

**Media Hype Versus the Policing Profession: Results from Mass Media's Effort to Incite
Communities Against Their Police Departments**

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Abstract

Mass media propagandized a message of defunding the police profession following a defining moment in American policing history which occurred in May, 2020. Media has a long history of directing and controlling the narrative concerning the relationship between the policing profession and communities in America. Media holds the demonstrated power of debilitating the policing profession through the media's own negative and inciting spin purposely embedded in divisive news stories which suffocate our senses. The purpose of this paper is to briefly examine the relationship between media and the community in America's not so distant history, followed by a more detailed examination of the relationship between mass media and the policing profession in current day America, focusing in detail on mass media directed cyclical events causing the breaking down of, blaming of and the rebuilding of the policing profession.

Keywords: media, mass media, directing the narrative, policing, defunding, crime

Media Hype Versus the Policing Profession: Results from Mass Media's Effort to Incite Communities Against Their Police Departments

Mass media is inclusive of several types of large scale broadcasting systems which infiltrate the homes and minds of our culture. Mass media blasts at us from our television sets in our homes, our smart devices in our hands, the stereo in our vehicles, small television screens at our local fueling stations, billboards planted along busy highways, billings placed inside large-scale commuter transportation, and so on. Our society is surrounded by mass media to the extent we become unwittingly inundated with its calculated message despite not actively listening. The barrage begins the instant we awake to begin our day, stretching over to our smart device to check overnight headlines and by the time we have reached our place of business or the place of our first errand, we have potentially been exposed to every source listed above, leaving our minds and emotion swirling with not just the information provided but the media induced spin purposely embedded in the message. It is critical to our individual understanding and reaction to media that we first accept all media as a business entity attempting to gain and grow a customer base just as all other successful business models. The question becomes, what is the polarizing topic of the day and how does the media exploit it to build a customer base and what is the resulting effect on society? This paper will briefly explore America's past relationship with the policing profession through the eyes of media and then explore the three part cyclical effect mass media created inside the policing profession: destruction of the policing profession through propagandizing defunding, placing blame on the resulting shredded police departments for lack of adequate staffing, poor response to and poor investigation of steadily increasing crime rates, and ending with a mass media directed push to increase police recruitment through

promise of increased funding and increased resources, all steps which saw their genesis from inundating mass media coverage of one polarizing police incident.

To fully appreciate the status of policing as displayed by the media in present time, I will briefly take us back to a time when law enforcement held a place of respect in the hearts of communities. I call to mind a famous painting, *The Runaway*, which portrays a finely dressed state trooper in pristine uniform sitting at a diner counter eating lunch with a small boy, the actual runaway, the boy's hobo style bag on the ground near his stool (Rockwell, 1958a). This painting illustrates the aura which surrounded police officers in its time: the trooper appearing clean and sharp, pride evident in his uniform appearance, body language encouraging and facilitating of trust as the trooper is leaning to his right, toward the boy, drawing the boy into earnest conversation, and the respect and trust displayed from the small boy, whom we would naturally assume is in a state of fretfulness as he has packed his favorite belongings into a small bag and left his home, yet who is able to make direct eye contact with the trooper and give full attention to his words. This painting was artwork created by Norman Rockwell in 1958 specifically for the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post* (Rockwell, 1958b). Evident to all who purchased or otherwise encountered a copy of this well distributed news magazine was a positively portrayed police event. Naturally, viewers observing the overall message of this painting would garner a positive and harmonious relationship between the policing profession and communities. Twelve years later, wildly popular radio broadcaster Paul Harvey delivered an approximate two minute long narrative, *Policeman*, on his radio broadcast. Inside the narrative is the following description of a police officer:

A policeman is a composite of what all men are, the mingling of a saint and sinner, dust and deity. Gulled statistics wave the fan over the stinkers, underscore instances of

dishonesty and brutality because they are “new”. What they really mean is that they are exceptional, unusual, not commonplace. Buried under the frost is the fact: Less than one-half of one percent of policemen misfit the uniform. That’s a better average than you’d find among clergy! (Harvey, 1970).

Inside this description we can note that instances of police dishonesty and police brutality have crept into the national dialogue concerning police officers. Harvey takes steps to note this percentage is remarkably low and ranks the policing profession even above clergymen in professional acumen. Through these two examples from America’s past we can develop a feeling for how the media outlets of the era shaped the policing profession in our country, proud and professional. As we explore more recent events in America’s history we will see how the stage began to be set for looming critical decline in the relationship between media and policing.

