Final Project Scenario

Tensions between the minority community and the police are regrettable problems in the United

States. One city, Fictionland, has experienced tremendous population growth and demographic

changes in the past 50 years. The Fictionland Police Department has been criticized by a

powerful citizen-based organization, Center for Justice, for engaging in illegal racial profiling

tactics and for being generally unresponsive to complaints about police harassment and police

brutality allegedly committed against members of the minority community.

Details

The Fictionland Police Department in New Jersey was established in 1945 to deal with the

community’s growing concern with traffic congestion and increasing crime rates. Fictionland’s

population in 1945 was 5,000 and predominantly Caucasian. According to the latest census

figures, Fictionland’s population is now 68,000 and racially diverse. Approximately 25 percent of

the Fictionland population is a racial minority. The latest projections suggest that if this trend

continues, at some point, Fictionland with be 51 percent white and 49 percent racial minority.

The department had 14 full-time police officers on staff in 1945, and all were Caucasian. Today,

the department has 60 full-time officers with only two minority officers on staff. Over the past five

years, members of the Center for Justice have claimed that Fictionland police have harassed

many minority citizens and, on several occasions, have engaged in acts of police brutality. In

particular, the Center for Justice claimed that minorities have been the victims of racial profiling in

traffic stops. Seventy-two members of the minority community have filed complaints to the

Fictionland Police Department claiming that they have been pulled over without just cause. In

each instance, Internal Affairs (IA) has investigated the complaints and found no wrongdoing.

In one of the many incidents of racial profiling, last year a complaint was lodged against Officer

Tim Smith, a fifteen-year veteran of the force, for racial profiling and police brutality against

Antoine Jones, a prominent business owner. Again, IA Unit investigated the complaint and found

no wrongdoing and took no action. Approximately two weeks after the IA handed down their

decision on the complaint against Officer Tim Smith, a damaging videotape was leaked to the

press from a whistle-blower in the Fictionland Police Department. The videotape showed Officer

Tim Smith following Antoine Jones’ car. You could hear Officer Smith saying, “Homeboy in a

Mercedes, must be a crack dealer.” on the videotape prior to turning his siren on. Officer Smith

approached Mr. Jones and said, “Boy, give me your license and registration now!” When Mr.

Jones complied and handed the documents over, Officer Smith threw the license to the ground.

Officer Smith ordered Mr. Jones to get out of his car and to pick up his license. Mr. Jones was

deferential and complied with the order. The videotape clearly shows, without any provocation,

Officer Smith pepper-spraying Mr. Jones in the face. Mr. Jones was handcuffed and taken into

custody. The arrest report, prepared by Officer Smith, stated that Mr. Jones swung at Officer

Smith and resisted arrest. Eight similar complaints against Officer Smith had been filed in the

past. Each of the complaints was investigated, with IA Unit exonerating Officer Smith on each

occasion.

The Center for Justice claims that the IA Unit is unresponsive and tends to be dismissive of their

complaints. The reputation of the Fictionland Police Department has been sullied, and members

of the minority community, to this day, do not trust their local police department. Some members

of the community are reluctant to contact the police because of negative encounters they have experienced in the past.