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Forword
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FOREWORD TO THE SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY LAW JOURNAL SYMPOSIUM ISSUE

On November 13, 2015 the Southern Illinois University Law Journal, together with Southern Illinois University School of Law and Southern Illinois University School of Medicine, hosted a symposium entitled “The President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing: Procedural Justice, Policing and Public Health.” This issue collects papers presented and remarks given at the symposium.

The occasion for the symposium was the Final Report of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing. The symposium was the idea of, and in large part organized by, SIU and SIU Law Journal alum Sean Smoot, who was a member of the President’s Task Force and is the Director and Chief Legal Counsel for the Policemen’s Benefit and Protective Association Labor Committee of Illinois.

The Task Force itself was constituted in response to the growing attention and focus on issues relating to police use of force emerging from incidents such as the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and the protests in response. In his order creating the Task Force, the President charged the task force to “identify best practices and otherwise make recommendations to the President on how policing practices can promote effective crime reduction while building public trust.”¹ The public interest in and attention to issues with police use of force has remained high, and has recently included an increasing focus on Illinois and in particular the City of Chicago.

The Task Force’s final report, which was released on May 18, 2015, made a series of recommendations organized around “six pillars”: Building Trust and Legitimacy, Policy and Oversight, Technology and Social Media, Community Policing and Crime Reduction, Training and Education, and Officer Wellness and Safety.² The Task Force’s report and recommendations were produced after a series of public listening sessions, and extended discussion and consensus-building among the Task Force members themselves.

The symposium’s purpose was to discuss the Task Force’s report, but also to advance the work of the Task Force by considering the problems of community violence and policing from a public-health perspective. Presenters included legal and medical academics, judges, government officials, administrators, public policy researchers, activists, and police *416 representatives. The attendees were similarly varied, including police chiefs, police officers, Illinois State’s Attorneys, United States’ Attorneys, elected officials, activists, and faculty and students from both the SIU School of Law and SIU School of Medicine.

After introductory remarks by Dean Fontaine, School of Medicine Dean Kevin Dorsey, and Sean Smoot, the keynote speech was given by Ronald Davis, another alumnus of SIU, who is the Director of the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) of the United States Department of Justice, and the Executive Director of the President's Task Force. Director Davis's remarks, which are reproduced in this issue, focused on the "window of opportunity" to improve policing created by the current national attention being given to the need for policing reform, and the process by which the Task Force worked together to build consensus around the recommendations contained in the Task Force Report.

The first panel focused on police legitimacy and trust from the perspective of the public, under the title "Building Trust and Legitimacy Towards Effective Community Policing." Speakers included Bryan Stevenson, Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative, Tracy Meares, Walton Hale Hamilton Professor of Law at Yale Law School, both of whom were members of the Task Force, and Robette Dias, Executive Director of Crossroads AntiRacism Organizing and Training. In her remarks, included in this issue, Prof. Meares explains the importance of procedural justice. She argues against focusing exclusively on crime reduction, in favor of a wider perspective that considers not only crime reduction but also public trust and confidence in the police; the "need to feel safe in the presence of legal agents." Ms. Dias's paper, also included in this issue, argues that it is impossible to build trust and legitimacy in policing without first recognizing the historical and present reality of racism and racial power imbalances in American society. Bryan Stevenson closed the panel with remarks that tied policing reform, and the recommendations of the Task Force, to the trend of increasing mass incarceration. He urged considering four concepts to improve injustice and policing: proximity to the policed community, changing narratives of racial imbalance and injustice, maintaining hope for meaningful improvement, and willingness to embrace the challenges of making uncomfortable or inconvenient changes to settled practices.

The second panel focused on the training and mental health of police officers, under the title "Training, Education, Officer Wellness and Safety." Dr. Ted R. Miller, Senior Research Specialist at the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, presented research on effective ways to detect and prevent substance abuse by police officers. This issue includes a paper by Dr. Miller and his co-author, Dr. Elizabeth Galvin that goes into more detail about research-based best-practices for detecting and preventing substance abuse by police. Sean Smoot, Director and Chief Counsel of the *417 PB & PA of Illinois, gave remarks, which are included in this issue, about his observations of the effect on police officers of violent encounters with members of the public. Finally, Dr. Stephen Soltys, Professor of Medicine and Chair of the Department of Psychiatry at the Southern Illinois School of Medicine, presented remarks about the incidence and under-treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder in police officers; his paper in this issue explores this topic in greater depth.

