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Rhetorical Analysis and Evaluation: "American Comeback"

"Americans no longer talk to each other; they entertain each other. They do not exchange ideas; they exchange images. They do not argue with propositions; they argue with good looks, celebrities, and commercials" (Postman). President Donald Trump's recent campaign commercial, "American Comeback," is an astute example of how contemporary politics utilizes modern platforms to convey their message to the audience. The days of flipping through the newspaper or listening to the radio for political advertisements have been overtaken by outlets such as television and social media, and accompanying these upgrades is the immoral practice of video manipulation. **The commercial appeals most strongly to pathos by citing textual, verbal, and visual elements that reflect popular Democrats personally attacking Trump's intelligence, and establish credibility by showing evidence of Trump's critics praising his administration's efforts with the current pandemic and economy. However, the campaign's unethical approach to logos and blatant manipulation of previously-aired audio and video clips weakens that credibility, and in turn, its idea.**

The U.S Presidential elections for 2020 are almost upon the nation, and preceding the event are efforts by both major parties to garner as many votes as possible; campaign commercials like Trump's "American Comeback" one are an effective way of reassuring current supports of the party and persuading new voters. This campaign commercial by the Trump administration opens up with President Trump promising to protect American citizens from the coronavirus pandemic. It is followed by a brief clip of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (Democrat, California.) ripping up the speech behind President Trump. A headline reflecting the word "Mocked" appears on-screen, and Joe Biden's voice claiming "hysterical xenophobia" can be heard. In between switching images of health care workers, Air China jets, and 'Cancelled' flight signs at airport bulletins, the commercial depicts a clip of the exchange between CNN anchor Wolf Blitzer and a frequent visitor, Dr. Sanjay Gupta. President Trump then claims the U.S economy is at it's best currently. Soon after, the ad features two Democratic governors praising federal efforts to help the states during the pandemic. In the second half, the commercial focuses on positive images and quotes from Trump about defeating the coronavirus and making America great again.

One of the most potent elements in a political commercial is its appeal to the audience's emotions, and "American Comeback" makes this appeal to pathos in a few different ways. The ad begins with Trump mentioning the coronavirus pandemic: "My administration will take all necessary steps to safeguard our citizens from this threat."

(Trump, 00:03 – 00:08). This quote is a way for the creators to instill a sense of security in their audience. The visual of the public clapping for President Trump during that quote is another strategy to make the audience surmise that supporting Trump is in their best interests. This idea is reiterated throughout the commercial's second half by the lively visuals and quotes by Trump about eliminating the pandemic and making America great again.

Negative appeals to pathos in this ad include a brief video clip of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi ripping up what turned out to be Trump's 'State of the Union' speech (Sherman). The clip is accompanied by the visual of the word "torn" blazed across the screen. The commercial then introduces the word "mocked" as a textual rhetoric strategy with a clip of Joe Biden declaring "hysterical xenophobia." (Biden, 00:10). Speaker Pelosi's actions and former Vice President Biden's words alongside the cynical texts on-screen are provided as an attestation of Trump's opponents regularly attacking his intelligence and disrespecting him. These strategies aim to invoke unpleasantness and indignation in the audience's hearts on behalf of President Trump.

Throughout the commercial, the creators attempt to establish their credibility and appeal to ethos by insinuating Trump's uncompromising attitude towards foreign nations, specifically China, and offering visual affirmation of his rivals praising his approach to the pandemic and his economic efforts. In the ad, Wolf Blitzer, an anchor for CNN, can be seen asking Dr. Sanjay Gupta, a chief medical correspondent, "Is it

accurate that if these steps had not been put in place … it could have been 2 million

people dead here in the United States?" (Blitzer, 00:12 – 00:18). Dr. Gupta is then heard

stating a simple "yes" in response. The impression is that Trump's travel restrictions,

which went into effect in early February, were responsible for saving those lives. This

video clip evidence helps the creators of the ad construct credibility on their part.

"American Comeback" includes three quotes further to establish the audience's

confidence in its creators. The sections included are: "We built the greatest economy the

world has ever seen." (Trump, 00:23 – 00:24); "What the federal government did … was

a phenomenal accomplishment." (New York Gov. Cuomo (D), 00:32 – 00:35); "Promise

made, promise kept." (California Gov.Newsom (D), 00:42). All of these quotes,

especially the latter two by known Democrats (members of Trump's opponent party),

help the creators of the ad appeal to the audience's ethos, and in doing so, make the

viewer more likely to agree with the commercial's message.

