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## **Over-policing does not hinder Crime**

### **Demographics:**

East Flatbush, Brooklyn, is located in the south of the borough right next to Canarsie and Park Slope two polar opposite neighborhoods. East Flatbush's history dates back to the 17th century when the Dutch settled it. It was initially an agricultural area with farms and rural landscapes. During the early 20th century, East Flatbush experienced a suburbanization trend, with the construction of single-family homes and a growing middle-class population. The neighborhood also became more diverse as different immigrant groups began settling in the area, including African Americans, Caribbean immigrants, and Jewish communities. In 2015-2019 it was reported from the NYU Furman Center there were 85.8% of Black people, 7.6% Hispanic people, 2.5% White people, and 2.3% Asian people. In terms of household income, a majority make less than 60,000 dollars a year. Only 47.6% make over 60,000 dollars a year, showing a lower-income community. The city-wide benchmark for poverty in 2019 is 16%, and East Flatbush is at 9.9%. Rent has gone up so much in the past ten years that 36% of renters use half of their income just to pay rent. The ages in East Flatbush are vastly different. 31.7% are under

the age of 18. 42.9% are under the age of 44, and 25.3% are over the age of 45, which shows how much a family neighborhood

### **My Background:**

In 2015 I moved to Flatbush, Brooklyn, after there was a huge rent increase in my childhood home in Sunset Park. When we first moved, I noticed how different this neighborhood was from my upbringing. Sunset Park, it's predominately a Hispanic neighborhood when I was growing up. Being Puerto Rican, I felt like I was a part of this community, and seeing all the Spanish restaurants and hair salons, I knew I was home. Flatbush is a predominately Caribbean neighborhood, with foods like jerk chicken and ox tail gravy and seeing people on stilts and amazing costumes during Carnival season. Which I never experienced before but adapted very quickly.

It wasn't long until I realized this vibrant neighborhood also had some ugly parts. I've never loved the police, with my family having issues in the past. But It never bothered me when I saw them patrol or walk around until I moved to Flatbush. My first apartment in Flatbush was on Linden Blvd, but to locals, its called "opp ville." Opp is a slang word meaning snitch or in this case, police. Along Linden Blvd would be double-parked cars camped out all night with strobe lights at every corner to brighten the night. Black curtains and blinds were no match for these powerful lights beaming in. Those were the little things I started to notice and then patrol cars were so frequent in this neighborhood, but I already felt safe in this neighborhood since most of

my friends and their families lived there, and I had never seen a crime. Then Covid happened, and everything changed.

### **Crime:**

East Flatbush during COVID felt like the wild west. At one point, my mother and I started to play a game, “ firework or gunshot.” However, the over policing and the patrol cars double parked continued. The crime rate in 2021 for Flabush was 5.8% compared to the city-wide crime rate of 4.6%, according to the Furman Center. But I was seeing cops everywhere, and the crime rates kept increasing, and it confused me on how this could be. I came to the conclusion that Over Policing does not hinder crime.

### **Over Policing:**

Overpolicing refers to a situation where law enforcement agencies disproportionately focus their resources and activities on specific communities or demographics, resulting in a higher level of police presence and surveillance compared to other areas. This practice can lead to negative consequences such as increased racial profiling, harassment, and a strained relationship between the police and the community. According to a survey conducted by the Brooklyn Movement Center, 70% of East Flatbush residents reported feeling unsafe around police officers. Additionally, 75% of respondents reported witnessing or experiencing police misconduct. Having swarms of police up and down the block is wasting taxpayer money, and the cops can't catch the actual criminals. According to the NYC compstat in the last 28 days have been 51 reported felony assaults. If the community doesn't trust the cops, imagine how many

unreported assaults are occurring. And if 51 assaults in the last month aren't enough, there have been two murders and seven shooting victims as well.

However, the distrust in the community did not happen overnight. Historically the black community has been targeted hard by police. There are well-documented racial disparities in policing, including higher rates of stops, searches, arrests, and use of force against Black individuals compared to other racial and ethnic groups. These disparities have raised concerns about racial bias and unequal treatment. Brian Jordan Jefferson, associate professor at Illinois University, wrote a scholarly article, "Broken Windows Policing and Constructions of Space and Crime: Flatbush, Brooklyn". The author argues that broken windows policing significantly impact space construction and crime in urban neighborhoods. By targeting minor offenses, such as littering and loitering, the police create a sense of order and control in public spaces. Jefferson uses the Flatbush case study to explore how broken windows policing has affected the neighborhood's physical and social landscape. He argues that the strategy has led to the displacement of low-income residents, the gentrification of the area, and increased police presence and surveillance.

