

Building Law Enforcement Alliances with LGBTQ Communities

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.

Jennifer Donelan

00:16

Hello, I'm your host, Jennifer Donelan, and welcome to *The Beat*. Today, we're going to be learning about Out to Protect, or OTP. Out to Protect is a tax-exempt organization, a 501(c)(3). It was founded in 2009 with a focus on providing training grants for law enforcement and scholarships to law enforcement recruits who are out as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or a straight ally, and were outstanding role models for their fellow professionals. They also seem to create greater awareness of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender professionals working in law enforcement, and to support those pursuing law enforcement careers. OTP is one of COPS' new partner organizations and the partnership focuses on enhancing the capacity of LGBTQ liaison officers and units.

We've got a lot that we're going to be discussing today and it's valuable. I'm really excited about this. We are truly excited to have Greg Miraglia with us. OTP is led by Greg. He is a 35-year veteran of law enforcement. Mr. Miraglia has a master's degree in education administration and a bachelor's degree in business. He teaches five courses in LGBTQ studies and a variety of law enforcement courses, including human relations, workplace harassment, community policing, and one of the only state-certified hate crime investigation courses in the State of California. We are really lucky to be joined by Greg right now. Greg, thank you so much for being here.

Greg Miraglia

01:46

Well, thanks, Jennifer, for having me. I'm very excited about this.

Donelan

01:49

So, you have a 35-year career. How did you get started in law enforcement? Why did you pursue a career in law enforcement?

Miraglia

01:56

Well, I never thought as a young kid that police work was even going to be on my radar. I had always wanted to be a teacher, go figure. And my dad, who's a 30-year career firefighter, had a good friend who was a deputy sheriff. This was back in 1978. And he said, "Hey, do want to go on a ride along with

this deputy?" And I thought, "Sure, why not?" And by the end of that shift, I was completely hooked. It was in my blood already. I knew that that is exactly what I wanted to do, so I dove headfirst into the career, and started out as a police cadet, and never looked back.

Donelan

02:29

That's amazing, and really does drive home the power of the ride along, and just being exposed, being able to peel back the curtain and see what's really involved in becoming a police officer. And when you get that experience and those opportunities, it can really open your eyes to a whole new world, and for you, a 35-year career. And you're teaching, so I guess that all worked out for you.

Miraglia

02:52

It absolutely did. And I can honestly say I remember every single solitary thing we did that day on that ride along. I mean, all the different things I've been able to do in an amazing career, but when I think about that first ride along, it is still very vivid to me. And I agree with you, I think that this is how we're going to grow future law enforcement officers, by reaching out and getting people involved and exposing young people to the excitement and the challenge of the profession.

Donelan

03:16

Absolutely, it's a huge tool. So, let's talk about Out to Protect. Can you please break down for the listeners what exactly Out to Protect is? And can you really key in on the fact that while we have LGBTQ liaison units in several of our police departments, there's been a key piece that's been missing as an overarching umbrella, right? Is Out to Protect served to sort of fill that?

Miraglia

03:39

Well, yes. Out to Protect came about in 2009 after I wrote my first book, and I always had a vision of taking the proceeds from that book and whatever else would come to put into some sort of a scholarship program to support LGBTQ recruits who wanted to become law enforcement officers. My belief was, at the time, that the best way to get law enforcement comfortable with LGBTQ people was for those people in law enforcement who were part of the community to come out and to have good role models, so that's where it started. It's evolved over the years to now what we're doing is providing training, LGBT awareness training, for law enforcement. And as a byproduct of that, we're providing training on how to build and operate an LGBT liaison program. Because what I found was that while there are many departments that have a community liaison person for the LGBT community, very little is written down about it. There isn't a lot of formalization or structure to it, and there certainly isn't any standardization for training on how to do that job well.

So, the idea of our latest venture here with this LGBT Liaison Training Academy is to help departments build a program from the ground up. And then for those existing programs, help them reinforce them and make them sustainable based on some national standards that we found through research.

Donelan

04:57

You know, you can imagine a department starting an LGBTQ liaison office because I've seen that, and they're really sort of reinventing the wheel, almost, out the gate. When, in fact, there are others who have gone before them, done this already, and have such valuable information, be it mistakes they made as they were forming their liaison unit, lessons learned, it's... This connection that you're making between these departments must be huge.