As impressive as the commercial's appeal to ethos and pathos is, the creators'

unethical approach to logos in every single element mentioned above destroys not only

their reliability, it makes the audience less likely to accept the message. While the

strategic use of quotes and visuals may be persuasive to current supporters of the

President, several of the facts are unsubstantial. Trump's remarks about 'safeguarding

citizens' when the commercial starts are deceptively edited and do not include the

preceding sentence that gives the correct context: "We are coordinating with the

Chinese government and working closely together on the coronavirus outbreak in China." (Kessler). This blatant omission is critical to consider because it wrongly leads the audience to believe Trump has been uncompromising towards China.

> A Monmouth University poll found that 46% of Americans approve of the President's handling of the coronavirus crisis, with 49% disapproving. That is a downward shift from last month when 50% of those surveyed approved of his handling of the pandemic and 45% disapproved (Milligan)

Just as feasibly as the ad misquoted Trump regarding the coronavirus to aid in its appeal to pathos, the commercial also implies that both Pelosi and Biden have publicly insulted Trump's intelligence. In both cases, the creators of the ad committed a straw-man fallacy. In Pelosi's instance, the ad only focuses on her actions and not the context behind it to unethically support their claim of being attacked frequently. Pelosi did not rip up the speech because of his coronavirus remarks; she later admitted it is because she believed it to be a "manifesto of mistruths." (Sherman). Similarly, Biden's quote of 'hysterical xenophobia' is another example of the straw-man fallacy because those specific words were used to support the creators' stance on unfair treatment. Biden stated this during an Iowa campaign appearance in January, where he talked about the pandemic: "This is no time for Donald Trump's record of hysteria and xenophobia — hysterical xenophobia — and fearmongering to lead the way instead of science." (Kessler)

The Trump administration perpetrated two more fallacies throughout the commercial that withered their integrity: cherry-picking and oversimplification. There is evidence to suggest much of the dialogue exchange between CNN anchor Blitzer and Dr. Gupta was deceptively altered and taken out of context. The ad edited the verbal element by omitting most of the question, which in reality was: "Well, is it accurate that if these steps had not been put in place, the stay-at-home orders, the social distancing orders, as the president said yesterday, it could have been two million people dead here in the United States?" (Reider). The ad uses visual elements like the images of stationary planes and canceled flight notices to distract the audience from the edited video. While Gupta ultimately gave a positive response to Blitzer's question, it is much more nuanced than the ad suggests (Reider). This is a clear demonstration of cherry-picking evidence to support the ad's claim of Trump being responsible for saving millions of lives.

The verbal rhetoric strategy used in the campaign's appeal to ethos was similarly cherry-picked to favor the creators of the campaign. The clip of Governor Cuomo was edited from the original statement, which came during an April 19 press conference, where Cuomo was talking about how the predicted death rates in the absence of social distancing had fallen sharply. He praised just about everyone, rather than the Trump administration specifically (Kessler). The quote by Governor Newsom that helped the creators solidify their cachet was also missing some context; he proclaimed those words

after the federal government sent California 90,000 testing swabs out of a promised initial shipment of 100,000 (Kessler). While not expressly subject to unethical video editing (more of a false contextualization), this is also an example of cherry-picking evidence to construct the creators' credibility and support claims within the ad.

Lastly, the campaign committed the fallacy of oversimplification by using auditory and visual elements to indicate that Trump built the largest economy globally. By doing so, the creators oversimplified a national affair; while the American economy was steady with low unemployment rates and soaring stocks before the pandemic, it was not the 'largest' or 'best' globally.

> The economy has gone through many periods of more robust growth than it has under the Trump administration. Over the last 39 years — dating to Ronald Reagan's presidency — the nation's real economic growth has exceeded Trump's peak year of 2.9% 19 times (Reider).