With Dr. Soltys's presentation as a pivot point, in the afternoon the symposium turned to analyzing policing from a public health perspective. The third panel, entitled "Public Health Implications at the Front End of the Criminal Justice System," examined how criminal justice and police encounters with the public often arise out of underlying mental health issues in the persons with whom police come into contact. Jennifer Brobst, Assistant Professor of Law and Director of the Center for Health Law and Policy at Southern Illinois University School of Law, spoke on "Government Approaches to Community Violence," examining the public health ramifications of violence and police use of force, and arguing for additional measures beyond those recommended in the Task Force Report to check police misconduct and improve public mental-health treatment.

Dr. Richard G. Dudley, Jr., Executive Session member of the Harvard Kennedy School's Executive Session on Policing and Public Safety, spoke about the ways in which violence inflicts trauma on children, and the implications for policing, in particular, the need to train police on how to react and intervene when they encounter persons who have suffered repeated exposure to traumatic events as a child. Finally, Charlene Moe, Program Coordinator at the Center for Public Safety and Justice at the University of Illinois, spoke about the importance of procedural justice, and practical ways for police to work at building trust and legitimacy with the communities they serve.

The final panel's topic was "Implementing Public Health Related Task Force Recommendations." Judge Jeffrey Ford, Circuit Judge of Champaign County and the President of the Illinois Association of Problem-Solving Courts, spoke about his experience as a judge operating a drug court and the ways in which problem-solving courts help to improve recidivism rates among offenders. The judicial perspective is further represented in this issue by a paper by Judge Kathryn E. Zenoff, of

Illinois's Second District Appellate Court, who designed and created Illinois's first mental-health court system and currently serves as chairman of the Illinois Supreme Court Special Advisory Committee for Justice and Mental Health Planning. Judge Zenoff's paper examines mental health courts in Illinois from the perspective of her own involvement in creating and improving Illinois mental health courts over the past fifteen years. Dr. Howard Spivak, Deputy Director and Chief of Staff at the National Institute of Justice, presented the paper included in this issue, which he wrote with *418 co-authors Maureen McGough and Nancy Rodriguez, examining ways to use scientific methods and data-backed strategies to improve policing performance. Finally, Dr. David Steward, Associate Dean of Community Health and Service at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine, closed the symposium by presenting remarks that analogized between community medicine and community policing, and pointed out ways in which policing might benefit from drawing on the models and methods employed in community health.

Throughout the symposium, the panelists engaged with one another and the audience in questioning and discussion about the recommendations of the task force, as well as the best ways to carry forward the work of improving policing and understanding criminal behavior and police use of force from a health as well as a legal perspective. The discussion benefited from the wide variety of perspectives of both panelists and attendees, but was grounded in a shared goal of improving the quality of policing by seizing the "window of opportunity" Director Davis emphasized.

The work of implementing the task force's recommendations continues³, as will the national discussion about how to improve policing to better serve and protect the public. We hope the articles and remarks collected in this symposium make a valuable contribution to that discussion, and are glad that Southern Illinois School of Law and the Southern Illinois Law Journal have been able to facilitate these contributions to this important national conversation.

Footnotes

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¹ [Exec. Order No. 13,684, 79 Fed. Reg. 76,865 \(Dec. 18, 2014\)](#), Establishment of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing.

² "Final Report of The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing," May 2015, available at http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/TaskForce_FinalReport.pdf.

³ Information about the ongoing implementation of the Task Force's recommendations is available at <http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/PolicingTaskForce>. The website collects examples of the many local police departments that are in the process of implementing the Task Force's recommendations. A one-year overview, which mentions this Symposium, is available at http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/TaskForce_Annual_Report_May23.pdf