Miraglia

05:23

I think so. You know, the history of LGBT liaison programs, I've been able to trace it back to 1962. San Francisco PD was one of the first to appoint Eliot Blackstone, who was a police officer at the time, a straight ally, to be the liaison to the community. But even in that initial program, there was nothing that was formalized or really written down about it. We went out and we surveyed, across the nation, programs that were existing. And, as you said, there were a lot of people that were doing it, but not a lot of information was being shared. And there certainly wasn't a whole lot documented, so we collect responses and ideas from people about how the program should be constructed, and the qualifications, and the job duties. And we've been able to amass that now in writing, where there are some standards and recommended best practices that we can then provide in terms of training for new programs.

Donelan

06:10

Greg, could you give us an example, for instance, of one of those best standards of practice that worked with one department that stood as a shining example for others?

Miraglia

06:18

I think there's a couple that stand out to me, and they're very simple. One is simply having a designated web page that has a designated phone number and point of contact for whoever the LGBT liaison happens to be. In many cases, we found that agencies have a liaison officer identified, but if you went to the department website you could never find any information about it. So that is a very, very basic one.

Donelan

06:40

That's basic, but yet so desperately needed. And honestly, I can see where that may not be a first thought as critically needed.

Miraglia

06:48

Right. You know, the other part of it is the reporting structure. Most of the LGBT liaison officers that are currently working are at the rank of supervisor or below, and a key function that the LGBT liaison officer provides is a conduit of communication from the community to the chief executive, the police chief, or

the sheriff. So there needs to be some direct access of that liaison person, at whatever rank they are, to be able to talk to the chief, and for the chief to be able to talk to that officer, so that that conduit actually works. If there's layers of bureaucracy in between, then the chief is rarely going to know what's really going on.

Donelan

07:24

You know, I've seen these liaison units provide such a valuable link to the community, especially in cases where there's been a member of the LGBTQ community who has been the victim of a crime, or there's been a series of crimes affecting that community. And at various times, if there's any feeling in the community that they're not a part of the community, and they feel like the police department doesn't "reflect" them, but these liaison units, these liaison officers, play such a critical role, just in their being there as a conduit for communication.

Miraglia

07:59

Absolutely. The liaison officer provides a human face and a name for the law enforcement agency. And so, whether it's after a hate crime or some other catastrophe that's happened in the community, having someone who is known to the community as a person, ideally who's a member of the community that people can go to when the department is looking for witnesses, for example, or additional victims. There is a higher level of trust, in most cases, with that LGBT liaison then with officers who come into the neighborhood who are not known to the people who live there.

Donelan

08:34

So much of it boils down to just being able to feel like someone's going to listen to me. This department cares about me. And it can never be underestimated, and I know that's why these liaison officers are so important. But talk about the rest of it. It says community interactions. What roles do the liaison officers play internally?

Miraglia

08:53

Well, they're huge resources. So, I guess you could group the major job functions into sort of three areas. There's the conduit for communication we spoke about. There's the resource for investigators and other patrol officers when they're responding to calls for service, helping them access additional victims, search for witnesses, just helping officers even with terminology to help them communicate with members of the community. But you talked about the internal resource—training is a key function of that LGBT liaison. In our view, every law enforcement officer and every 911 dispatcher working in an agency in the United States should receive some level of LGBT awareness training. And that liaison officer is the key person to provide that. So, whether it's giving some information about proper

terminology, to helping officers communicate more comfortably and effectively with members of the community and helping them just understand what LGBTQQIAA means. All of that is very valuable and it's a key part of the role.

Donelan

09:49

All right. Well, let's start that here. What does LGBTQQIAA mean?

Miraglia

09:54

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual and ally. And then the plus is everything and every other identity that really references a sexual orientation or gender identity minority group.

Donelan

10:11

And just that ability to have that training, to have that exposure, to have those officers exposed to just, "Hey, this is what it means, because these are members of your community that you serve. You're going to respond to 911 calls. You never know what you're walking into. And these members of your community need to feel that you're there for them just as much." And just as simple as knowing just what that stands for really says a lot about an organization. It says a lot about an officer, because it's a familiarity. It's an ease. And I think that that goes such a long way to improving community relations with law enforcement, which is such a focus. There are so many efforts within law enforcement to do that and Out to Protect... How is your work with COPS now providing that framework for those departments to continue moving in that right direction?

