association of Chiefs of Police are developing model training curriculums in the area of cultural and human diversity.

The Peace Officer Training Council's primary emphasis is on pre-service training; and secondarily, it plans to provide a program for all other sworn officers. In addition, it must decide whether to mandate this program or a similar one for all in-service sworn personnel. (Currently, no state in the country has mandated training in this area.)

The Chief's Association's primary focus is to provide training for law enforcement administrators, and secondarily, for other sworn officers. Both agencies are working to develop compatibility between these two programs. As a member of the Subcommittee on Cultural Diversity for the Ohio Peace Officers Training Council, I have some understanding of how complex and critical this issue is.

Currently many law enforcement agencies around the country are developing or implementing training programs for their staffs in cultural or human diversity. In spite of what some law enforcement practitioners might say, it is generally a reactionary response to local and national problems in this area.

Also, most law enforcement administrators probably are aware that by the year 2,000 the composition of the public we serve will change significantly. By the 21st century, there will be greater diversity among our client base and probable extensive training available on how to serve them properly.

The important questions for all Chief Executive Officers (CEO's) to ask is this: Is the composition of your law enforcement agency representative of the public you serve? This, I suspect, will be the acid test of whether your agency is perceived as being successful or unsuccessful in the area of cultural and human diversity.

Definition of Terms

Cultural Diversity refers to the different races, cultures and ethnic groups that are co-existing in our communities and nation. Each of them is different due to their heritage, traditions, environ-

ments, physical features, socialization patterns, etc.

Human Diversity is an expansion of the term "cultural diversity." It not only includes the different cultures but addresses such differences as sex, sexual orientation, age, disabilities, etc.

Some Strategies for Success

As an administrator, the starting point is believing that it is desirable to have the human diversity of your staff be representative of the public you serve. It is not enough to provide human diversity training for your staff. The public must believe that you practice what you preach. The successful hiring and retention of a diverse staff will reinforce your training efforts.

Set a goal, develop a five- or ten-year plan for achieving human diversity within your staff. Reduce this plan to writing and communicate it to your staff and community. It should explain that practicing human diversity is good business and should set forth what your desired results are. The Chief Executive Officers must take the lead in this area and mandate progress. Otherwise, the goals of the departmental plan may not be reached.

Take a strong stand in the enforcement against hate crimes within your jurisdiction. As the local law enforcement agency, it is your primary responsibility to protect the rights of all citizens. Those who are discriminated against because they are different will want to examine your policies, procedures and practices if they perceive police service to be inadequate in this area.

Have administrative policies on discrimination and harassment of employees. Take swift and immediate action when violations in these areas occur.

Develop and implement a thorough and professional recruitment, selection, and hiring process. It is this writer's opinion that human diversity hiring practices do not mean placing unqualified people in a sworn officer's position.

Human diversity hiring should mean hiring a qualified diverse staff. Hint: do not say as an

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administrator that you cannot find qualified minorities, females, etc. No matter how well-meaning you are, it will be interpreted by some that you *will not* instead of *can not*.

Additionally, it appears you are saying that those who are different from the majority are not as capable and qualified. Besides, you will never develop human diversity among your staff members if you do not believe it is possible (previous point made).

Begin now to plan and to prepare to ensure compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Acts. This law was enacted to eliminate discrimination against individuals with disabilities who are able to work.

This law will become effective at different times — depending on the size of the agency. For example, for employers with at least 25 employees, it will take effect on July 26, 1992; for employers with at least 15 employees, it will take effect on July 26, 1994.

Compliance with this new law will probably require changes in policies, procedures and physical facilities to some degree. Planning and preparation will be the keys to success for your agency.

Conclusion

Both locally and nationally, human diversity issues abound. Various issues, situations and criminal violations are occurring which cause citizens, politicians, attorneys, courts and others to ask: how much knowledge, ability and skills do the law enforcement officers exhibit in dealing with those who are different from themselves?

Some agencies are reacting to the problems at hand while others look on — responding with preventive training programs and policies; literally every agency is in one of these two positions. This has caused cultural diversity training to be vague.

There appears to be an unlimited number of individuals and companies who want to contract with your agency for human diversity training. A good question is: if you hire this training consultant, will you obtain the proper results from your staff in the area of human diversity?

A better question is: if the public you serve examines the composition of your staff, will they perceive that you practice human diversity? **OPC**

The Teachable Moment

By Clair Young
OACP Education Director

Human diversity in our society is fast becoming a social reality. This diversity includes those attitudes, attributes, beliefs or behavior that tend to set one group apart from another, including •race •color •creed or religious belief •culture or country of origin •sex •sexual orientation •age •divergent lifestyle and •disability. These diversities are not listed in any specific order of importance and a priority listing would vary greatly based on geographic location.

Linked with these pending changes are related facts that add to the complexity of the situation. Social scientists indicate that by the year 2000, non-white minority groups will represent about 85 percent of those entering the work force.

An estimated 95 percent of jobs will require specialized training or skills and 75 percent of the current work force will require retraining. Those with insufficient training who are unable to obtain employment will present communities with severe socio-economic challenges as well as the potential for increased criminal activities.

Public understanding and/or acceptance of those in our society who are different has a tendency to lag behind the proliferation of many of these groups. If groups in a society are denied recognition, they can become activists and the climate for confrontation and violence can develop. The impact of this activism on law enforcement agencies is well documented.

These trends and developments have dramatically changed the traditional role of police agencies as law enforcers to a new role — that of working closely with various elements of the community.

Mutual problem-solving and community-based efforts involving police agencies, business and industry and private citizens have become critical factors in visionary police leadership, crime prevention and crime control.

Police executives and their staffs must have knowledge and understanding of social issues, economic trends and, above all, acceptance of the human diversities in our changing society.

Adjustment to the noted societal changes include the changing of attitudes in relation to the acceptance of human diversities with a resultant change in behavior. A change in behavior by the police community would be manifested by quality contact with the public in all circumstances.

The result would include fewer accusations of brutality and violence, a lesser degree of liability, a positive police image and greater public acceptance of the police. **OPC**

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