These transparent manipulations of verbal, textual, and visual evidence in a campaign commercial is not a one-time occurrence by the Trump administration; these unethical practices were brought to light in past Trump campaign commercials, and this revelation weakens the creators' reliability further. (Samuels)

While President Trump's "American Comeback" campaign commercial effectively appeals to pathos and ethos by utilizing auditory, textual, and visual

elements that help support the creators' idea that Trump is the best candidate for the

next presidential elections, the commercial's overt unethical appeal to logos undermines

that effectiveness and ironically makes the viewer less likely to elect him for a second

term in the White House. With the presence of fallacies, blatant manipulation of

evidence, and fabricated contextualization throughout the commercial, the creators'

credibility is debilitated, and the message lost to the audience. Political campaign

commercials would do well to remember that while American society might have

evolved from radio and newspapers to technologically advanced mediums, core

principles and values are not as quickly abandoned. "Once you have learned to ask

questions - relevant and appropriate and substantial questions - you have learned how

to learn, and no one can keep you from learning whatever you want or need to know."

(Postman)

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Comparative Analysis and Evaluation of "Trump's Response to COVID-19"

When you come across the word "politician," who comes to mind? A Democrat imagines Joe Biden. In contrast, a Republican might conjure up an image of Donald Trump. Political factions like the Republican and Democratic parties go as far back as the struggle over the U.S Constitution's ratification in 1787. However, the one thing in common every person had – and still does – is that they were Americans first and foremost. Throughout the history of this country, there have been numerous defining moments that have, at the time, either served to unite or divide it, ranging from social justice movements to national economic disasters. The most recent one is the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing scrutiny of the federal government's response. To further explore this controversy, two opposing opinion articles addressing President Trump's response to COVID-19 are rhetorically analyzed below. **While both articles are likely to appeal to their audience, "Trump's Response to COVID-19 is worse than giving up" is more persuasive for rhetorically sophisticated readers because it appeals to the audience's pathos and is strengthened by relevant logic and facts, references leading**

experts and official statistics to build credibility, and adequately describes pertinent instances and actions that support the author's claim regarding Trump's negative response to COVID-19.

The first opinion article sheds Trump's response to COVID-19 in a negative light, titled, "Trump's response to Covid-19 is worse than giving up", and written by CNN's Abdul El-Sayed. According to CNN's website, El-Sayed is a physician, epidemiologist, former health director for Detroit, and a published author of the book, "Healing Politics: A Doctor's Journey into the Heart of our Political Epidemic." Contrarily, the second article praises Trump's actions, named "Is Trump doing a heck of a job with COVID-19? Yes, the administration's response has been good for America". Stacy Washington authors it, a co-chair of the advisory council for the National Center for Public Policy Research project 21, and an Emmy-nominated TV personality and podcast host. Both authors use rhetorical appeals of pathos, ethos, and logos to persuade the audience to support their opposing viewpoints regarding the federal administration's response to the pandemic.

The articles appeal to the reader's pathos in contrasting ways, with El-Sayed using Trump's controversial actions against him, while Washington focuses on putting most of the blame on China as a defensive measure for Trump. El-Sayed mentions the infamous dictator Stalin to draw startling comparisons with Trump's approach to COVID-19.

"If only one man dies ... that is a tragedy. If millions die, that is only statistics."

That quote, attributed to Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, has been made all too real

by President Donald Trump in the context of the pandemic in 2020…Trump has

done something worse than give up; he's prioritized electoral politics above

public health — and at the potential expense of American lives (El-Sayed).

The quote above incites emotions such as anger, disbelief, sadness, or shock in readers. It achieves its goal by summarizing preceding paragraphs equipped with adequate supporting facts regarding Trump prioritizing his politics over COVID-19. It states bluntly what the previous paragraphs were only implying. This appeal to pathos is very efficient because not only does the author make a wayward claim, he precedes it with evidence-supported paragraphs and examples of the different ways Trump has done this. The first evidence is Trump hiring inexperienced medical experts like Dr. Scott Atlas, a neuroradiologist, to headline the war against COVID-19 — a disease that primarily affects human lungs. Some other instances include Trump disobeying prevention guidelines set by the Center for Disease Control and driving attention away on social media from encouraging protective measures to his upcoming Presidential elections.

In contrast to El-Sayed's direct hit to Trump's character, Washington appeals to her audience's emotions by including the quote, "…instead, the virus was allowed to spread unchecked for nearly two months, before the tightly controlled communist

Chinese government would go on to share information with the World Health

Organization" The author deliberately uses a subtle hostile tone and specific words like

"allowed" and "communist" and "tightly controlled." These serve to sway the reader

subconsciously and negatively into perceiving China as the cause and, in some way,

instigator of the virus that is wreaking havoc globally. This action attempts to paint

China as the bad guy and encourages citizens to not blame Trump for the devastating

effects of the virus on America. This appeal to pathos is significant because when

people in a democratic-republic nation read the words "tightly controlled" and

"communist," the subject is automatically assumed to be a threat to their liberty and

incites wariness or fear in them. The quote also does an excellent job convincing the

audience that President Trump is not to blame because China chose not to share

valuable information about the virus with the rest of the world in time.