Miraglia

10:56

Well, I've been a longtime fan of the COPS Office, and for the reason that I'm able to access so many different resources. I teach community policing and I've taught law enforcement classes for several decades now. So being able to draw upon successful programs that have been proven, you know, in other jurisdictions around the country is great. It's a one-stop shop. So, what I'm looking forward to is being able to get the word out about the training, and the training grants, and the scholarships that we provide, as an additional resource to law enforcement agencies. There's 18,000 of them or so in the country, and so getting word out to everybody about what's available and what we can do to help them is a big challenge. And the COPS Office is a great place, a warehouse, if you will, of amazing resources, and we're going to be very excited to be part of that.

Donelan

11:43

Really is going to help extend your reach. And that's it, people are desperate for information. Half the battle is just letting them know that the resource is there.

Miraglia

11:52

Exactly. And a lot of the resources we're able to provide, even the basic training courses that we offer online, we're able to provide for free. We understand that dollars are tight, and agencies have to prioritize where they're spending their training dollars. So, it's exciting for us to be able to get the word out that, if you want to do LGBT awareness training for your personnel in your department, you can access that at no cost.

Donelan

12:12

So, if I'm police leadership, I'm listening to this podcast, and I'm learning about Out to Protect for the first time, and I want to reach out to you, because we are creating a liaison office—what am I getting from first point of contact with your organization?

Miraglia

12:29

Well, we have a website at outtoprotect.org, and you will find all the information about training grants that are available there, as well as the training courses. And you can register and begin that training immediately right from that website. So that's our, sort of, base place to reach out to us. If you want consultation, or you want to ask a specific question, you can do that right through the website, set up an appointment to talk on the phone or Zoom, if necessary, but it's all there. The training grants that we have, there are two of them. One is to help agencies start up an LGBT liaison program so you can apply for grant funds to buy some materials, and also to get some seats in the LGBT Awareness Training Academy that we have. And then the other grant we have is to support LGBT awareness training. So, if your agency is looking to do some training in-house, maybe you want to bring in a speaker, or you want to buy some materials for that training, you can also apply for a grant there.

Donelan

13:25

Let's talk about departments who have had longstanding liaison offices, who have put together these programs, been successful at it. What does that look like, or an example of a department?

Miraglia

13:36

I think there are several out there. Certainly Washington D.C. Metropolitan Police Department's got a lot of history and a lot of success with their program. The one that strikes me as being a really great model is in San Diego. San Diego PD has not only an LGBT liaison officer, but they have a liaison appointed for all of their different communities, and that LGBT liaison is part of this team that meets regularly with the chief that can represent the interests of all sub-communities. And why I think that's important is that sexual orientation and gender identity transcends everybody else, all of the other sub-communities. There are LGBT people in the Muslim community, and the African American community, and the Latinx

community, and the disabled community, and the Jewish community, for example. So being part of a team, and to have individual liaisons that represent all of those communities working together, is, I think, an ideal model.

Donelan

14:27

Absolutely. You mentioned Metropolitan Police in Washington D.C. I understand that they incorporated patrol or support of their patrol operations.

Miraglia

14:36

And that's an ideal practice. The liaison officer should be a resource to everybody in the agency. So, if an officer responds to, let's say, a domestic violence call in a same sex household, and is uncertain about how to approach that family, or is having difficulty communicating with that family, then the LGBT liaison officer should be a phone call away. Now, that's a pretty big burden to put on one person in a large agency, so I understand that there's some limitations about somebody not being available to be on call 24/7, but that type of integration and knowing that that resource is available is a best practice, for sure.

Donelan

15:10

Also, I think we need to stress too, Greg, that no question's off the table, right? You even break it down on how to write the position description for a liaison officer. How to do that the best way.

Miraglia

15:24

Absolutely. The Liaison Training Academy—we call it an academy, by the way, because there are three separate courses that a person completes to put together an LGBT liaison program. But the master course, if you will, for the liaison program is very practical. Everything that participants do in that is designed to create something that is real that they can use for their program. So, I mentioned earlier, identifying a phone number, a dedicated phone number, developing a web page to provide easy access to the liaison, and then the job description, getting some of that documentation in writing so that the program becomes part of the organization and becomes sustainable in the long term. LGBT liaisons, who get into it initially and build a program, have to be thinking about who's going to take this over when I'm done with it, or when I retire. So, building something that's sustainable, that can be easily passed on to the next person, or expanded to include more than one person, is critical.