An event I believe so crucial to my thesis that to leave it out would result in a missing link, occurred on Tuesday, November 8, 2016; Republican candidate Donald J. Trump won the presidential election. When Americans awoke on November 9, 2016, and reached for their smart devices, what they saw was mass media’s coverage of the beginning of a great polarization of Americans, an event which proved to divide country and community. One very interesting occurrence to come out of this election result was many American colleges electing to make optional, delay or all together cancel exams and formally excuse students from classes due to their personal feelings over Trump’s victory (Soave, 2016). This is a critical point; in 2016 what major college institutions taught and students learned was cry aloud enough and you begin to gain media attention followed by media influence toward your cries. As part of an online news agency report, Aaron David Miller, former State Department advisor to both political parties, stated “There has never been a presidency in modern times when America’s dysfunction has

been so fully on display” (Spetalnick et al., 2021). The media were relentless in their descriptions of Trump’s polarization of political parties and Americans in general. A round table discussion amongst a group of persons who collectively represented a wide cultural variance among Americans summed up their feelings on what they felt were the largest struggles radically dividing the country in the wake of the post Trump era. Areas of concern raised by participants included political polarization negatively affecting the future of the country, an increasingly violent society, complicated feelings over the attack carried out on the United States Capitol Building and the resulting deaths, gun rights, increasing crime levels, and protest rights (Healy & Rivera, 2022). What I believe is the crux of the mood of Americans in the post Trump era is to understand we were reaching a critical failure point in lack of tolerance for opinions differing from our own and lack of coping skills toward divisive events. Yet, a divisive event was about to occur in American policing. Mass media was going to invade every avenue to our minds and emotions with uninhibited images and coverage of the incident. In the following paragraphs we will explore how this event’s resulting mass media coverage began to incite communities against the policing profession.

In May of 2020, 658,700 police officers were employed in the United States of America (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). On Monday, May 25, 2020, by my own mathematical calculation, .000455 % of those officers became physically involved in detaining an alleged forgery suspect in a prone position on a city street, where said physical actions aggravated the suspect’s preexisting medical conditions, all factors together ultimately culminating in that suspect’s death while still detained prone on the street. This percentage, .000455 % remains consistent with the calculations of Paul Harvey some 50 years earlier, mentioned in paragraph 2, of officers who misfit the uniform. The specific players and facts involved in the mentioned

incident are not germane to proving my thesis, but are crucial to demonstrate the media's power to falsely over-inflate the minority side of an issue to the detriment of the majority side of the same issue. To that end, when needed for reference, the above mentioned incident will be referred to simply as Incident A. Mass media unleashed a frenzied storm of Incident A coverage which instigated widespread incitement in communities against the policing profession.

The essential core of the matter is the astronomical levels of mass media coverage of Incident A. Generally speaking, a person in our country could not access a social media outlet, on-air broadcasting, web based media outlet or print media without encountering coverage of Incident A. And, in short, the message was police brutality. According to Moore (n.d.), in terms of hard numbers, in a two week time span 1,880,507 media articles featured Incident A. Of these media articles 1,028,372 also mentioned police brutality. In order to fully gain an understanding of the media coverage for Incident A, I want to create a comparison with another major event which occurred during this same time frame in the United States.

Running in a parallel time frame with Incident A was the deadly coronavirus pandemic. I want to contrast media coverage of the two incidents to demonstrate the scope of the obtrusive volume of media coverage of Incident A. As Incident A was unfolding, coronavirus death counts had clicked beyond the 100,000 mark in the United States (Fischer et al., 2020). The authors point out for months Americans had been starving for news concerning the severity of the coronavirus pandemic as it continued its sweep across the world and our country, however the media had been closed out of medical institutions, therefore the media had no emotion driving, gut wrenching images of coronavirus death with which to assault Americans. Contrastingly, as news of Incident A swept across the country the media was able to provide an entire landscape of graphic, anger driven images which easily achieved viral status. The authors

point out the following statistical data per various media outlet in the immediate days following Monday, May 25th:

