

Black Voices in Policing—Perspectives of Someone Who Wore the Badge

Voiceover

00:00

Welcome to *The Beat*—a podcast series from the COPS Office at the Department of Justice. Featuring interviews with experts from a varied field of disciplines, *The Beat* provides law enforcement with the latest developments and trending topics in community policing.

Gilbert Moore

00:16

Hello, I'm Gilbert Moore, and welcome to another episode of *The Beat*. Our guest today is Matthew Horace. He's a 28-year veteran of federal, state, and local law enforcement, and he ascended to the ranks of the Senior Executive Service within the Department of Justice. He's an on-air contributor to CNN, NBC, CBS, and ABC, and he has written for the *Wall Street Journal's* "Crisis of the Week" column. Yet, it was only after seven years of service when Horace found himself facedown on the ground with a gun pointed at his head by a fellow White officer, that he fully understood the impact of all too frequent disconnect between police and communities of color.

This, and other experiences, led Mr. Horace to author a book titled *The Black and the Blue*, which features the on-the-ground research and personal accounts garnered by interviews with police and government officials around the country. It also represents issues of policing from an often unexplored perspective, that of African-American police officers. Matthew Horace, thank you for joining us today. We're honored to have you, and welcome to *The Beat*.

Matthew Horace

01:22

Thank you for having me, and good morning.

Moore

01:24

And so, one quick question to get us started—I just want our listeners to be able to understand who you are as a person and who you were as a law enforcement officer—what motivated you to pursue a career in law enforcement?

Horace

01:38

That's a great question. I think, growing up in Philadelphia during the era that I did, I was exposed to over-policing under Mayor Frank Rizzo era. And I was always aware that there was this disconnect between communities of color, my community, and policing. And I was that child who was always told, you know, stay away from police. Don't do things that are going to get you involved with police.

Not because police are bad, but, you know, my parents didn't want any mistaken-identity things to occur. And I grew up with that in mind. So when you couple that with the fact that I was actually attacked by a Philadelphia Police canine in 1982, while I was a matriculating student athlete at Delaware State University, I became convinced that somewhere along the way, some of us have to decide to be a part of the solution and not a part of the problem.

Moore

02:23

Was that attack by a canine unit that actually started you thinking about a profession in law enforcement?

Horace

02:29

No, actually that attack [laughs] actually drove me the other direction. I was kind of sure at that point that, you know, why would I want to be a cop because these are the kinds of things that cops do, right? But as you emerged throughout your studies in school, as I saw police officers and police departments and active recruiting initiatives on my campus at Delaware State University, and I saw officers who looked like me that were professional and educated and all those sorts of things, and many of the departments at the time had a college degree requirement... So I knew that that absolutely was not the case in Philadelphia, the city where I grew up in. So understanding that, understanding that police departments were changing their standards and looking for people of a certain caliber, it kind of gave me the idea that perhaps I can get involved in a different way, in a different city, in a different environment. And perhaps I could help in a very small way to be that bridge to gap those relationship disconnections.

Moore

03:22

And so when you did begin your career, what was your first duty station? What was your first assignment? What kind of environment were you working in when you began?

Horace

03:31

Yes, well, my first job in law enforcement—and I had two—my first job was with the Arlington County, Virginia, Police Department in suburban Washington, D.C. Very good department. At the time, they were one of the very few accredited police departments throughout the United States and they touted that very strongly in their recruitment efforts.

And it simply means that even at that time, I mean, they were way ahead of the curve with standards and policies and procedures that complied with sort of the statewide and national standards. So my first assignment was there in Arlington, Virginia, and then subsequently I got a position with the federal government where I took on my first role in my first office in Providence, Rhode Island. So two answers to the same question.

Moore

04:11

So were there any experiences that you had early in your career or lessons learned that stayed with you as you rose through the ranks?

Horace

04:21

Oh, sure. Well, in Arlington, which was, you know, Arlington was and is still is a very good police department for a variety of reasons. But in Arlington, you very much were in an environment—because it was suburban Washington—where you had a us versus them. This is, you know, high-income, high-tax community versus Washington D.C., which was viewed as low-income, low-taxed, and crime-ridden. And you kind of felt it day in and day out in your policing because there was us and there was them, the across the bridges and on this side of the bridge. But I realized very quickly... and I'll give you an example.

When I was in the police academy, I had to go to Philadelphia for a court case involving a police dog attack. So I had to leave the academy for two days. And I remember my academy instructor telling me that he really had a problem with me leaving police training to go testify against police officers because cops don't tell on cops. So that was even before I got into the police car with my field training officer. So there was this idea—I mean, if you think about it, when you're in a police academy, you're learning how to do things right, you're learning all these skills that you need to be an effective police officer, and then you're being told that cops don't tell on cops.