Donelan

16:18

OTP feels like it empowers a department to feel comfortable talking about it, feel comfortable planning it, feel comfortable setting up this liaison office. Because I can see where there would be people who, you know, if it comes to any subject matter with which you're not familiar, right? You can be hesitant.

You don't want to say the wrong thing. You don't want to do the wrong thing. You want to make sure that you're doing everything as best as you can, right, just to put that very simply. To me, OTP sounds like it empowers a department to make sure that they're doing all of those things, and that you can speak freely, and you can ask the questions, and here are the training tools, you know. We've got them all together under one website. You can go here and, like you said, one-stop shopping.

Miraglia

16:59

We would like to think so. You know, there's still a pretty pervasive environment of homophobia and transphobia in law enforcement. And I think, from just my experience in talking with officers of all level across the country, that much of that homophobia and transphobia is fueled by just not knowing, by being uncomfortable with sexual orientation and gender identity in general. So, if we can provide some education and some awareness in a way that gives people language to use and increases their comfort, I think it's going to be good for all the closeted LGBT employees that are already working in law enforcement across the country. And I am hopeful that it's going to help agencies serve their individual communities more effectively and more comfortably.

Donelan

17:39

Exactly. You know, you just said something that I absolutely agree with. Just the establishment of a liaison office within a department. What does that communicate to LGBTQ officers within that department? What does it say to them?

Miraglia

17:53

Well, certainly, if the chief establishes an LGBT liaison position, and includes in the duties of that job to support LGBTQ employees, it sends the message that, "Hey, I know you're here, and I value you, as I do all of the other differences that exist in the rank and file." And, of course, externally to the community it places value on the importance of communication and the importance of humanizing the law enforcement agency within that community.

Donelan

18:17

And it's inclusion; I mean, it's just absolute inclusion across the board and it opens those lines of communication. Now, we've talked a lot about creating the liaison office and providing these materials and tools to law enforcement agencies so that they can begin that process if they haven't already. And let's say they have. I'm assuming that all the things that we've discussed here, even if you have a liaison office already established, this is a place to go to see, you know, what's the latest and greatest.

Miraglia

18:45

Absolutely. So, the program starts out with an assessment, where we ask each participant to sort of go through a checklist and mark the things that exist in their program as well as the things that don't, and then there's some measurement for how complete the program happens to be. We think the training program will be beneficial for anybody, whether you've been an LGBT liaison for, you know, six years or six days, or if you're just wanting to start one, you don't even know where to begin. We think that there's going to be some value there, because, again, there's so much that has not been written down about this that where would you go look? How would you know if you're doing everything that is best practice? So, we think we've been able to amass as much of that as we know, and it's going to be a learning process for us. I'm sure we're going to add to this list of best practices as we go along and learn.

Donelan

19:33

If you had to give an assessment on how you think the industry is doing as a whole when it comes to LGBTQ matters, it does feel like it's come a long way.

Miraglia

19:44

It absolutely has come a long way. You know, we got back last fall from providing some LGBT awareness training at the FBI National Academy, which was the first time in the FBI's history that they had ever done any kind of LGBT awareness training. It was huge. And they are very committed to embedding that training into their new agent program. But my point is that I think that is a signal or at least an example of the changing tides, because this is the organization that 70 years ago was hunting down gay people in federal government, federal employment, to weed them out. So now for them to come, you know, sort of full circle is huge. And their investment in training is certainly not unique. You know, agencies throughout the United States are doing it. In California, we actually have a legal mandate that all peace officers and all 911 dispatchers complete LGBT awareness training. It has evolved, but it most definitely has a long way to go.

Donelan

20:38

It's no time to relax. There has been an urgent call for police reform across the country in recent years, especially in light of the murder of George Floyd. How has that played out for the LGBTQ community in terms of its relationships with law enforcement?

