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Policing the Open Road: How Cars Transformed American Freedom

Abstract: Policing the Open Road is about how the introduction of a technological shock in American society—the mass adoption of cars—transformed American governance, policing, criminal procedure, and the relationship between individual citizens and the state. The overarching argument posits that all of these changes responded to the necessity of disciplining "law-abiding" citizen-drivers, which raised a profound and troubling question: What did freedom mean in a modern, automotive society that policed all its citizens? Ultimately, the law's solution to the potential arbitrary policing of "Everyman," I argue, further enabled and exacerbated the discriminatory policing of racial minorities. I'm circulating Chapter 4 of the book, "It Could Happen to You," which offers an alternative account of the Warren Court's due process revolution by juxtaposing the Court's landmark cases with its car cases.