- On the following Sunday, combined television air time for CNN, MSNBC and Fox News covered coronavirus in 2.5% of airtime and Incident A in 25% of airtime
- By the end of the week of May 25th, 2020, social media interactions on Incident A were 14 times that of coronavirus
- Searches for Incident A overtook searches for coronavirus by midweek
- Online articles concerning police brutality were 6.8 times more in demand than coronavirus articles
- Online articles concerning police brutality averaged 3,800 views per article

The authors offer the following, which I read as a warning and what I really hope will be a poignant take away from my paper on its whole, which is “**Be Smart:** Ideally, the media should have no problem paying attention to both issues, but pressure to keep viewers glued to their screens will make it difficult to avoid the unique visual opportunity that the” Incident A images “present.” (Fischer et al., 2020). The media focus on one particular portion of Incident A was evident and the centermost point of the media spin is also evident, police brutality. Incident A and its fallout was in the media for the remainder of 2020 and received coverage throughout much of 2021 as related legal decisions were carried out in courts of law and replayed ad nauseam via endless mass media outlets. Mass media coverage of Incident A changed the policing profession in many ways, some literally overnight.

Many of us who reported to line up on May 26, 2020, were much the same person and law enforcement officer as we were when we reported to line up on May 25, 2020. I believe we

all took a brief moment to examine our own personal policing style to reassure ourselves we had no part of what we had viewed, along with the rest of America, inside of us. Beyond that we still had all of yesterday's societal and community issues facing us. This day though, we were to experience many new Incident A related concerns which required our constant adjustment and adaptation. Some changes occurred overnight, such as how our citizenry viewed us on the whole. Cultural changes to the profession were introduced over the coming months. Formal governmental reform also followed in short order. In the next few paragraphs, I will discuss how these changes affected the policing profession. Here I want to add a few notes which were my own personal experiences.

Overnight we had become the untouchables. The media, in all its raging power and reach, had managed to sully the uniform we all wore. A couple of happenings from those next few days stand out in my memory. I protect and serve a midsize city of approximately 200,000 persons. During this time frame I was serving as a patrol sergeant on a hustling mid-shift. We were a fortunate city in that we did not have enemies of the policing profession. Over my seven years of service before Incident A, the disliking police officers was just a matter of business. The sentiment was not one we experienced on a personal level. People chose to violate laws. We arrived to make the appropriate arrest. The order of these things was merely a matter of routine business on both sides and no hard feelings developed. We, the profession, had friends and allies among our citizenship in every police district of our city. It may be odd to consider, but we were familiar with many persons we arrested to the point that casual conversation occurred during the arrest process. Beginning on May 26, 2020, though, ostracizing us became deeply personal. What stands out the most was the lack of eye contact. Neither the citizens who were kindly offering to buy us a cup of coffee, nor shop owners who regularly welcomed our

uniformed presence in their shops one shift earlier would now make eye contact with us or the uniform. The sense was even though they personally may not have blamed us for Incident A, the fallout was so severe that to acknowledge us would lend them to the phenomenon of guilt by association. I want to share with you two brief experiences which occurred over the next few weeks to add personal relevance for why I choose this topic to explore. I responded to an address for a call to service. I don't remember the nature of the call but because I went in my role as a supervisor, I can tell you it was a higher priority call. Upon my arrival, I took a quick scan of the scene as standard for officer safety. I caught movement about shin level off to my left and looked that way. A toddler shot me with his finger guns. His actions stopped me short as the heaviness of the moment swept over me. I imagined his mom sitting him in front of a television set for hours on end as images of Incident A infiltrated his once pure toddler mind. As the weeks went on, I stopped going inside businesses to eat and stopped driving the marked police unit through the coffee shop drive-thru. An atmosphere had developed where customers were not comfortable shopping next to us and business owners naturally chose cash flow over our presence in their shops. One afternoon shortly after Incident A, I left a training class at the end of a long day. The dress code for class had been business casual so I looked a lot like everyone else going through their daily routines. Dressed so, I felt comfortable stopping by Kroger to grab a few groceries to take home. I wore my badge and gun on my waist but each remained obscured by a light jacket and I shopped the aisles with a feeling of comfortable obscurity. As my turn arrived at a self-checkout, I walked by a young girl, maybe six years old, who was waiting obediently for her mother to scan their groceries. The young girl was eye level with my badge and I watched her catch sight of it as I lifted my basket to the counter. The little girl jerked back with such a start it caused her to stumble backward into her mother. In weeks

prior, children just like these would wait not so patiently for police officers to produce police badge stickers for their shirts. Now though, they had learned a negative reaction to seeing a police officer. Officers and departments in many cities were experiencing the same disheartening moments. Larger scale fallout was also occurring in police departments across the country. And the first stage in the media-driven cyclical effect on policing, defunding, which brought police departments to levels of ineffectiveness when attempting to fight crime, was in its infancy and growing quickly.

