

Opinion

Opinion: Are Our Lives As Minorities Worth \$2.75 and a Food Stand?

Since July of 2019 when Governor Andrew Cuomo of New York announced the inclusion of 500 police officers in subways to prevent fare evasion, minorities have become the primary target.

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Protesters gather together in a New York City subway against the NYPD.

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“Hey, hey! Ho, ho! NYPD’s got to go!”, were the chants of enraged New Yorkers protesting against over-policing in subways through the streets of Brooklyn.

Way too many New York City civilians have been personally affected by an injustice made by the NYPD since the inclusion of 500 more police officers monitoring the subways. Whether it was an injustice related to food stands, yeah, food stands, or refusing to pay the train fare, the NYPD is on every corner of the subway reaching for anything to put minorities in handcuffs.

“Ellos me quitaron todo”. In English this translates to, “they took everything from me”. This heartbreaking statement from Elsa, a Hispanic woman from Brooklyn was heard through Pix 11 News. Elsa, an honest street vendor trying to make a living through her churro business, was left with nothing after being bullied, humiliated, and threatened by the NYPD. Everyone watched in disbelief as the NYPD confiscated Elsa’s churro stand, along with all her earnings.

A few days following, a similar incident occurred where four policemen tackled and detained an African American teenager for selling candy in the subway in Harlem. [Video footage of the incident surfaced on Twitter](#) and revealed that upon being arrested, the policemen failed to read aloud his rights.

With these incidents, the NYPD has made it clear that a certain level of dehumanization is taking place. The law may be that one must acquire a license before selling food on the streets and it is true that the individuals mentioned earlier were breaking the law. But realistically speaking, this type of crime does not justify violence and the overall treatment they received. Police should, instead, focus their energy on more violent crimes which actually require this level of aggression. A Hispanic woman took home nothing but humiliation and trauma after a long day of work. A teenage boy was injured after the brutal attack from four policemen who did not see him as another fellow human being making an honest living. Is this truly the behavior that the NYPD stands by? This system is deliberately targeting people based on their ethnic backgrounds. Unfortunately, food vendors are not the only ones facing this prejudice.

Ever since the increase in the train fare to \$2.75, [many daily subway users have boycotted the MTA in hopes that the fare would be lowered](#). Many of these boycotts consisted of not paying the fare by either jumping or crouching through the railing or simply walking through the emergency door. And who were the ones to take the biggest hit from this boycott? You've guessed it- minorities.

In the case of Marco Cruz, 20, the NYPD presented a clear example of xenophobia towards the Mexican-American young man. "They told me they would arrest me along with the rest of my family all because I walked

through the emergency door. I had no money in my metro card”, explained Cruz, a close family friend. Cruz, a well-respected college student and athlete best known by his teammates for his outstanding leadership skills was what most people would say “at the wrong place at wrong time”. Cruz explained that in following a group of people through the emergency door after realizing that his metrocard had an insufficient balance, he was approached by two officers who threatened not only him but his family as well, insinuating a sense of doubt toward the legal status of his family. It is evident that there is underlying racism present when enforcing the law. This incident revealed that the NYPD’s goal is not to stop crime. However, its goal is to detain as many minorities as they can.

A case like Marco Cruz’ can be considered lucky. On October 12, 2019, twelve policemen pulled out their guns on a helpless African American teen for fare evasion in Brooklyn. As seen in the viral [Twitter video](#), the teenage boy obeyed the policeman’s command to put his arms up and yet was still cruelly attacked at gunpoint. This teenage boy almost lost his life over \$2.75. Cases such as this one goes to show that the NYPD must reevaluate their true mission because dehumanizing teenage boys of minority groups should not be a part of their mission and yet it is becoming more and more common in New York City.

The NYPD must be held accountable for their prejudice inhumanities and Governor Cuomo’s policy must be reversed in order to put an end to the

appalling corruption that has become so widespread. Protestors, keep protesting. We must keep fighting against the NYPD's prejudice attitudes constantly reflected upon minorities. The other side has dehumanized us for far too long. This ends now.

