

## EVERY MOTHER'S SON AS A TEACHING TOOL

The documentary **EVERY MOTHER'S SON** is an excellent teaching tool to stimulate students critical thinking about criminal justice issues especially the role of the police in a democratic society.

The film raises some fundamental questions: What is the role of policing in a society? Can structural reform happen in policing?

- **The Use of the Chokehold** - Trace whether or not the chokehold continues to be authorized and used in some police department. If it has been abandoned what has been replaced to “restrain” suspects?
- **The Rotten Apple Thesis** – What are the pros and cons of police unions? What are the disadvantages not being able to fire police officers that have multiple complaints of miss conduct.? What other mechanisms can be used to protect the careers of good police officers and to protect the community against bad police officers?
- **Bench Trial verses Jury Trial** – What are the pros and cons of a defendant being able to select a bench trial in place of a jury trial? When the judge pronounced the verdict in the killing of Anthony Baez he began his verdict by saying, “The death of Anthony Baez was unnecessary and avoidable.” Yet he found Police Officer Livoti not guilty. Why might this have happened?
- **Racial Profiling** – Does racial profiling work as an effective law enforcement tool? For example, the New York City Police Department stopped over 500,000 people during 2006-2007. More than 80 percent of the people stopped were Black or Latino. Only 13% of the stops resulted in an arrest. This means that the police were wrong roughly 87% of the time. Would this margin of error be accepted in any other profession? Should it be accepted in policing?
- **Change of Venue** - Should defendants have the right to ask to have the case tried in a location where the crime did not take place? Does the Change of Venue violate the notion that a defendant should be tried by a jury of their peers?
- **Excessive use of Force** - What constitutes a residential community? Do certain communities get more protection from police behavior than other communities? Explain how you would expect police to behavior in an affluent residential community? How would you describe the community where Amadou Diallo lived?
- The law recognizes that people with mental illness are not legally responsible for their behavior. Are the police the appropriate agency for attempting to control a situation when a person has a mental health problem? Should there be another mechanism for intervening in these cases?

- **Cover-Up** – Is attempting to cover up a mistake made by a police officer a form of police misconduct? Should police be punished for a covering-up? What might be done to reduce this kind of behavior?

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