So that's the message that you're given even in the police academy. And then when you get out of the academy and you get a field training officer, and just like many of us, thousands of us, who've had training programs, and then the first thing the field training officer says is, "You know what happens in this car stays in this car, right?" And again, that's one of the things we talk about in the book, this idea that cops don't tell on cops, it's a cultural nuance to our profession, and it is one that needs to be eradicated. And many police leaders have done a good job at trying to knife through that cultural dynamic of our profession, if you will. So that stuck with me throughout my career, for sure.

Moore

06:02

Sentiments similar to what you just expressed—navigating the thin blue line—are replete throughout your book. Can you tell us a little bit about the book, its focus, and what motivated you to work with your co-author to write it?

Horace

06:17

Well, the book begins in addressing things like implicit bias, and how implicit bias not only drives law enforcement reaction and action, but as a part of the larger society, what it means to our psyche, right? How implicit bias drives our thoughts and the way we react to people. And the reason why I decided to

write it was because there was a period in the mid 20—maybe 2012 through 2017—and I was living in New York City, and I left the federal government in 2012, and you leave that position where you have a government car with a bunch of blue and red lights and a bunch of antennas.

And you have this position where you're stopped by the state police, you throw your blue lights on and the state police says, "Oh, you know, keep it moving. I'm sorry for stopping you." You move on. Well, when you give up that car and that position, especially when you're, as you know, when you're in the SES, it's a fairly high, lofty position in government, but also in society. But when you leave that position, and you become a civilian, then you become subjected to and vulnerable to the same things that every other person in society does, specifically Black men.

And I realized very quickly when I became a civilian that no longer was I covered by that rule of law, that big, black suburban with the blue and red lights, that shiny gold badge that says federal agent, the right and duty to carry a firearm. Yes, I still had the badge, but it was under a different sort of presence. So when I started to see what was happening throughout the country, both in Ferguson, Missouri, and other places, it was very clear to me that the disconnect was getting worse. That the bad policing—and make that distinction—the bad policing was more in focus. And there was a reason why it was more in focus. And the reason why it was more in focus was because of the advent of cell-phone video and cameras. And that's a condition I call Coptics, the optics of policing in the digital age. So now you have communities that are for years, right, cried and lamented over things that they saw in their communities. And now many of these same behaviors are coming right into our living rooms by way of video and camera footage.

And I think then I sort of realized that people like me and others should use our voice and use our experiences to create a better understanding—not just for Black America, because many of us know—but for all Americans. And we felt in writing the book, it would go a long way into doing that by using the examples and profiles, not just with my own experiences, but of other law enforcement professionals as well.

Moore

08:35

In the book, there is a lot of content that speaks to those issues. Is there a passage that you're particularly fond of that you feel conveys issues in a unique manner?

Horace

08:47

Yeah. I have a couple, but if you bear with me, I'd like to read one and I think it really sets the tone. And it talks about a period when I was leaving Baltimore after having interviewed a number of people in Baltimore to include a former police commissioner, Leonard Hamm.

"As I made my way north up Interstate 95, I thought about deadly police interactions with African Americans and the difference in the two drug crises—one perceived as Black and the other as White. Whether unconsciously or intentionally, American society is suffused with a racial bias that must be

eradicated. When it comes to ailments and needs in the Black community, the response is punitive and lacking. The incidents we routinely encounter, which would be unacceptable in the White community, are shunted aside, ignored, or explained away, as if we were throwaway people, as if our lives didn't matter. Our lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality, higher rate of chronic diseases, lower income levels, and higher unemployment rates are all interrelated. These same dire statistics have been the underlying cause of Black riots since the 1960s. Police are merely the flash point, the most immediate intersection between abrasive and [discriminatory] policies and the Black public.

"I thought about my fellow officers who are upset or feel betrayed about a movement that is directed at fighting against police. But my brothers in blue are wrong. The suspect has once again been misidentified. These protesters are not saying White lives don't matter or that police lives don't matter. They do. Everything in America—from educational institutions to social networks, television, news, films, financial markets—say White lives do matter. Instead, the message is a demand and a plea for society to embrace African Americans' humanity. Black lives matter—too."

Moore

10:41

A very interesting passage. And it sounds like the perfect time for me to let our listeners know that the book is also available in audio version. So I listened to you read that and it sounded just like the audio version of the book. But these issues of perceptions and bias and how that impacts policing, did you see that at various stages throughout your experiences in the field?

Horace

11:05

Oh, absolutely. Well, as a local police officer, I understood very quickly that the way people were treated broadly was very different. And that's when you start to understand that line you're walking when you're African American because you know, based on our collective experiences, what types of things happen to people like you, and then you're working with officers many times, and you see that people are spoken to differently in different communities, under different conditions, and in different environments.