Miraglia

20:54

Well, I think when people look at use of force videos online, and the very challenging stories that they read about and experience, and hear stories from their friends, what it really does is compromise trust in law enforcement. And if you don't know anybody in law enforcement, if you don't have a face and a name to put to law enforcement, then it's very easy not to trust people that have as much authority and

power as law enforcement officers do. So, I would say the biggest challenge facing the relationship between law enforcement and the LGBT community as a whole is centered around a lack of trust and a lack of relationship. LGBT people want to see themselves represented in the rank and file of law enforcement, just like any other group does. So that's a piece of it too, and it's played out today in, I think, very damaging ways.

For example, Pride organizations, local Pride organizers across the country, have stepped out and banned police from participating in Pride events. And that's an important opportunity for law enforcement to build those relationships and be present, and to be visible, and to demonstrate their, at least, allyship with the community. So, when a Pride group takes the step to ban the police, well, now the problem is even much worse. We've got to solve that, and I think that the solving of that starts with humanizing the law enforcement agency by providing a point of contact that has a face and a name.

Donelan

22:17

It goes back to what you said earlier: I see you. The power in this role really is the communication to the community that I see you; I recognize you and I'm here for you, just as I am here for any member of this community. And breaking down those barriers.

Miraglia

22:35

That's right. We talk in the Liaison Academy a little bit about procedural justice and how the tenets of procedural justice fit within the role of the LGBT liaison, and a big part of it is giving the community voice. Again, it goes back to that conduit of communication, but you have to have a person do that. It can't be a mechanical process. It can't be sort of an anonymous town hall, where you just sort of show up and listen to people you've never met before try and explain themselves.

Donelan

23:02

You mentioned the community meeting aspect, right, or the town hall. It tends to be the same people. You tend to be talking to the same community members over and over again at these meetings, and there has to be a concentrated effort by law enforcement to reach beyond the usual players, because they're engaged. It's how do you reach the rest of the community, and this liaison office seems like the perfect conduit for that.

Miraglia

23:30

I got to chance to walk with the newly appointed LGBT liaison officer at San Francisco PD. And we were walking through the Castro District and, again, she's relatively new to the role, but every five minutes we were having to stop, because either a business owner or a citizen on the street recognized her—and she wasn't in uniform at the time—and stopped and talked with her. And some were just saying hi, some were getting hugs, but other people were saying, "Hey, have you seen this problem over here? Hey, do you realize that there is a homeless encampment developing over here?" But they knew her, and that

was the key. They didn't have to look up the phone number and try to call the police or try to figure out the right bureau. They knew her name and they had her contact information, and I thought that was very powerful.

Donelan

24:13

It reminds me of walking the beat and the principles behind walking the beat—getting to know the people in your community, where you're shaking hands and reaching out and actually touching someone, and they become familiar with you. Same concept.

Miraglia

24:27

Absolutely, it is. And if you boil it right down, really, this is just a way of building trust with people and building relationships with people. That is a big part that is missing, I think, from all that's going on today with law enforcement and communities.

Donelan

24:41

You talked earlier about something that I'd like to touch on now, which is sort of the investigative component with this, the crimes against members of LGBTQ. In recent years, have you seen that the victims of crime are at a higher incidence, a higher rate, members of the LGBT community? Has that begun to level out? Where are we there and how does this parlay into helping with that aspect?

Miraglia

25:11

In all honesty, I think it's very difficult to measure. Hate crimes, for example, motivated by sexual orientation or gender identity are often the second or third most common bias motivation according to FBI statistics. And here in California, it's typically the second most common bias motivation. But what we don't know are all of the hate crimes that go unreported, so we don't really have a good feel for how big or small this problem is. We do have a pretty good belief that LGBT victims are hesitant, very often, in coming forward and making the report to police, because they don't want to be outed, they fear retaliation, they fear not being taken seriously by law enforcement, or just fear of law enforcement in general. I think this is particularly a problem in the transgender community. You know, trans women of color, we believe, are victimized at an astronomical rate that we haven't really measured accurately.

There's a lot that we just don't know, so, you know, that liaison out in the community, educating people on what hate crimes include, and urging them to come forward and report it if and when they ever happen is very important. We have to get a good handle on exactly how big or small this crime problem is to really understand it. You know, that goes all to getting agencies across the U.S. to report their hate crimes to the FBI, which, unfortunately, many don't. But the LGBT liaison at the local level plays a key role in encouraging people to come forward and report and building the trust that's necessary for people to come forward and report.

