



COMMUNITY POLICING AND REPRESENTATION WITHIN POLICING IN CANADA

Date: November 14, 2023

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KEY EVENTS

On November 14, 2023, Jacqueline Edwards presented *Community Policing and Representation within Policing in Canada* for this year's West Coast Security Conference. The key points discussed were diversity in policing and the importance of accountability and community engagement in policing.

NATURE OF DISCUSSION

Ms. Edwards spoke on diversity in policing, its significance, and the means in which we can support diverse spaces by creating an environment that is accessible and supportive. She referenced the Association of Black Law Enforcers (ABLE) which was established to support black and racialized individuals in the policing space.

BACKGROUND

Ms. Edwards began her presentation with the introduction of the ABLE, created out of a need to improve the image of law enforcement in North America. Part of the intent was to model behavior that was more indicative of professionals in the space and create a safe space for black and racialized individuals. It was created to combat loneliness experienced within law enforcement and create a network for black and racialized people to connect and engage.

For Ms. Edwards, seeking diversity in the law enforcement space in—both policing and corrections—is important, as some areas require a more intentional approach. Though racism, sexism, and homophobia are still present within the field, there is a transformation taking place under the guidance of courageous police leaders. Ms. Edwards stated that this shift is noticeable, even though it is

far from where she and others believe the field needs to be. She acknowledged that positive growth may not be as publicized, however, and evaluating progress within North American policing is sometimes difficult. She emphasized the need for increased accountability and an encouragement for change within the evolving policing landscape.

Ms. Edwards referenced her experience as a testament to the changing landscape of policing, affirming that it is important to see yourself reflected in different spaces within your chosen career. Individuals are encouraged when they see people who look like them in policing spaces, and she stated that courage, cooperation, being part of the solution, co-development, and co-creativity are imperative in establishing the path forward in efforts to dismantle discrimination.

Ms. Edwards noted that some behaviors are counterproductive to forming the inclusive and diverse spaces we seek in policing, reiterating that it is essential to not to be exclusive in attempts to be inclusive. An intent to create, not recreate, is needed in the process of dismantling oppressive ideologies (i.e. homophobia, sexism, racism), and the culture needs to change to actively ensure inclusivity. It is important for individuals entering the policing space to not feel othered. She asked the audience to consider how to recognize and respect differences and also integrate those differences into the fabric of the field. Ms. Edwards emphasized the importance of mental wellness and highlighted the significance of recognizing how work environments are affected by racism, sexism, and homophobia.

Ms. Edwards acknowledged the need to reference research and academics to help evolve and support the progress being made in policing, stating that researchers are not doing research for research's sake—it is necessary to find a cure, utilize the knowledge to solve it, and apply it with increased awareness. Her recommendations included more community and youth engagement which she believes will aid in achieving the higher standard of excellence in policing. To conclude, Ms. Edwards emphasized the need for the footprint of the past to remain so that the upcoming generation views policing as an honorable profession.

KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

- The association of black law enforcers was created to support and bring together black and racialized people within policing.
- The policing space is actively evolving, there is a transformation taking place under the guidance of courageous police leaders.

- It is crucial to increase accountability and allow changes that evolve the policing landscape. Research and academia can play a role in supporting the evolution and progress being made in policing.
- More community and youth engagement will aid in achieving a standard of excellence in policing. We need to ensure that the footprint of the past remains so that the upcoming generation sees policing as an honorable profession.



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