Fear does not build trust, fear does not stop crime, and fear is not a deterrent. In an article published by The American Journal of Criminal Justice, "Social Disorganization and Neighborhood Fear: Examining the Intersection of Individual, Community, and County Characteristics" In this article, Porter, Rader, and Cossman examine the relationship between social disorganization, neighborhood fear, and individual, community, and county characteristics. Social disorganization is a theory that suggests that certain neighborhood characteristics, such as

poverty, population density, and residential instability, can contribute to high levels of crime and disorder. The authors use data from the National Survey of Fear of Crime and the U.S. Census Bureau to analyze the relationship between social disorganization, neighborhood fear, and various individual and contextual factors. They find that social disorganization is significantly related to neighborhood fear, even after controlling for individual-level factors such as age, gender, race, and income.

Without changes to how we police our neighborhood, we will have a generational physiological trauma, especially in youth. Children are like sponges and absorb everything around them. We should not enforce this fear with the youth and rather see the police as a person to go to for help. Kristen Henning, a professor of Law at Georgetown University Law Center, wrote “Policing and Trauma: The Harms of Hyper-Surveillance and Over-Policing Youth of Color.” The author discusses the concept of hyper-surveillance, which refers to the use of advanced technologies to monitor and control the movements of certain groups of people, particularly those who are seen as potential threats. She highlights how this approach has been used disproportionately against youth of color, leading to high levels of anxiety and fear among these communities. Hennings writes, “In the Black community, the traumatic effects of policing often begin with word-of-mouth and media accounts of police violence. Repeated exposure to high-profile police killings is particularly detrimental to the mental health of Black youth.” The police presence for youth doesn't stop in patrol cars, I know personally how in our schools, we had at least four security guards on each floor patrolling us in class. Children are being overpoliced from such a young age creating the school-to-prison pipeline. Minor disciplinary

issues that could be handled within the educational system may instead be escalated to law enforcement involvement, leading to youth being funneled into the criminal justice system.

**Solutions:**

Crime will never stop; there will always be a person who thinks wrong from right. There will always be someone who doesn't have any other options in their life. However, there are fundamental reforms we can implement in order to have crime rates go down and for the community to trust the police and use them as a tool of safety. First and foremost, all the cars on Linden Blvd have to leave, and the bright strobe lights as well. How can we trust the police if they don't trust us? We need more of community policing; Community Policing's purpose is to build relationships and trust in the community and help reduce crimes and the fear of crime. We need cops who care about the community members and do not sit in their cars all day waiting for a crime. On-the-beat patrols have proved to be very successful. In Arlington, Texas, the police chief implemented that all cops must walk the beat for a year to get to know the community. As a result, violent crime dropped by six percent. Also, licensed professionals deal with mentally ill people and the homeless. I've seen police rough up a homeless guy at the Church Avenue train station on the two line. And more recently, with the news about a homeless man being killed on the train. According to the Bureau of Justice Assistance, more than half of the people homeless have been incarcerated. Throwing homeless people in jail only raises crime rates and puts people through unnecessary trauma.

**Conclusion:**

In conclusion, over-policing is a complex and multifaceted issue with significant implications for communities, particularly those that are marginalized or disproportionately affected. Experts and research have highlighted several concerns related to over-policing, including racial profiling, community distrust, psychological and emotional harm, disruption of social cohesion, and perpetuation of inequality and social injustice. Addressing over-policing requires a comprehensive approach that includes community engagement, police reform, and systemic changes. Efforts should focus on building trust between law enforcement and communities, promoting transparency and accountability, implementing unbiased and equitable policing practices, and addressing the underlying social and economic factors that contribute to crime. Meaningful progress in reducing over-policing and its adverse impacts requires collaboration and dialogue between community members, law enforcement agencies, policymakers, and other stakeholders. Other cities have seen changes in using community policing. New City is a massive jungle, but maybe if we just start changing the policing in the neighborhoods, then the whole city will follow along. By working together, it is possible to strive for a fair and just system that prioritizes public safety while respecting the rights and dignity of all individuals.

As a white-passing woman, I haven't dealt with racism or being targeted on the street. However, I want to live in a neighborhood where everyone feels safe, not from criminals but with police as well. Crime doesn't define Flatbush, but it's a characteristic that needs to change. Over-policing does not hinder crime, and solutions need to happen now.

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