You find yourself looking at or addressing other officers, saying, "Hey, look, you really didn't have to speak to that person that way, they just asked you a simple question." And you sort of see where the biases and prejudices surface amongst many of your colleagues and your peers. And then you'd find yourself leaving the incident afterwards and needing to sort of justify to your colleagues why it's inappropriate, but also in many cases, justify to people in the public why you understand how they felt when they got upset or passionate about an issue because of the way they were spoken to or treated or handled.

And it's a very fine line to walk. And then you figure we know—we know—that the way someone just spoke to a member of our community was inappropriate and wrong. And, in many cases, the biases are so ingrained and so discriminatory that our colleagues don't even realize that what they're doing is wrong as a part of what they've been taught, that's expected from them.

Moore

12:20

There's so much to unpack in your response there. I don't know where to start, but I'll stay on this issue of bias. Also in the book, in the very early stages of the book, you reference an experience that you had responding to a domestic violence call with your partner and how you went into that call with one lens, but ultimately it turned out to be something very different. Can you talk about that for a quick second?

Horace

12:45

Sure. As you know, in the very beginning of the book, we address the issue that biases are things that we all have. They don't make us bad people, they just make us people. But for some reason, right, the law enforcement community broadly and the police unions and such, what they want the American public to believe is that bias is an issue in every other avenue of our society except for law enforcement. And that doesn't make sense because we see the best and the worst of humanity day in and day out.

In my own case, in the book, we talk about an incident where I responded to a domestic call, and the victim of a domestic assault was a man and he needed help. And he indicated that his partner was upstairs. And it was myself and a female officer as my backup. And we moved up the stairs to the apartment thinking, unrightfully so, that who we were going to be speaking to was a woman. And we get to the apartment and the individual who committed the assault was a man. Well, if you think about it, we had that expectation because of a bias in our brains that says: male victim, female perpetrator. And it probably would have been the same thing if it had been the other way around. But the idea is that in our brains, we were programmed to think, wrongfully so, that we were going to be speaking to a female and it wasn't, right?

And even during the interaction, when we got up to the apartment, the individual was huge. He was a really, really big guy. And myself and my partner are thinking this is not going to go well, because initially we were getting non-compliance. We were asking the person to sit down and he did. Then we asked him to get up so we could walk downstairs. He refused to get up. And, because of his size, right, we were thinking that this is going to be problematic, and we may have to use additional force to get the person out of the apartment.

But at some point during the interaction, the individual who really could have given us a very hard time had we tried to put cuffs on, he just started to cry, and then he complied. Just out of nowhere, it just sort of happened. So there were two biases that we were working with, or at least I was working with. The first was that it was going to be a woman and it wasn't, it was a man. The second was that because this individual is really large that he might be a problem for us, and he wasn't. Now, as far as my partner, she may have been dealing with even more biases than that. But it goes to the point of just because someone is big doesn't mean they're bad.

Just because someone is Black, doesn't mean they're bad. Just because [laughs] someone is a man versus a woman doesn't mean it's going to go bad. But we have to accept and embrace situations as they come and not allow our biases to drive our actions or our reactions. If you saw what happened in Oklahoma with Terence Crutcher and the police officer and the helicopter, making that statement.

If you get beyond the fact that he shall be shot on—she was the only officer that usually the four out of five officers on scene—if you get beyond that fact, let's go back to the officer in the helicopter was says over the radio, "That looks like one bad dude." Well, what information did he have beyond seeing him from 1,200 feet in the air that he was one bad dude? And that goes into one of the chapters of the book where we talk about the bogeyman effect and America's fear of Black men.

Moore

15:40

So witnessing that kind of bias and also having felt it yourself on different occasions, maybe for different reasons, and I know you can't speak for the tens of thousands of African-American officers at work serving and protecting throughout the country, but is there an impact that that has on officers as they have to exist in a space, in an environment, where obviously they might be working in situations that professionally they can understand, but personally might have an impact on them?

And so I've heard you during interviews, and others, say or use the phrase, "you can never be Black enough and you can never be blue enough." Is this a common sentiment among the African-American officers? And are there aspects of the job that are simply different for Black officers?

Horace

16:29

Oh man, [laughs] we could almost write a book just on that alone. Absolutely. Now whether Black officers say the term, "you can never be Black enough, you can never be blue enough," I don't know. But I don't know if it's a Black officer anywhere that I've ever met, that doesn't feel that sentiment. And I'll tell you why. Because many of us enter departments and enter the field in times when it was groundbreaking, when departments didn't have very much diversity. So many of us were the first or the second or the third, we're a part of the new wave of hiring. So organizations had to get used to our presence, and used to doing things differently, used to speaking differently.

And many of us still face new situations where we got on departments and even in the government where people were using racial slurs fairly frequently in offices and squad rooms and squad bays and when on operations. So you know very quickly when people come out of their [laughs] mouth and use the N-word that you're not welcome, it matters not that you lay your life down for the sake of another person in your office. When they're still using the N-word when referring to African Americans, then you're definitely not blue enough.