Alongside these appeals to the audience's emotions, both authors also appeal to

ethos; El-Sayed references the most expert secondary source possible in these times to

support his claims, while Washington provides reasoning to support her blame on

China for the failure most people assume to be Trump's ineptitude. In his article, El-

Sayed includes a paragraph about the U.S CDC publishing guidelines to discourage the

public from getting tested for COVID-19 if they do not display any symptoms. He

follows it by the quote, "Dr. Anthony Fauci, the country's leading infectious disease

expert, estimated that about 40% of people who carry Covid-19 do not exhibit

symptoms — yet they can still spread it" This quotation is a way for him to build credibility while referencing the nation's leading expert on the pandemic to support his opposing view of the guidelines. It is a practical appeal because Dr. Fauci has been the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases since 1984, with unrivaled experience during this time. The author not only builds strong credibility by using Dr. Fauci as his source, but he verifies the audience's trust in the message he is giving them.

To compete with her opponent's strong appeal to ethos, Washington attempts to instill her audience's trust in her by providing simple reasoning behind the message in her appeal to pathos above. She states:

An article in Xinhua, a state-run media outlet…highlights the seriousness of our reliance on China for antibiotics. A Chinese official upset with Americans characterizing the viral outbreak as originating in China claimed that China could tighten pharmaceutical exports and "plunge America into the mighty sea of coronavirus" (Washington).

This statement attempts to appeal to ethos by providing factual information to support Washington's earlier accusation of China withholding information and, ultimately, deserving the blame instead of President Trump. This statement reflects her undertone throughout the article, taking the blame away from Trump and putting it on China. Her

argument is based on Trump not having the resources needed to combat this pandemic properly, and the cause of that problem is also China, as proven by the quote above. This appeal to ethos is not very effective because while the author mentions a state-run media outlet and 'a Chinese official' threatening American safety from the disease, she neither cites her source anywhere in the article nor does she name this supposed official. The lack of this evidences works towards crumbling her credibility rather than building it.

To make up for her weak appeal to ethos, Washington swings back with a powerful appeal to logos by offering statistics to compare Trump's response to COVID-19 with former Democratic President Obama's response to the swine flu:

> Contrast this [Trump declaring a state of emergency before COVID-19 had severe effects on the U.S] with President Barack Obama waiting nine months into the H1N1 pandemic, when 60.8 million Americans were infected, and 12,469 people had already died, before declaring an emergency (Washington).

This statistical fact goes a long way in rebuilding her lost credibility while providing the audience with figures they can easily fact-check to corroborate the author's claim. Despite not being explicitly cited, the figures are a powerful and ethical appeal to logos because the statistics match precisely the numbers on the official CDC website

concerning the 2009 H1N1 pandemic deaths and cases under the Obama administration.

With an equally potent appeal to logos, El-Sayed goes an extra mile by hyperlinking to the projections and figures stated below:

> Trump continues to put his political aims ahead of the public health crisis, contributing to projections that show the U.S. death toll from coronavirus could exceed 315,000 by December 2020…According to a recent Gallup poll, approximately one-third of Americans say they would not get a vaccine if it were available today (El-Sayed).

The author provides facts and figures surrounding COVID-19, similar to Washington's statistics on the swine flu pandemic of Obama's time. However, in contrast to her approach, he strengthens his ethical appeal to logos by providing the readers with supporting links to the information he shares. El-Sayed also mentioned and cited the current death toll globally and nationally, as depicted on the John Hopkins Covid-19 dashboard ("COVID-19 Map"). It is a compelling appeal for reasons more than merely citing his sources; El-Sayed cleverly utilized his resources to support his earlier claim while simultaneously showing the audience the consequences of Trump prioritizing his politics over the pandemic. His quote also serves to make the audience understand that

Trump's reckless actions are not only causing Americans to lose trust in him as a leader, they are irrevocably causing people to lose their lives.