In approximately 14 days since Incident A, traditional major news outlets served up 300 articles to their viewership and readership which were centered on defunding the police compared to merely 2 articles in the year leading up to the date of Incident A (Hollar, 2020). Concerning social media, in a 30 day period various social websites saw 4.4 million mentions of defunding the police (Beckman, 2020).

With public pressure on them, mayors and city councils responded. In 2020 budget votes, advocacy groups won over \$840m in direct cuts from US police departments and at least \$160m investments in community services...25 cities, such as Denver and Oakland, officials moved to remove police from schools, saving an additional \$34m (Levin, 2021).

On June 6, 2020, a Twitter user posted live footage of a few unknown people utilizing various styles of large buckets, paint rollers and very bright yellow paint, painting very large bright yellow letters on a Washington, D.C. street located near the White House (Cuthbertson, 2020). The twitter post was just a few seconds long so the end result was not available while the site owner was live. However, the end result would be front and center on media outlets the next morning; bright yellow letters painted from curb to curb of the city street which spelled out

“defund the police”. For the purposes of my paper, I opened a google search bar and typed in various combinations of the words yellow, defund and police. Google sent back images by the thousands of painted city streets and demonstration signs calling for police defunding. Google also sent back hundreds of traditional media and social media sites attached to the images so viewers could scour the images and articles, complete with mass media spin over their sudden and rapid appearance. It appeared no media site had not covered the bright yellow slogan. Images of the slogan spread via ultra available mass media and before one city’s bright yellow paint had dried, hundreds of additional cities had bright yellow letters of their own for mass media to capture and force into our lives. Glaring caveat here, despite what mass media would have us believe, defunding the police was not the singular thought of our country. Large opposition to the defund police movement existed, however that message was not catching on with mass media.

While city streets were being painted, a poll conducted to determine support or opposition to the defund the police movement revealed two-thirds of Americans opposed calls for defunding the police and its goal of moving funding away from law enforcement and toward mental health or housing issues (Karson, 2020). I conducted many google searches on this topic and was not surprised to find extremely little coverage of opposition to the defund movement. Mass media brainwashing would have us believe the sole belief of Americans was the need to defund police departments in favor of social programs and allow the community to heal the community. The outrage leading to defunding the police was riveting, full of violent images and impactful pleas and screaming in the streets. For mass media outlets, these images were looping in viewer after viewer and exploding their customer base. In stark contrast however, those opposing the defunding movement were not in the streets painting brightly colored letters.

Those opposing defunding were not, in fact, creating any viral visual opportunity which would be beneficial to the mass media bottom line. I think it is both astonishing and terrifying that a minority of Americans have the ability to create a buzz so enticing to money hungry mass media that the majority is washed out in a media silence. However this is exactly what occurred in June of 2020. And the end result of the media parade of images was defunded police departments and police programs.

Falling prey to the media's cajoling, city leader's defunded police departments across America. Austin, Texas, Los Angeles, California and 12 other cities determined they would cut police budgets and reinvest monies in social programs (Subramanian & Arzy, 2021). San Francisco, California launched crisis response teams, specifically not composed of law enforcement officers, to respond to behavioral health calls and Berkeley, California voted to limit law enforcement involvement in low-level traffic stops. Minneapolis, Minnesota and other cities committed to removing police presence in schools. New York City, New York and the State of Colorado ended qualified immunity protections for police officers. Many states passed laws to restrict law enforcement's use of less-lethal weaponry, including pepper spray and tear gas. Several states and Washington, D.C. enacted duty to intervene laws requiring officers to stop fellow officers from excessive usages of force. Eight states enacted duty to provide medical assistance laws. The majority of states created a process for decertification of police officers who had committed serious policy violations (Subramanian & Arzy, 2021). Examining this list of formal reform, I am left wondering about the motivation behind cuts designed to remove School Resource Officers from America's schools at a time when we seem destined to hear, at an alarming rate, stories of children being murdered in their classrooms during active aggressor incidents. I feel much the same about cutting less lethal weaponry as a tool police officers may