And in our communities, there is this distrust and there's a distrust among many people who are involved with a criminal activity, of course, but then even people aren't, there's a mistrust because of the many, many, many years of abuses and bad policing. So you're trying to convince people who look

like you, and who understand your plight and you understand theirs, and you're trying to convince them that you have their best interests at heart and you really are there to help and the system being a guardian. And then you're trying to convince people in your work life that you have their back and they have your back and you're part of this blue team and everybody understands.

When, in fact, within our organizations, there is just as much racism and discrimination and biases as there are in any other organization. So you go to work and you deal with it from one end, and then you go out on the street and you deal with it from another. But then also, look at the fact that even under the Department of Justice, look at the different organizations that have had class action lawsuits filed by African-American officers and agents.

Moore

18:22

Are these the law enforcement components of the departments?

Horace

18:25

Law enforcement components, yeah. If you just look at the different organizations that have all had these class action suits because of racism and discrimination and bias within organizations. So this is something that makes our presence unique in that we have to deal with it internally. And then we go out into communities and we deal with it many times from our own people as well.

Moore

18:43

So that brings me to another question and it's very straightforward and basic, and that is how your book and some of the sentiments that you share, or the experiences of others that you recount, how it was received by the law enforcement profession, the fields, your fellow brothers and sisters?

Horace

19:01

Well, I think the title alone, you know, we're in this period where law enforcement broadly as a culture... I use this term that culture eats strategy for lunch. So, and what I mean by that is, so many of the law enforcement leaders try to change culture, but the cultures are ingrained so much that many times the strategies that we want to employ—like 21st-Century Policing strategies—they become so difficult because of the culture. So the point of your question is: I've received feedback from so many people, police chiefs, command level, line level, officers.

And the response actually has been overwhelmingly positive, particularly from police leaders who struggle with trying to change culture. And when I say leaders, I mean people above the level of captain, right? Now at the line level, I understand culturally because I was a part of it, that we never like to be questioned. We never like to be called out. We never like to be made the bad people, and we always

feel victimized by society, particularly in this environment of social media and instant messaging and instant news. But by and large, from people who have read the book, right, the reaction has been extremely positive.

I've even gotten information from chiefs and from different organizations like NOBLE and IACP, that the book probably should be a part of police academy study throughout the United States. Now, the interesting thing is, when the book was first released, the response from even many of my peers was less than kind. Now, what's funny about that is it wasn't less than kind because they read the book. It was less and kind because the book's title and subject matter appears to be anti-police. Now, everyone who's read the book knows that the book is not anti-police, the book is anti-bad policing.

And if you start from the place of no one hates bad cops more than good cops, presumably most of the cops I've ever worked with were good cops, why would there be so much pushback early on? So the overwhelming majority of pushback has been from people who didn't read the book. People who have read the book have said, "man, spot on, great job, great meeting, great stories." And, quite frankly, a lot of the stories that people read, they just found gut wrenching and heartbreaking.

Moore

20:58

And, I would also add, very interesting and informative. Last summer America had an awakening following the death of George Floyd. We saw some things as a society that you've never seen before in terms of the response, unified response, in terms of pushback. In terms of a change in normal expectations for how issues or perceptions of police misconduct are viewed and handled. And I would ask you just a broad question: As a society, how do we move past the disconnect between police and communities of color?

Horace

21:33

In many ways, we should use the example of the George Floyd incident as an awakening for everyone. And as you pointed out, when you look at the demographics of protests, it was very clear to me and others, and many of us that more people understood this a little deeper this time than in prior incidents, like Walter Scott in South Carolina. Like some of the other incidents that we've seen. So it's clear to me that more people are at least willing to look, watch, and learn. And why they found this incident any more deplorable than others, well, I don't have to answer to that, but I think it was very clear.

When you look at the video and you get past the idea of what it represented, and you look at Officer Chauvin's face while this was going on and you see that sense of depravity. I think people really, really got on board too that there needs to be change. Now, you see now and specifically here in Minnesota, where I live, they just pulled back money from the policing budget. And to sort of reimagine how law enforcement looks in the future. Well, I think when you see departments doing that, then it's clear that there needs to be, and people want change. And the problem we've had is in the past we've had progress, but we haven't had real change.

So think about this for one second. One out of four police shootings is involving someone who's mentally ill. The mentally ill are 16 times more likely to be killed by police than people in the general population, right? Police officers, generally, broadly, are not trained to diagnose or treat people who are mentally ill, but we're the ones that are called when people are in mental health distress. So a good business practice might be—if you're looking for better outcomes—it might be to combine a police response, but also a mental health response.

So what the Minneapolis government is saying is that instead of hiring 200 new police officers, why not hire 150 new police officers and 50 mental health professionals that can support their work? These are things that people are considering now who are broad thinkers, that are driven by data and science and not driven by culture. Many of the police officers that I know say that they don't want to be called to these calls because they can't tell the difference between someone who's schizophrenic or bipolar.