As stated earlier, Washington and El-Sayed mutually use rhetorical appeals in a myriad of ways to persuade their audience on whether Trump's response to COVID-19 is positive or negative. Nevertheless, I believe El-Sayed is more likely to persuade uncommitted, rhetorically sophisticated readers because he appeals to his audience's emotions and supports it with statistics that fortify that appeal. He also ethically uses facts and figures to appeal to logos and solidifies his credibility by providing credible secondary sources to fact-check all of the information he shares and support his central idea. Washington would not be as likely to convince apathetic readers because her article focuses on pathos's underlying appeals, with minimal inclusion of credible supporting facts and statistics. But whether the federal administration is doing a good job of protecting its citizens, it is more important now than ever to remember our history, and remember that whether you are a Democrat or Republican, come economic collapse or pandemic; our nation is strong for as long as we present as united Americans in the eyes of the world.

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Police Brutality in the United States

In 2019, American police forces killed three people per day for nearly 1,100 deaths. In his article, Yuri Vanetik includes that according to the Mapping Police Violence, 99% of police killings from 2013 to 2019 have resulted in officers not being charged with a crime. Those numbers surpass any in other advanced western nations. As stated by David Smith in his article, a recent Guardian/Opinium Research poll discovered that nearly 9 in 10 Americans believe that racism and police violence are a severe problem in our country. These statistics display just the tip of the iceberg that is the severe issue of police brutality in the United States. **There are many catalysts that give rise to police brutality, and by examining these issues, we can find some highly effective solutions, including tracking officer complains, investing in non-police alternatives, and altering police culture.**

Acknowledging an issue is the first step towards eradicating it; for us to combat the severe issue of police brutality in our nation, it is essential to understand

how U.S police brutality rates compare to other nations, the national budget allocated to police departments, and the several instances where the African-American community has suffered at the hands of American police. Presently, the U.S government spends a significant amount of money on public safety programs. As Levin states in his article, in the past four decades, the cost of policing in the U.S has tripled to approximately $115 billion. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic has reduced funding in social services departments such as "education, youth programs, arts and culture, libraries, housing services", et cetera, there have been minimal to no reductions in police budgets throughout the nation (Levin).

When compared to other countries, American funding for public safety programs exceeds that of social services. As Levin states in his article, the U.S also has excessively higher imprisonment rates. Ironically, these investments in police and prison do not make the country any safer; in fact, "police in America kill more people in days than many countries do in years" (Levin). In the same article, Levin expresses that researchers also discovered that exercising forecful policing on the streets for trivial matters not only causes social disruption, it leads to an increase in crime. This is proven by the dissolution of the New York "stop and frisk" policy, which displayed no significant crime rate rise (Levin).

Acorrding to Holmes Smith, there is ample evidence that shows minorities are the targets of police brutality much more often than their counterparts. Police kill black

Americans at rates drastic to their overall makeup percentage of the U.S population, as mentioned above. "They [minorities] are three times more likely to be more killed by police than white people and five times more likely to be unarmed when killed" (Campbell). In addition, there have been many names in recent years added to the growing list of police brutality victims.

Michael Brown was an unarmed 18-year-old black teenager, who was brutally shot to death by a police officer in Missouri in 2014, with his dead body left on the street for hours. Similarly, Tamir Rice was an unarmed 12-year-old black teenager who was shot to death in Cleveland in the same year, by two police officers who suspected him of carrying a gun. Furthermore, Eric Garner was an unarmed 43-year old black male who died in New York City a few years ago after police officers choked him during his arrest. He reportedly repeated, "I can't breathe" 11 times before passing out (Campbell)

Other instances of police brutality include the murder of Alton Sterling (an unarmed 37-year old black man, who was shot dead by two police officers in Los Angeels in 2016); Philando Castile (an unarmed 32-year old black man killed by a police officer during a traffic stop in Minnesota), and Walter Scott (a 50-year-old unarmed man pulled over by a police officer, and killed during a traffic stop for an inoperative brake light in South Carolina in 2015). And the most recently publicized use of excessive force by police - George Floyd, a 46-year-old black man killed by a police officer who "knelt in the back of his neck for 8 minutes" in Minneapolis (Campbell). In an informal

interview that Holmes Smith includes in his article, 40 black men from disadvantaged

urban communities shared their experience with police officers, revealing that the

participants perceived mistreatment from the police as racist and intentional, which

resulted in an "extreme sense of betrayal, fear, and distrust toward police".

