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# SECURITY

Jeremy Travis

## NIJ Director Emphasizes Community Policing in Keynote Address

*Editor's note: The following is a summarized version of a speech given by Jeremy Travis, director of the National Institute of Justice, in a March 10, 1996 keynote address at the First Annual Conference of the New York Campaign for Effective Crime Policy.*

Jeremy Travis, director of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), stressed the importance of community policing instead of imprisonment in a recent keynote address, titled "Lessons for the Criminal Justice System from Twenty Years of Policing Reform."

"We should recognize how different these two movements are," Travis says. "Community policing is based on the notion that government and community should work closely together, that the police and the community are co-producers of safety. The processes of government—in this case, of policing—are opened up to public involvement and scrutiny. . . . In community after community across the nation, as community policing takes hold, we are witnessing a remarkable phenomenon: the public is

expressing satisfaction with the police at higher levels than before, tensions are lessened, and there is an old-fashioned American sense of optimism, on the part of the public and the police, that together they can make a difference, and indeed are making a difference."

Travis says the imprisonment movement brings with it a much more pessimistic view of our ability to have an impact on crime. The expanded use of prison severely reduces the exercise of discretion by judges, correctional officials, and parole and probation officers while discouraging risk taking and increasing the risk of failure as caseloads increase and resources dwindle.

Travis believes three lessons can be learned from the community policing movement:

"Community policing views the community as a co-producer of safety," he says. "To be more effective, I believe that other components of the criminal justice system must view the community as a co-producer of justice."

The first lesson requires that we

view the community as a full partner in producing public safety. According to Travis, this lesson asks that we "listen to the people we serve, ask them what their priorities are, explore their capacities and provide solutions." At its core is the notion of community partnership as "one which extends far beyond narrow institutional interests or public relations . . . [one which] reflects the belief that ultimately the police cannot produce safety alone."

"Strong communities are safe communities," Travis says. "Communities that encourage people to use public spaces are safe communities. Communities that care for their young people are safe communities. A strong police department is one that recognizes this fact and works assiduously, at every level, to promote the infrastructure of community life that reduces crime and fear and disorder."

Travis says the most significant ramifications for the criminal justice system come when we think of the role of community in the sentencing decision.

"For years, no one considered the input of the public to be important to

the mission of corrections," he says. "Then recently, the Department of Corrections in the state of Vermont commissioned an independent survey of residents to ask them what they expected their corrections system to deliver. . . . From [this survey, as well as the surveys of] Pennsylvania, Delaware, Alabama, Minnesota, Oklahoma, and county systems in Oregon and Arizona . . . [it is clear that] the public supports community service, restitution, drug treatment and other immediate sanctions for nonviolent offenders."

will focus more resources on closing the place down than on processing arrests.

"Problem-oriented policing brings new partners to the problem-solving table," he says. "Emergency rooms become partners in identifying the patterns of gun violence so that the police and other service providers can intercede to reduce the likelihood of a retaliation killing. Counselors, coaches and probation officers become partners in supporting a juvenile who is wavering on the brink of delinquency. If it is part of the mission of the mod-

ern day police department to prevent the next crime—then the police must think differently about the dynamics of crime and about the best ways to prevent crime."

The third and final lesson from community policing, says Travis, is to send a signal by paying attention to the little things. To illustrate his point, he uses the metaphor of the broken window first developed in 1982 by James Q. Wilson and George Kelling: A broken window, left unattended,

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**—Jeremy Travis**

"'Community corrections' has long had the word 'community' in its title, but only recently is the community corrections profession thinking about this issue at a fundamental level. What does it mean for the 'community' to be a full partner in the sanctioning function? For starters, it should mean that the criminal justice system should do everything it can to keep an offender's support structure intact (and preferably strengthened) so that he is less likely to reoffend. You and I know that we are far from the ideal."

Travis says the second lesson the criminal justice system must learn from the development of community policing is to focus on solving specific problems that are important to the community. Looking at the "problem" as the unit of analysis means a problem-solving police department looks at a crack house as a criminogenic location that breeds crime and attracts criminals not just as a place to arrest criminal sellers and users. A problem-solving police department, he says,

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invites other windows to be broken, which leads to a sense of disorder and lawlessness that breeds fear and more serious crime.

"By ignoring the little things, we signal our indifference," Travis says. "Our indifference is read as tacit acceptance."

According to Travis, we need to think carefully about the theory of broken windows as we think about the

future of the rest of the criminal justice system.

"What does this mean for courts, corrections, probation?" he asks. "If the theory of broken windows can be restated as a belief that the enforcement of social norms, no matter how minor, creates a climate that supports prosocial behavior and discourages antisocial behavior, then we must pay much more attention to the little things. Summonses become important. Administrative tribunals become important. Misdemeanor probation, juvenile probation, fine payment,

restitution orders, conditional discharges—all become important because the failure to take them seriously undermines our ability to enforce more weighty social norms."

Our courts pay the most attention to serious cases; however, Travis says we pay a price for neglecting minor cases.

"We lose opportunities to hold offenders accountable, in a moral sense, for their acts against the community and the individual victim; we lose opportunities to show victims that sentences can be meaningful; we lose opportunities to show the wider community that these crimes—which communities often care more about than high-level felonies—are taken seriously. This imperative to take little things seriously is more than public relations—in my view, this goes to the core of the credibility of our system of laws and norms. Correcting years of worship at the altar of the felony culture does not take much money, only creativity, and a belief that the cause is right."

Travis concludes by saying that the challenges of community policing provide the opportunity for creativity and reform within the criminal justice system. Community policing has emerged from the knowledge that random preventive patrol is not effective. It has built itself slowly on "small innovations in foot patrol, problem-solving exercises, beat officers, and, ultimately, the notion of organizational change that is transforming police departments and the police function around the country."

According to Travis, we have reason to be optimistic as we approach the next century, and can look to the community policing story for inspiration.

"Our success in adapting the lessons from that story to the rest of the criminal justice system depends on our willingness to take the risk of engaging the community in a difficult dialogue, our openness to fundamentally different ways of thinking about the criminal justice system, and our ability to keep the ultimate goals of safety and justice in mind while we plant and nurture the seeds of change." 