But, unfortunately, now in many places, that's the only solution we have. So I think you see government and societies and communities looking for outcome-based measures. And I think more people are willing to accept the fact that the outcomes that we've been receiving for the past however many decades are not good. They're not sufficient, they're not productive, and we need to change what it is we're doing if we want better outcomes.

Moore

24:01

Relative to the discussion about reimagining policing reform, or however you want to refer to it, is the fact that so much of police service is dictated at the local level. Given that, where should the discussion start in earnest? I mean, where does the change come from?

Horace

24:21

I think that it needs to be collaborative. Some things can be left at a local level, but I'm a big advocate, personally, of having national standards for policing in so many different ways. One, national standards for hiring, right? The way things are even now, some departments you need a college degree, some you need an associate's degree. Some of you can be 19 and some you can be 23. Some departments would like you to have three years of work experience. Some departments will hire you one year out of college if you worked at 7-11. I think we all know, as practitioners, that given the complexities of what you're asked to deal with as a police officer in 2020, that having some life experience in some way, in some fashion, would help you be able to achieve better outcomes.

So having a national hiring standard, whatever that looks like, I think would help us to understand and better monitor the training and advancement of police officers. I think number two, having a national registry for officers who have been found to have violated citizens' civil rights. So as they can't continue to just get hired by other departments—leave one department in Arizona and get hired on in another department in Wisconsin. Having a national registry for officers involving civil rights. And then, number three, I'm a big fan of, if not civilian oversight, civilian participation and collaboration in evaluating officers' disciplines and those sorts of things.

Culturally, we've always been taught that we're the only ones that can monitor and make decisions about our organizations. But, again, if we're going to change behavior, we have to change culture, and to change culture we need government intervention. And that's been the case as long as we can remember. No change would have ever occurred without the government stepping in and saying we need to change Jim Crow laws. We need to have a Civil Rights Act. Women need to vote. African Americans need to vote. Without government intervention, things don't change. So I think there needs to be a collaboration between state, local, and federal government to ensure that organizations are held accountable by a solid set of principles, guidelines, procedures, and policies.

Moore

26:15

So what would you say to law enforcement agencies or departments that are not at the point of recognizing or being ready to make a change? And what would you say to communities of color who may not trust changes led by law enforcement exclusively?

Horace

26:38

Well, to the communities I'd say you have to keep the pressure on. If you really consider what happened—and this not a political statement, but it's a matter of process statement—if you really consider in any election cycle when there is normally change when more people were involved with the process. So at the local level you need to be involved with your government. You need to be at those city council and town council and county council meetings. You need to know what laws are being enacted, and you need to push people. We say in the book that we all as communities need to be involved with what we expect from policing.

That starts with political involvement, understanding how money and budgets are derived and where money goes, and you need to be involved. We all need to be involved with that. And we need to teach people how we want our communities policing. And that does work in certain communities, but it doesn't work in too many communities. At the policing level, if there is national involvement—and I just used the example, not the COPS Office—but if there's national involvement about standards and procedures, then at some point police chiefs no matter if you're in a small city in Mississippi, or a large department in Wisconsin, or a super department in California—at some point, people are going to catch on and change is going to happen.

But it's got to be multi-tiered, multifaceted. There needs to be community involvement and there needs to be buy-in. There needs to be leadership buy-in at the very top of departments. But then in hiring decisions, who we hire, what values those people have, and that's another area I believe we need national standards of who we hire, how we recruit, you know, testing, psychological testing, polygraph examinations—they need to be consistent, because right now they're not.

Moore

28:08

Is there a role of significance, in your opinion, for police unions in this change process?

Horace

28:15

Oh, there absolutely is a role of significance in police unions. Right now, it seems that everybody is saying that unions are in the way. And in many cases they are, because even in situations where chiefs and executive officers are trying to influence change, the unions are saying, "Why, why is it necessary, nothing's wrong?" I think the biggest thing police unions can do going into the future... So if you go back to what we said earlier, no one hates bad cops more than good cops. If we use the formula that there are more good cops than bad cops, then why can't we turn the table and get to the point where we all can acknowledge that there are one too many people in the profession that shouldn't be?

So then, if that's the case, why can't unions get onto that? Just jump onto that one concept. The world would be a better place if we root out the bad cops and accent the good cops. So the unions can be a part of that narrative, they just choose not to be. And I think they haven't caught up to the idea of this whole thing about videos and cameras and all these things. The unions, they're still trying to do business the way they did 20 years ago. The difference is now you have video, and you didn't have video then. So in my view, even as being a career law enforcement person, you really sound like a fool, right? That's how we say it where I grew up: you sound like a fool, being on television in front of cameras from around the world saying, "We shouldn't pass judgment on this incident," when everyone who looks at the incident knows that it's wrong. So the idea is, how do police unions represent their people? Well, maybe not come out upfront. Maybe wait until the incident gets investigated and vetted.

