

**Written Testimony of
Heather Mac Donald
Fellow, Manhattan Institute
Before the Committee on the Judiciary of the United States House of Representatives**

**Oversight Hearing on Policing Practices
September 19, 2019**

Chairman Nadler, Ranking Member Collins, and committee members, my name is Heather Mac Donald. I am the Thomas W. Smith fellow at the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, a public policy think tank in New York City. I have written extensively on criminal justice and am honored to address you today regarding policing practices.

Since the 1990s, felony crime in the U.S. has dropped 50%. Tens of thousands of lives, the majority Black and Hispanic, have been saved, closing the life expectancy gap between whites and blacks by 17%.

This crime drop was the result of a policing revolution that began in New York City in 1994 and spread nationwide. Upon taking office, New York Police Commissioner William Bratton dared something that few police chiefs had ever risked: he publicly set himself a target for crime reduction. Bratton not only met his one-year goal of 10%, he beat it, with a crime decline of 12%. The next year he upped the ante, declaring that the NYPD would lower crime by 15%. That year's crime drop logged in at 16%.

The idea that the police would take measurable responsibility for public safety was transformative. Bratton accomplished his crime rout with three main strategies: timely information, accountability, and proactive policing. Deputy commissioners started demanding crime information in real time, so that crime patterns could be addressed as they first broke out. Top brass held precinct commanders ruthlessly accountable for the crime in their jurisdictions. And officers on the beat were asked to intervene proactively when they observed suspicious behavior.

Broken Windows policing was a crucial aspect of this policing revolution. It addresses low level social disorder, such as loitering, unruly conduct, and public drinking and drug use. Broken Windows policing is not just a crime strategy, however, it is a moral imperative. It is the hard-working, law-abiding residents of high crime neighborhoods who beseech the police to address street disorder. Go to any police-community meeting in a high risk

community and you will hear the good people there beg the police to get the drug dealers off the streets, to clear the corners of rowdy youth, and to crack down on loud music and illegal street parties. Those residents know that it is out of such unchecked social disorder that more serious crime emerges.

A 2015 Quinnipiac poll found that 61 percent of black voters in New York City wanted the police to “issue summonses or make arrests” in their neighborhood for quality-of-life offenses, compared to 59 percent of white voters. Should the police ignore their voices because the activists say that broken windows policing is racist?

We are also told that we are living through an epidemic of racially biased police shootings of black men. This, too, is false. A study published this August in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences is just the latest research undercutting the media narrative about race and police shootings. It is the rate of violent crime that determines police shootings, the study found. The more frequently officers encounter violent suspects from any given racial group, the greater the chance that members of that group will be shot by a police officer. In fact, black civilians are shot less, compared to whites, than their rates of violent crime would predict, the study found. If there is a bias in police shootings, it is against white civilians.

The anti-police narrative deflects attention away from solving the real criminal justice problem, which is high rates of black victimization. Blacks die of homicide at eight times the rate of whites. The homicide death rate for black males between the ages of 15 and 24 is 16 times higher than that of young white men. That is the civil rights problem that should most concern us. Those black victims are killed not by cops, not by whites, but by other blacks. Blacks commit homicide nationally at eight times the rate of whites and Hispanics combined.

In 2017, there were 7851 black homicide victims—more than all white and Hispanic homicide victims combined. Only 2.8% of those black casualties--the vast majority armed with a gun or otherwise dangerous--were killed by a cop.

The best solution to urban crime is to reconstruct the family. That is a long-term project, however. In the meantime, the policing revolution that began in New York in the 1990s and spread nationwide has given law-abiding

residents of high crime communities greater freedom to take their children to school or go to the grocery store without fear, an expectation that is the government's most fundamental obligation to meet.

Policing today is more professional and restrained than at any time in its history. And there is no government agency more dedicated to the proposition that black lives matter than the police.