utilize to end potential deadly force situations in a manner omitting deadly force. Many of the cuts were nonsensical in that they in no way reflected the circumstances surrounding Incident A. I believe American communities and the policing profession fell victim to city leaders' vain attempts at placating the demands to defund police which were demanded in perpetuity via mass media. These actions of city leaders echoed the thought processes behind decisions made by academic leaders in many American colleges when Trump was elected, which amounted to responding to the loudest cries carried by media outlets. Perhaps the media had so plundered the policing profession that city leaders felt like they should attempt to make police officers unseen in order to reduce criticism being directed back toward themselves from mass media sources. Lastly, I would be reticent if I did not call out Berkeley, California; low level traffic stops only exist in the realm of the boogey-man and the monster under children's beds. The disconnect in defunding policing programs which in no way related to the facts of Incident A leads me to believe city leaders were intimidated by media pressure to the point of making any knee-jerk reaction budget cut with the word police in it just so mass media outlets add their city to the rolls of those defunding policing. Collectively, states approved approximately 300 reforms, affecting endless police departments, which included money diverted to social issues, arrest alternatives and constraints in force tactics (Lavoie et al., 2020). We must critically consider the overall effect of monies removed from the budget of a police department. Removed monies resulted in more than just fewer police officers on the street. Proper equipment, including tools, uniforms, vehicles and more, for police officers to safely and effectively complete their sworn duties became scarce. Training necessary to equip police officers with industry standard best practice approaches to professionally navigate issues negatively impacting communities such as homelessness, domestic disturbances and infiltration of illegal narcotics and firearms, could no

longer be financed by police departments and became unavailable to officers. Dispatch centers were negatively impacted by staffing reductions. Police departments began to become ineffective from the moment a citizen reached for a phone to dial 911.

Nearly three years have gone by now since Incident A. Movements have quieted. Intense feelings have been replaced with Americans' desire to resume the routines and activities of their everyday lives. However, the policing profession is struggling still with what has remained a downward trend in census numbers. At the time of Incident A, I had been serving as a law enforcement officer in my city for approximately seven years. I doubt the makeup of my police department differed all that much from many other police departments around the country. With seven years of service we were considered by our senior officer heavy department to be just washing off our green. There was quite a disparity in years of service; our department had senior officers and young officers like myself and few scatterings in the middle. Post the defund police wave, my then eight years of service made me the senior officer on many police scenes. The senior guards broadcast their last ES call and abandoned the policing profession. These officers called in their retirement, many of them years before they initially planned. With them went years of experience and yet to be untaught lessons that no hype media article or defunded police money fed social program would ever replace for us younger guards. The combination of media fueled distrust, media fueled boldness of the new brand of criminal and lack of support from our city leaders drove senior guards out of squad cars and, in most cases, into private sector employment far removed from policing. I will let you know, during this time, placing a handcuff on the wrist of an otherwise non-flummoxed, non-disheveled, standing on his or her own two feet, arrestee did not come without comment of lack of ability to get oxygen into his or her lungs. Many citizens on the streets and in communities were emboldened by the anti-law enforcement

mass media message and felt empowered to curse and threaten us as we worked through our tour. Every arrest drew an anti-police crowd armed with smart devices. Our police scenes and our faces were rounding on social media sites before we could get victims removed from harm's way and suspects safely to an investigatory setting. Our mayor failed to speak up for us and instead initiated his own brand of defunding, defunding by attrition, refusing to fill spaces left vacant as our senior guards walked away. Our younger guards, 1-2 years on during this time, turned away as well. They simply had no skin in this game with just 1-2 years of service and, frankly, as young adults and new police officers had no idea how to succeed in the wave of this media charged police hate. They quickly became afraid for their safety and left to wire alarms in homes or work for their fathers-in-law. Departments around the country were experiencing this same phenomenon. A total of 184 police agencies surveyed reported resignations increased by 43%, retirements increased by 24% and overall hiring fell by 4% (Ahmed, 2022). Another report shows similar results, noting departments of 500 or more sworn personnel reporting retirements increased by 30%, with hiring dropping 5%, as well as noting across the board numbers of 45% increase in retirement rates and 20% increase in resignations (Westervelt, 2021). The statistics boil down to detrimental numbers of police officers fleeing the profession and police recruitment centers finding themselves with no applicants to process. Cities began to feel the results of defunded police departments by finding themselves without police officers to protect them from increasing crime rates. The second stage of the cyclical effect created by mass media in the policing profession was beginning; filling mass media platforms with articles highlighting high crime and no police response.