Reflection

I chose to pitch my op-ed to BuzzFeed News because many of its users happen to be from the younger generation. Buzzfeed is a news outlet that can only be found online. Therefore since the majority of young people are on the internet, I decided BuzzFeed would be the best choice. This topic of over-policing is very popular amongst the younger generation seeing that the majority of the people boycotting the MTA during protests were young people in their teens. The specific audiences I intended to write to were minorities from New York. I clearly presented this with the title of my op-ed, "Are Our Lives As Minorities Worth \$2.75 and a Food Stand?". Throughout my op-ed I include examples of minorities whose rights have been violated. Another audience who my op-ed is intended to target would be young people in general. Previously, I explained that I chose to pitch my op-ed to BuzzFeed News because it is a popular news outlet for the younger generation. In addition, the video examples I used were viral videos found on Twitter. Twitter is a social media outlet and the majority of the younger generation use social media.

The rhetorical situation of my op-ed is that over-policing has become a widespread issue in New York City and minorities have been the group that took the biggest hit from the policy. I included the date when Andrew Cuomo enforced this policy to convey the rapid downfall of this action. I wanted the audience to understand how fast things continue to worsen in such little time. In addition, it is clear that this is the rhetorical situation with the line, "Way too many New York City civilians have been personally affected by an injustice made by the NYPD since the inclusion of 500 more police officers monitoring the subways". I included this in the beginning of the op-ed so that the audience knows right away that this is the problem I am addressing. Additionally, after all my examples I addressed the rhetorical situation again to connect them.

For instance, after explaining the injustice of Marco Cruz, I ended the paragraph with the statement, “This incident revealed that the NYPD’s goal is not to stop crime. However, its goal is to detain as many minorities as they can.” With this statement, I am reminding the reader once again that over policing targets minorities.

Since the newspaper publication is BuzzFeed News, the style I chose to write my op-ed in was assertive, demanding and slightly informal. BuzzFeed News has op-eds ranging from furious demands to comical rants. I wanted to make sure the audience knew how passionate I felt about this topic and therefore, using pathos, I let my emotions pour onto this op-ed. An example of this is, “Is this truly the behavior that the NYPD stands by? This is a system that chooses who gets fair treatment based on their ethnic background.” In calling out the NYPD, I showed that I was demanding in wanting a change and assertive for directly saying it. Furthermore, my last sentence, “The other side has dehumanized us for far too long. This ends now.”, serves as a call to action which shows a level of assertiveness. In addition, because it is BuzzFeed, I made sure my language was not too formal with lines such as, “Whether it was an injustice related to food stands, yeah, food stands, or refusing to pay the train fare...” BuzzFeed has an informal way with their language that always makes it seem as though the writer is speaking directly to you and in using the word “yeah”, I wanted to convey the same feeling for my audience. Moreover, I kept my paragraphs short because most of the op-eds that I have read on BuzzFeed follow a similar format. This is intended to maintain the reader’s attention because long paragraphs tend to become tedious to read.

The examples I chose to include were all ones that people can find on social media. I chose the example of Elsa and the African American boys because all these cases went viral on social media. Therefore, the reader most likely was already familiar with the incidents. I chose to

include the example of Marco Cruz, my family friend, because it further emphasizes my passion for this topic. I made sure to include a brief description of Cruz as I wrote, “Cruz, a well-respected college student and athlete best known by his teammates for his outstanding leadership skills...”. I mentioned this because I wanted the reader to feel compassion towards the injustice my friend faced and further evoke a reason to boycott the police.

The purpose of my op-ed was to encourage people to continue protesting against over policing in subway stations. In my last paragraph, I speak directly to my audience and say, “Protestors, keep protesting.” I did this because I wanted my message to come across clearly. To add on, I began my op-ed with a quote of a chant from a protest against over policing. The reason I did this was to simply introduce the idea of protesting against the NYPD and then throughout my op-ed I would give reason after reason as to why they should protest.

My stance is that minorities do not deserve the prejudices and injustices that they receive from the NYPD. My stance is evident in the sentence, “With these incidents, the NYPD has made it clear that a certain level of dehumanization is taking place.” I used the word “dehumanization” to emphasize the fact that this is extremely wrong. Using words such as this one allows for the reader to feel compassion for the targeted group. Therefore, this statement shows that minorities do not deserve this type of treatment.

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