

# The SPECTATOR

*Patrick O'Flynn*

## I admit it, I got Cressida Dick wrong

20 July 2020, 1:06pm



Photo by Hannah McKay – WPA Pool / Getty Images

What are we thinking about Dame Cressida Dick, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner whose officers have lately 'taken a knee' at unlawful protests, failed to prevent the defacing of cherished national monuments, been injured in their scores and chased out of London housing estates?

Weak, woke and woeful, right? That was certainly my view. Indeed, I was one of many calling for her to be replaced by a more robust police leader. Until, that is, I found myself reading the [full transcript](#) of her appearance before the Commons home affairs select committee earlier this month.

Now I have come to appreciate that, in reality, she is a capable and intelligent leader seeking to uphold law and order in almost impossible circumstances that have been imposed on her and her force by 'progressive' politicians and their media allies.

If you saw any coverage of Ms Dick's appearance at the select committee, it will probably have been about her apologising to the black British sprinter Bianca Williams for a stop and search episode.

The apology made big broadcast news and was also the top line from her appearance in newspaper reports. Of course, it fitted with the preferred media narrative of a force that routinely picks on people because of the colour of their skin.

This was certainly the drift of several committee members, including its chair Yvette Cooper, when questioning Ms Dick about the apparently disproportionate use of stop and search against black people in the capital.

But the Commissioner was having none of it. Instead, in remarks that were barely reported anywhere (I have only been able to find brief mentions buried in much longer articles in the *Guardian* and the *Evening Standard*), she stood her ground, telling the MPs of 'horrible disproportionality' in the crime figures. She told the committee:

“Nationally – you probably know the figures – you are four times more likely to be a victim of homicide if you are black and eight time more likely to be a perpetrator.

The overlap with my key metric, which is knife injuries for under 25s, which we have been reducing for the last two years and into this year, shows enormous disproportionality in the way it affects our young black men as victims and, I am sorry to say, as perpetrators. That is horrible. For knife robbery, gangs, county lines, line holders: hugely disproportionate.

'They want to save lives and, among everybody else, they really want to save black lives'

Four times more likely to be the victims of homicide, eight times more likely to be a perpetrator and also over-represented in perpetrating other forms of serious crime? That's clearly a pretty good reason to be also over-represented in stop and search statistics then. As someone who did not know those figures, this all came as a jaw-dropper to me. It hardly fits with the dominant – indeed apparently the only permissible – broadcast narrative of a community unfairly victimised by racist coppers. No wonder the BBC and other TV channels failed to cover it.

But Ms Dick was not finished, not by a long chalk. In her *tour de force* testimony she variously revealed that: Black Lives Matter protestors had subjected her officers to 'constant abuse all day long', with her black officers particularly picked on; that the higher levels of stop and search she has implemented have succeeded in driving down violent crime; that many affected communities support more stop and search (paraphrasing black mothers, she said: 'I do not care if my son gets stopped and searched ten times because I want him not to be carrying a knife. I want him not to be at risk.').

She also gave a passionate defence of the determination of her officers to save young lives being lost to gun and knife crime: 'They want to save lives and, among everybody else, they really want to save black lives.'

This should have been a home affairs correspondent's dream – solid crime statistics; black officers singled out for the worst abuse by protestors; support within black communities for stop and search; the Met's officers being the people who were really going all out to 'save black lives' – all newsworthy lines. All apparently missed in favour of an easy hit over a single controversial stop and search. Ms Dick also told Ms Cooper:

"Some of the people you are talking about upon whom nothing has been found [during a stop and are very violent repeat offenders who happen not to have anything there and then. Some of them have stashed it. They have given it to the other boy or whatever.

But Ms Cooper and many of the MPs on the committee did not appear interested in any of this. Instead, they fixated on the idea of victimisation of black Londoners, with Cooper asking somewhat disingenuously after one extended diatribe on this theme: 'Are you worried about the impact that all of this is having on confidence in particularly the black community?'

I would have been tempted to snap back that of course it would have a detrimental impact if authority figures such as Ms Cooper insisted on hyping the notion that certain communities are picked upon without providing the wider context. Instead, Ms Dick patiently deployed the Met's list of achievements when it came to 'inclusion, diversity and engagement' to disarm the criticism.

She also faced Diane Abbott saying that young people should not be stopped and searched at all and Newbury's Laura Farris – one of the few Conservative MPs to take a knee – only seeming to be bothered about whether every demographic was equally represented in promotions to senior ranks.

'Would it be possible for us to consider, for example, how long people remain with the force, with a breakdown by ethnicity?' demanded Ms Farris. One would have hoped that Tory parliamentarians would have grown out of this grievance-based identity politics.

Of course, Ms Dick politely agreed to furnish the committee with those figures. It dawned on me that this was not a Commissioner pushing a woke culture in her force for the sake of it but rather one who has become skilled in ensuring her force jumps through whatever hoops the politicians and the media say it has to in order to get on with patrolling the streets and making them safer.

It may be that having socially conservative commentators like me berating her has provided useful cover to Ms Dick – helping reassure woke panjandrums that she is really one of them at heart. In which case I am sorry to tell her I do not intend to do that any longer.

**WRITTEN BY** *Patrick O'Flynn*