And then maybe once the vetting happens and the person is found to be at fault, guilty as charged and all that, maybe you work with the process and say, "This is an unfortunate incident and we are as unhappy about it as anyone who's seen it." Rather than continuing down the road of, "We don't see anything wrong and we're going to represent our person and we're going to believe in them to the end." I think that would add trust to the process.

Moore

30:08

It would also, in some circles, it would represent wishful thinking. So as unions, obviously their job or the role is to support their members, and I haven't seen a whole bunch of public statements from unions suggesting that, writ large, that's the direction that things are heading.

Horace

30:24

No, and you had—and listen, all of us who've worked in government or any organization know that if it's our turn in the pot and we're being disciplined, then we want the discipline to be fair. Everybody understands that. And you don't want to be thrown under the bus for a mistake of effort, right? And we understand that also. But when you see certain things happen, there's no way to defend it. So when they try to defend it, it just makes the whole process look bad. If you go back to the Pillars of 21st Century Policing, if we can just agree, right, that we all want to build trust and legitimacy. We all want that—police agencies want that and the communities want that.

If we can all agree that we need better policy and oversight—the police want that and communities want that. If we can all agree that we need and want and should demand better use of technology and social media, right—the police want it and the community wants it. If we all agree that we want community policing and crime reduction, there are a segment of police leaders that say, “Yeah, community policing works and we need it,” and communities agree—no matter what color you are and what community—that you want crime reduction. If we can all agree that we want better training and education and I think we can.

And if we can all agree that officer wellness and safety should be very important. It’s interesting, growing up in communities where I saw over-policing, where I was a victim of police abuse, I’ve never met anyone that I’ve ever met that wanted to see police officers hurt or killed in the street, right? Even with our different lens and even with all the things that have been done to us, no one wants to see that. But many departments still don’t have officer wellness programs that look after police officers. And, as you all know, in many cases, police officers are given psychological evaluations in order to get the job.

And they’re never evaluated for the remainder of their career. And police officers suffer from the same mental illnesses that everybody else does. And, in fact, in many cases to a greater extent, and when you look at the amount number of police suicides over the past decade or two, that [bears out] that data. So, again, I think we all want officer wellness and safety, so why can’t we all agree? If you just look at those six pillars alone and say, “Why can’t we come to the table and agree that these are priorities for communities and priorities for policing?” And then we move forward and develop policies and plans that give everybody what they want, what they need, and what they deserve.

Moore

32:35

So given that premise, if you were sitting in a room and there were a bunch of police chiefs in there, and they wanted your opinion on how they can lead change in their organizations, that move things in the right direction, if you will, what would you say to them? And also recognizing that, and this is a premise of mine, that in so many cases, law enforcement executives are going to play a key role in leading this kind of change. But they too, I mean, they’re sitting on the top of a rocket trying to steer where it goes. What guidance, and what advice would you give them in terms of driving change?

Horace

33:13

It’s a very, very simple quote that I use. And that is, “Choose courage over avoidance.” Choose courage over avoidance. You be the change that you want to see. But you also have to be the change that everyone else wants to see. In the book, one of the chiefs, and I think it was Chief Superintendent down in New Orleans. He says, “Listen, when you’re the police chief, you’re not the police chief of the police department. You’re the police chief for the entire jurisdiction where you work. So really become a leader of the people, not just the leader of your department.” Again, choose courage over avoidance. Don’t avoid the tough issues, right?

Jump in, roll up your sleeves, and get involved. We all know what the issues are. Even a police chief, anywhere in the United States, knows these underlying issues of race and culture and social economics. Don't avoid them, choose courage, and deal with them, head on. And when you have problem people in your department that aren't pursuing and advancing your vision, then you do what people would do in business. I mean, I work in private industry. If you don't advance the business of the business, you're not going to be there very long. Treat policing like a business because it is. And if you look at the Six Pillars of 21st Century Policing, you cannot go wrong in any environment.

Moore

34:25

So before we close, I just want to ask you one overarching question. And that is, what would you want readers of the book and those listening to have as a takeaway about all of the issues we've talked about, concepts related to African-American officers and the change that so many people are asking for in our communities?

Horace

34:46

Well, I think for readers of the book, I want you to walk away with the idea that policing is very difficult. And as Chief Phil Banks says in the book, he says, "Listen, a lot of people understand that policing is difficult. What they don't understand is why police are never wrong." So I would say that until we start seeing wholesale change, not just progress, that we have to keep the temperature up, keep the attention where it needs to be, get involved with the process, and don't give up. Do not allow social media or the media to convince you that what you saw, you just didn't see, because we all know what we saw and we all know what it means.