What the media drove of course the media was sure to mass report. Mass media began to publish reports of increased crime rates, blaming police officers for providing inadequate or no

response to criminal acts negatively affecting communities. In reality, due to increased retirements and decreased numbers of applicants to hire, every one law enforcement officer was required to do the work of many. Acts of crime never stopped while government officials were defunding police budgets at alarming rates. Career criminals knew police numbers were dwindling and the country entered a time where crime really did pay the criminal element. Defunding led to a target rich environment for criminals due to police departments simply not having enough law enforcement officers and investigators to properly attend to the crime which was occurring. Across the United States over 20 major cities shifted or cut policing budgets, resulting in the largest homicide increase America has witnessed, during 2020 and into 2021, detailed in Table 1 (Cassase, 2022).

Table 1

Budget Cuts and Homicide Increase by City

City	Budget Cut	Homicide Increase
Austin, TX	1/3 police budget	54%
Chicago, IL	400 officers	135%
Washington, D.C.	\$15 million	Highest rate in 18 years
Louisville, KY	Shifted millions to social programs	78%
Los Angeles, CA	\$150 million	25%
Milwaukee, WI	\$430,000	95%
Minneapolis, MN	\$8 million	72%
New Orleans, La	\$16 million	79%
New York City, NY	\$1 billion	50%
Portland, OR	\$15 million	83%
Seattle, WA	20% police budget	74%

So who were people to call? Certainly not your local police department according to media sources. The media smoothly transitioned into the blame game.

Last year, the United States tallied more than 20,000 murders-the highest total since 1995 and 4,000 more than in 2019. Preliminary FBI data for 2020 point to a 25% surge in murders-the largest single year increase since the agency began publishing uniform data in 1960. Policing is to blame, or rather the lack of it (Johnson, 2021).

Due to extremely low police census numbers, officers on the job must focus on the highest priority calls leaving fewer officers to respond to lower level felony crimes and in some cases not responding at all and instead requiring victims to file online police reports (Mordock, 2022). Officers faced criticism for not responding to lower classed felony and misdemeanor crimes and were blamed for having a lack of concern toward those calls. Officers are also ignoring lower level crimes which often lead to bigger criminal arrests. Retail businesses reported a \$94.5 billion dollar loss to the crime of shoplifting (Mordock, 2022). As increased numbers of Americans began to fall victim to crimes, a plea for help arose. Mass media would now launch the third stage of the cyclical effect they created inside the policing profession; appealing for more police officers.

Present day, the media is now publishing images of sharply dressed squads of officers posed in pristine police uniforms, standing in front of gleaming police vehicles featuring State Capitol buildings as the backdrop and energetically explaining the new phenomenon of sign on bonuses if anyone will just apply to be a police officer. Thus, the cyclical effect has come full circle; mass media is calling men and women back to the proud profession of law enforcement.

Two years later, the political atmosphere for the policing profession is very different.

Politicians in both major political parties are pledging to increase funding, resources, and support for police departments. Many are counting on law enforcement to be the answer to many of our state's biggest problems like homelessness, mental health care, school discipline, and more (McCormack).

Collectively, city leaders and governments are again acknowledging the need for fully funded and supported police departments to effectively and positively impact issues negatively impacting the communities we serve and protect.

As we see, mass media took full advantage of Incident A and orchestrated endless coverage of the event to promote its own success. After the frenzy was over and the dust settled, mass media continued its successful business model while in its wake were an America being victimized by out of control crime rates while simultaneously suffering from inadequate police protection and the policing profession struggling mightily, with eviscerated police forces, to protect and serve. Mass media directed a message which turned out to be a cyclical narrative of defund the police, blame the police and bring back our police. This led to disastrous defunding actions from which we, the policing profession will now dutifully spend years rebuilding. We should feel uncomfortable knowing the direction this spectacle goes from here rests at the feet of the mass media. Mass media's reach and power will be vital in prescribing value back into the policing profession and contriving the need for fully functional police departments back into the minds of city leaders with control of police budgets.

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