    <u>While racism plays an essential role in the strained police-minorities relationship</u>

<u>shown above, it is not the only major catalyst; police brutality has several other causes,</u>

<u>including, but not limited to: lack of accountability, inadequate training for non-violent</u>

<u>situations, and the increasing militarization of law enforcement</u>. A vital factor allowing

police brutality culture to grow is the lack of rules requiring officers to retain some

accountability in their dealings with the community ("Causes of Police Brutality").

    In 40 cities and three states, officers receive paid leave while under investigation,

    while 43 cities and four states remove misconduct records within as little as two

    years after an incident. There are also union contracts and police bill of rights

    with formalized policies that limit police accountability. (Woodward and

    Michelle)

    As mentioned in the article by Woodward and Michelle, the Police Union

Contract Project notes that the existence of these contracts hinders proper oversight of

misconduct instances in over seventy U.S cities. Some of these provisions include the

restrictions on further investigations of some complaints as well as officers'

interrogations, appeal opportunities given to officers for reinstatement, and access by

police officers to confidential information during investigations (Woodward and

Michelle). This claim is elaborated within the article by the following statistics serving

as evidence:

> A Washington Post investigation found that of the 1,881 US police officers fired
>
> for misconduct between 2006 and 2017, 451 of them won their jobs back after an
>
> appeal. (Woodward and Michelle)

As feared, all of these measures result in an increased rate of police brutality cases

against minorities in the U.S.

More often than not, instances like the ones mentioned above reflect poor police

tactics that leave no other options apart from physical violence. This issue stems from a

lack of adequate training for police officers. As Vanetik points out in his article, many

people entering law enforcement do so as a career choice right after high school or after

earning an undergraduate degree. These people suffer from a lack of life experience

(apart from the police academy) that can help them deal with hostile situations they

grapple with on the streets. Vanetik sums the catalyst behind this issue in simple, yet

blatant terms: "…police academies and trainers teach a warrior mentality to recruits

who do not have the requisite background". He also recounts an instance in Cleveland,

where the officers who shot a 12-year-old boy called Tamir Rice carrying a toy gun,

froze after the shooting instead of immediately providing first aid, displaying a serious gap in after-shooting-incident training. Similarly, not all officers who respond to an emergency call involving a person with mental illness possess the training needed in in that peculiar scenario, often resulting in a severe mismanagement of the situation. "According to the Treatment Advocacy Center (a nonprofit), at least 1 in every four people killed by police has a serious mental illness" (Woodward and Michelle).

This analysis of inadequate police training falls in line with the perceived militarization of police. As the article "Causes of Police Brutality" discusses, the use of heavily-armed SWAT team intervention has increased between 50,000 and 80,000 incidents annually. Many local and state agencies have cultivated an "us against them" mentality towards the citizens they are entrusted to serve. In a civilian's perception of law enforcement, selling compliance and trust is crucial when handling confrontational situations. As Yuri Vanetik implies, while some incidents require some force, this should be the exception rather than the rule. The increased militarization of police results from a Pentagon program known as "1033" that allows the U.S military to grant excess military equipment to local police departments (Woodward and Michelle). Aylin Woodward and Michelle Mark also mention that the program has enabled local law enforcement agencies to possess "armored vehicles, bayonets, and even grenade launchers".

According to a 2017 study, researchers found that the act of receiving the equipment "leads to a culture of militarization" within police departments, causing them to "rely more on violence to solve problems". (Woodward and Michelle)

Stephanie Pappas, in her article, discusses the findings of a paper published in the Political Research Quarterly in 2018. She mentions that the researchers of the study discovered that "in all 50 states between 2014 and 2016, the number of police-involved deaths rose with militarization", despite regulated factors such as poverty, population numbers, race, and violence.

Samuel Sinyangwe, the co-founder of a police-reform initiative called Campaign Zero as well as the nonprofit database "Mapping Police Violence," presents research-backed ways to curb this violence, including tracking complaints about officers' use of excessive force, investing in non-police alternatives to respond to emergency calls, and changing police culture. Pappas notes that there is no official government record for data on police killings or police use of excessive force. In their article, Woodward and Michelle mention Andrew Papachristos, a co-author of a 2019 study on the use of excessive force by police officers, who stated, "Officers with a history of abuse have a pretty strong influence on the subsequent behavior of other officers". A similar 2019 study researched over 8,000 police officers in Chicago that reaped complaints between within a span of two years. The results indicated that police officers who partnered with

those that already had a complaint against them were more likely to receive similar

grievances in their future (Woodward and Michelle). But as Pappas states, most of these

complaints are not made public, with databases like Mapping Police Violence relying

on media reports of deaths instead of official data from police departments, cities,

states, or the government.