And from the policing standpoint, we need a paradigm shift in how we police. And if you just accept the fact that policing is a culture and a subculture, it's a profession just like every other profession. Don't accept the culturally disingenuous argument that Target can admit that racism is within their ranks. Best Buy can admit racism is within their ranks. The NBA can admit racism is within their ranks. American Express and all these Fortune 500 companies who have, since George Floyd and before, come out and said, "We need to do better. It is a problem. We need to address it and we're going to commit to it."

So don't accept a culturally disingenuous argument that racism, bias, and discrimination is evident in every other facet of society, other than law enforcement. We all know that that doesn't make sense. And if you're a part of law enforcement, you should understand as a member, that that doesn't make sense. And just go out on courage and choose courage over avoidance. You can't be a part of the solution and the problem at the same time.

Moore

36:21

We have been speaking with Matthew Horace, who is the author of *The Black and the Blue*, a very interesting book that provides the perspective of African-American law enforcement officers on some of the contemporary issues that confront policing today. And, Matthew, before we go, I just want to ask you a quick question about how people can learn more about the book.

Horace

36:43

Oh, absolutely. The book is available on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, all the major bookselling sites. I think it's available and the links are all on my website at www.matthewhorace.com. And we're also running a national speaking tour talking about social justice and talking about that idea of choosing courage over avoidance. I think if we all do that and come together, specifically the next four years can be a really solid time for the United States in our history.

Moore

37:07

[Music]

We initially recorded the podcast with Matthew Horace in December of 2020. Then, following the incidents at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, Mr. Horace got back in touch with *The Beat* and wanted to supplement his discussion with insight on core beliefs in officer judgment.

[Music]

Hello, this is Gilbert Moore. So, Matthew, I would ask you, when you looked at what happened in Washington D.C. on January 6th, what did that tell you about the appropriate place or standard for core beliefs and judgment among law enforcement officers?

Horace

37:50

Well, good morning, Gilbert, and thank you for that question and thanks for having me back. When I think about January 6th, I think about three different layers and levels, if you will. I think about the preparation, right, and the preparation to what the FBI and other organizations believe might have the potential to evolve from peaceful protests to violence. This wasn't something that people didn't know. This wasn't something that we shouldn't have prepared for. And, in fact, having worked in Washington D.C. on five different occasions, I've been a part of those planning strategy sessions where you plan for large crowds and events. So, it's kind of unconscionable to think that event was poorly planned for.

Then, the response from law enforcement largely—and if we juxtapose what we saw on that day with what we've seen in response throughout the United States, in many cases to peaceful protests against social injustices—I think it's clear to anyone that the response was very different, and that the crowds were very different, and that things could have and should have been done very differently.

And then, finally, there's the layer of who was involved. I think all of us would like to believe at our core that public servants—police officers and firefighters, and nurses and doctors, and people who are on the front lines of protecting democracy—weren't at the event and certainly did not ellipse the security of the Capitol. But we have learned that that was not the case and there were people from all walks of life to include law enforcement officers, who not only attended the rally, but also went to the violent, criminally-induced behaviors of the crowd at the Capitol.

So, we know that at some level there were a number of people who walked away from their core beliefs, that were in uniform one week prior or two days prior or three days prior and then were in plain clothes committing crimes against the government on that day.

Moore

39:41

In your experience in a law enforcement agency or the environments you have worked in, was there advance awareness that some of your colleagues may have had views that were inconsistent with the stated values of law enforcement?

Horace

39:57

Well, I think of course. I think most of us that have been in this career field for any length of time know that there are people in our organizations who fundamentally lack core values and belief systems and behaviors to hold a position of public trust. And we know who they are because we work with them day in and day out. And that really gets to the core of hiring and recruitment, training, and discipline.

And these systems, right, what we talk about in the book, we talk about when you say systematic, right—racism and bias and those sorts of things—you're talking about a system that allows for people like this to keep their jobs and go under the radar until something major happens. And then when something major happens, then people go back and say, "Well, you know, we should have known because there were triggers and there were things we should have seen." So, it speaks more towards the culture.

It also speaks to the fact that if you think about what happened in 2020, and you think about Fortune 500 companies coming out and saying, "You know, we have a problem with racism within our organizations and we need to do better." And you think about the resources and the money that have been poured into this initiative this year. You think about the Army coming out just last month and saying, "Hey, the Army does not tolerate racism, extremism, or hatred in our ranks." I would say it's time for our nation's law enforcement to adopt the same standard. Not that these statements aren't made in quiet and in corners of the profession, but if you really think about it, law enforcement still has never come out and said publicly that this is a problem within our ranks and it is.

Moore

41:27

So, there are estimated 15-18,000 local and state law enforcement agencies across the country. And while I understand your perspective, I can also see that there are many agencies that would take the position that we don't have those kinds of challenges, or we have a clear process of tracking people who are somehow falling outside of the boundaries of what we expect in terms of professional policing. How do you think about them being saddled with having to make a statement that they may feel doesn't apply to them?

