



Old Astoria Neighborhood Association (OANA)
www.OANA-NY.org

Op Ed

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Today's political divisions tend to be reinforced by our political figures, as they see them as tools to either stay in or gain power.

However, we badly need those courageous figures who are willing buck this trend, and begin a real dialog in the interest of Community.

In particular, we are speaking of the "Defund the Police" movement, where empathy, instead of antipathy should be the path forward and the Police Unions.

We need activists on both sides to stand up for the good of all.

Many of the issues with policing are a reflection of our society, which over the last 50 years, has been dumping that society's problems on the police. Starting with Nixon's war on drugs, the easy go to solution of our politicians has been to task the police with curing society's ills.


However, this has not been a real solution. It has just thrown gasoline on the fire; disrupting lives, creating divisions in society, reinforcing in inequity between race and class, putting demigods in power. The police are not trained for most of these issues, and tend to take a heavy hand when dealing with them.

It has put the police in the unenviable position of being responsible to cure ills that they have no real control over. I am sure that the police would welcome responsible change which would equate responsibility with authority. Having them focus on their main duty, which is to help and support the community, would be a welcome change.

On the other side, we are happy to see their activism in trying to resolve this issue. However, don't let semantics and power grabs to guide you. When you become an existential threat to a group of people, how do you expect to get cooperation? Threats like eliminating the police become a firewall against any real change. And using terminology like "DeFund" serves no purpose except political power grabs. Defund can be too easily equated with elimination of the police: We have heard your actual policy changes: Words like "Reform", "Refocus", etc. are a much more accurate description of these proposals, and much less threatening to those whose livelihood is in jeopardy.

We are absolutely sure that if both sides of this issue sat down and started discussions, you would find that you have much more in common than everyone assumes. And working together you can indeed create positive change. And we hope that these changes are driven by the actual citizens on both sides who have a deep concern for our society, not leaders on both sides whose power is based upon creating divisions and continuing failed policies.

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