> Some state laws make transparency more difficult. For example, Section 50-a in
>
> New York state seals personnel records for police officers, keeping complaints or
>
> histories of misconduct secret. (Pappas)

For the reasons mentioned above, instituting an effective tracking method such

complaints against officers can help provide oversight. Pappas, in her article, demands

that police department data should be accessible through the Freedom of Information

Act (FOIA), allowing citizens to ask for police records from public organizations. In

relation, Woodward and Michelle call for legislation that prohibits the reinstation of

officers previously fired for serious misconduct, stating this can make a huge difference

in disarming repeat behavior.

Levin states in his article that in recent years, community interest groups have

called for "defunding" law enforcement – withdrawing funds granted to police and

prison systems, and financing social services with them. The rudimentary principle, he

mentions, is that government budgets and "public safety" spending should focus on

"housing, employment, community health, education, and other vital programs, instead of police officers" (Levin). As stated earlier, the current cost of policing in the U.S is around $115 billion. To implement community policing strategy, Pappas discussed some great initiatives, including the use of Crisis Intervention Teams (CTIs) by some police departments–officers with distinctive training who work towards helping mentally ill people receive treatment instead of intensifying the situation into a dangerous encounter. Pappas also mentions a special 911 diversion program in Oregon called CAHOOTS, that connects calls about mental-health issues to professionals and medical experts rather than the local law enforcement. In addition, the Bend Bulletin notes that the staff of the organization reach out to the local homeless population, providing them with supplies and medical treatment. These investments into non-police alternatives when dealing with a low-to-mild threat situation have resulted in decreased crime rates in communities implementing these strategies, as several different studies discovered. Suppose state governments throughout the nation invest in similar programs rather than funding police departments more than necessary. In that case, these numbers can grow and eventually help morph our society into a safer all-around community.

As the saying goes: Change begins from within. No amount of federal oversight, demilitarization, and investments into alternatives can help protect our country from the brutality of some police officers – not unless we work towards changing police

culture within the walls of police departments. According to Woodward and Michelle, as The Atlantic reported in 2017, the efficacy of training methods like implicit bias training - training officers to be "more aware of their subconscious biases about class, gender, and race" - is questionable at best, partly due to a lack of consistent standards for such methods.

> According to Campaign Zero, police recruits, on average, spend 58 hours learning how to shoot, but just eight hours learning how to de-escalate potentially violent situations. (Woodward and Michelle)

In her article, Pappas mentions that a Use of Force Project report in 2016 by Sinyangwe revealed that departments that adopted at least half of the presented policies limiting excessive police force lowered the number of civilian deaths; departments with "four or more policies in place had 38% less police-involved killing per arrest compared to those with one or none". Pappas states that some of these measures to change police culture for the better included: requiring police officers to de-escalate before using force, banning chokeholds, requiring officers to deplete all other options before resorting to deadly force, obligating officers to report all uses of [attempted] force, and mandating officers to intercede if one of their fellow officers is using excessive force.

Police brutality is no longer merely a social media concept; as citizens of this country, it is our utmost duty to address this serious issue plaguing our communities.

We have to remember the names of police brutality victims and ask ourselves if their punishment fit their perceived crimes. As members of this society, we need to understand the factors that facilitate police brutality, including excessive militarization, the lack of training, and repercussions for officers involved in this practice. Most importantly, we have to take the last step and give a final push to the solutions in motion. By investing in alternatives, advocating for change within police culture, and holding the officers involved in the practice of police brutality accountable, we can help make not only our community safer today but hold on to that safety for our future generations to come. As former U.S President John F. Kennedy stated in an address at American University in 1963, "No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings... Let us focus instead on a more practical, more attainable peace, based not on a sudden revolution in human nature but on a gradual evolution in human institutions — on a series of concrete actions and effective agreements" We, as a united society, need to speak up against the illicit cruelty around us today to protect the notability of our nation tomorrow.

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