

William Weidner  
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Dear Sirs and Madams,

I am a recently retired school psychologist with 32 years experience. My career has been spent entirely at Vinal Technical High School in Middletown Connecticut. As you are hopefully aware the technical high schools are operated by the State of Connecticut, Department of Education. I also worked for Yale New Haven Hospital in their Children's Psychiatric Inpatient Service for 32 years, full time for 2 years and at least once per week for the remainder of my time there. Before that I worked at Mt. Sinai Hospital in Hartford in their Child and Adolescent Inpatient Psychiatric unit for 5 years. My experience has required me to interact with youth in crisis in both settings.

In the hospital I was required to physically restrain children and youth in crisis to prevent the youth from harming themselves or others. In both positions I was highly trained in safe restraint including how to physically control adolescents without causing injury to them. Often these adolescents were physically developed young men. We were required to restrain them safely and I don't see why police officers are not held to similar standards. Granted none of our patients had guns and obviously actions would be somewhat different then, but for someone who has committed a nonviolent crime and is non compliant, or is having a psychiatric emergency, violence against them is not necessary. To begin with punching and choke holds are out. Patience and listening pay dividends. To me, police officers unreasonably expect immediate compliance at all times even in non life and death circumstances. They are ill suited to their jobs either temperamentally or through lack of training. They should be held responsible for their actions just as I would be.

In schools my experience has been with CT state police officers because they serve the technical high schools. I have seen wonderful liaison officers who were able to build relationships with students and I have seen police officers who could not have cared less about any trauma inflicted on students no matter how innocuous the infraction. To be fair to the state police officers, my observations are that we began to see police used in our school when it began to be reported that too many students were being suspended and expelled. In order to decrease suspensions school administrators called in police officers to arrest the students. thereby avoiding taking responsibility themselves. The administrators also ignorantly failed to call on mental health professionals in the school to deescalate students in crisis and chose to call police to have them taken out in handcuffs. In this past school year we were lucky enough to work with a state police officer from Troop F, Alex Bogatti by name, who has shown great respect for students and whom I had the opportunity to work directly with several times. Officer Bogatti showed respect for my position in the school and for the students by deescalating students with me, and supporting me as I supported him to deescalate students. I would expect nothing less from a professional police officer.

As a white male I have experienced a great deal of privilege, however in my personal experience I have found police officers to be largely unprofessional and interested in exercising and preserving their power to repress law abiding citizens. As an example, when my son was a young man he went for a walk in a neighborhood next to where we live in North Haven with a friend of his from New Haven who had an "afro" hairstyle. They were accosted for walking on the street, where there is no sidewalk, by a resident who claimed to be a Hamden police officer although he was not in uniform and showed no badge. and he threatened to arrest them for walking there. They were doing nothing out of the ordinary. When I called the Hamden desk officer to complain, rather than telling me how to make a complaint he mocked me and talked me in circles. I left the call feeling thoroughly frustrated and disrespected because I was unable to protect my son from harassment by a public official, and another public official was protecting him by frustrating my attempt to seek redress. I can just imagine what would have happened if I was black. This is not my only negative interaction with police but I won't go on.

I support LCI 3741, and support the section removing qualified immunity. I never had qualified immunity in my career and I don't see why police should be entitled to it either. During the listening session, which I have been listening to for 10 hours at this point, mention was made several times about "bad apples". I



echo the comment from the woman who made the comment that the full phrase is "one bad apple spoils the whole bunch". Police culture must change. I don't want to de-fund police completely, but I, and many communities, do not trust the police, with good reason, Police organizations have a long way to go from their origins as slave catchers and protectors of the interests of robber barons. I believe efforts must be made to increase community policing and to respect the communities which they serve, and thereby earn the respect of those communities.

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