Horace

42:01

You bring up a great point. I've worked with and am friends with—work around people from all over the country—and you're absolutely right. There are police departments that I'm aware of where if you accept a free cup of coffee you might be disciplined. And the people who work for those departments that have those strict core beliefs and values and very strict rules on conduct, they are as mortified by some of the things that we see that concern us all, as anyone else would be. And to those departments I say hats off, and to those officers that work in those environments they're being taught the right way. Where I think we go a little bit sideways, and I'll use the example, I don't know a surgeon—and I know a lot of surgeons—I don't know a surgeon who, when faced with the idea that a surgeon has committed a bad deed 3,000 miles away... I don't know a surgeon who says, "You know what, I don't agree with what I just heard, and you know, I'm going to stand my ground, and it's us against them."

We have a cultural block where when things happen culturally many times in our profession we want to stand our ground and defend the action and defend the person. When, in fact, it would be easier just to say, "That's not something that I condone or my department condones. And it's an unfortunate incident, but I hope the officer ends up okay." What is so wrong with calling it out, supporting good over evil, and choosing courage over avoidance?

Moore

43:22

Courage over avoidance. I've heard that phrase used by you on several occasions. Can you talk a little bit more about your thoughts on what that means or how to apply it into a practical day of a law enforcement officer?

Horace

43:34

How that applies is when you work for an organization and you know that there are core principles and that you represent those core principles, that when you see things that discredit and dishonor our noble profession, you have to call it out. You have to call it out in a very vehement way. And every time someone doesn't call it out, what you've done is you've empowered someone to continue the same behaviors and those same behaviors are what we're hearing in pockets of our minority Black and Brown

communities, that for so many years law enforcement broadly has said don't exist, doesn't happen, it's almost like fake news. So, it's our responsibility, all of us, that carry the gun and wear that badge to do the right thing and take that hard right instead of the easy left.

Moore

44:19

So, obviously we can't let unfortunate public incidents color the effectiveness and the nobility of all of the men and women that serve in uniform in law enforcement across this country. That being said, what guidance or advice would you give to fellow officers who are really interested in creating the kind of future that we all want, given the fact that the legitimacy of law enforcement has, in some way, taken a blow based on what we saw?

Horace

44:52

Well, absolutely it's taken a blow. I remember specifically in 2016 the *Wall Street Journal* article that public confidence in law enforcement was at an all-time low. And many of the things that have happened since 2016 have not gone unnoticed. And, in fact, in 2020 we saw protests like we've never seen in the history of the United States, and not just from Black and Brown people. The protest involved a broad demographic of people from all religions and races and creeds.

So, that kind of demonstrates to you that there is a mounting distrust in what people see and what they hear and what they understand. So, to the officers that are doing the good job and come to work every day for the right reasons, I would say number one, step up and get involved with decision making. Be those sergeants and those lieutenants and those captains and those leaders that we need in these times. Stick to your core principles and remind people that you work for organizations that have core principles. Work towards solutions like implementing broader and more effective training. Work towards solutions like putting in place better use of force standards and de-escalation procedures. Look for solutions, like look for better candidates in recruitment and hiring. And when you're asked to sit at the table and you meet a recruit or a prospective hiree and you know—something in your gut says they're not right for this job—have that courage to say they're not right for this job, despite the fact that they're someone's friend or family member.

Also, keep in mind the sustaining citizens' involvement and community interaction is critical to the perspective of law enforcement and thus to your credibility. And then, finally, participate and be a part of requiring officer accountability. It all starts with us, each and every one of us, to do and say and see and act the right way, and do the right thing when people don't.

Moore

46:39

You know, Matthew, it's been a pleasure talking with you, kind of both during the initial recording and again today. And I would just want to ask you before we close out, what, if anything, do you want listeners to have as a takeaway based on what happened January 6th or our previous discussion, which was in many ways related?

Horace

47:02

I think the big takeaway for me is for decades and decades law enforcement officers, both Brown and Black and White, have been saying that there are people in our profession that tarnish our profession, even a very small percentage, right, and law enforcement broadly as a culture keeps saying that that's not a problem, it doesn't exist. Fortune 500 companies have come out and said, "We want to eradicate racism within our ranks." The military has said, "We want to eradicate racism within our ranks." Government has said, "We want to eradicate racism within our ranks." Why is it that the one profession that would be the most predisposed to develop biases and prejudices still maintains that there is no problem with racism and bias and discrimination in our ranks? To fix a problem you have to acknowledge the problem. Once we acknowledge the problem then we can work together to make our organizations, our officers, our agents, and that arm of government, a much better place and much more effective in the eyes of the community.

Moore

48:02

Great, Matthew. Really thank you for your insight. We appreciate what you have shared with us and it has been a pleasure speaking with you once again. Thank you so very much.

Horace

48:12

Have a wonderful day.

Voiceover: *The Beat* Exit

48:13

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Voiceover: Disclosure

49:12

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