Donelan

26:42

Creating that safety, not even feeling of safety, the sense of safety that I can report, that this is a department that's going to listen to me and not judge me—that's huge. It's almost beyond comprehension how big of an impact this can have on the community, and I think you're absolutely right that these are under reported and this could really lift the veil on that. We've talked about the academy and how you can support liaison officers and departments in creating these positions, and these spaces in these units. What about the scholarships and the support of recruiting new faces to law enforcement and how OTP assists with that?

Miraglia

27:20

Well, recruiting is a problem in today's world for law enforcement agencies across the country. And trying to get a rank and file that mirrors the communities that their law enforcement agency serves, I think, it's a huge challenge for everybody, not just for the LGBT representation that's there. The liaison really provides a key role, and they should be working with recruiters going to LGBT events and having a booth there that shares information, again, about the opportunities that are available in law enforcement. It's one of those things that you have to invest some time in to grow applicants over time. You can't expect that posting a job flyer, you know, in a local gay bar saying, "We welcome you," is going to really attract a lot of applicants. It takes, again, time and investment.

What we hope that our scholarships will do is encourage recruits who are part of the community already to be out in their academy classes. I believe that the more out LGBT people that we have, the more informal education is going to take place throughout internal law enforcement, and that hopefully the more comfortable straight allies will be in working with those LGBT members, the more understanding that they're going to have. So, we think that the scholarships, hopefully, will encourage people to be out. And then the grants, again, are designed to help agencies offset some costs associated with doing both training and creating LGBT liaison programs.

Donelan

28:40

I think it's underestimated how important the straight ally can be in this whole thing. We often talk about the LGBT member, officer, community member, et cetera, but the straight ally within a police department can have a significant impact on a department, I would assume. Like, they need to come out just as much as the LGBT.

Miraglia

29:00

I completely agree with you. Both from a community standpoint, as well as from an internal workforce standpoint. You know, a lot of the litigation that happens around unlawful discrimination and harassment in the workplace comes from the way law enforcement personnel treat one another. So, having an ally in that workplace to shut down bad behavior, to stand up for the LGBT employee is very,

very important both from a liability and minimizing liability standpoint, as well as just from keeping the rank and file that we have. We can't afford to lose anybody in this profession in today's world. When somebody quits because they don't feel comfortable at work, we're losing that person's experience and the investment we made in training in that person. So, it's very important we hang on to all of the assets that we have, including those LGBT folks.

Donelan

29:49

Define straight ally.

Miraglia

29:51

You know, a straight ally, to me, is someone who understands and recognizes that LGBT people exist, who will stand up when they hear a slur used or an improper term used. It's someone who has gotten some education and training for themselves. It's someone who recognizes the challenges that LGBT people face around hate crimes and domestic violence. And when they are called to take a report, for example, they have the language, and they have the understanding of what that victim is going through, and they can communicate that. I'll give you an example, you know, a young person who is bullied at school. An ally recognizes that LGBT youth are often bullied at school. An ally already understands that about 40 percent of homeless youth on the street are part of the LGBT community. Well, how did they get to the street? It's often because they don't feel safe at home, or they've been tossed out of their home, so an ally gets that. I just can't emphasize enough the importance of training.

Donelan

30:49

I was going to say the issues that the LGBTQ community is facing is not the job of LGBTQ officers alone to fix. It's going to take the entire department. It doesn't matter your sexual orientation. And, quite frankly, this applies across the board, whether it's race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation—it's that acceptance and saying, you know, "This is right, and this is wrong," and being unafraid to do that.

Miraglia

31:15

It really is about understanding. You know, we all have our own personal belief systems. We have religious belief systems. We have our own personal moral codes. You know, all of that is the individuals, right? But everybody in law enforcement has an obligation and swears an oath to support the 14th Amendment of the Constitution among all the other amendments. But the 14th that talks about providing equal protection under the law, so it doesn't really matter what your own personal feelings are, you have a duty to serve everybody equally. And what we're hoping to do is help people do that more comfortably and more effectively.

Donelan

31:51

You know, OTP has recognized a need. OTP has answered the call for information, provided the framework, the resources necessary, and that is key, I think, for a lot of these departments that haven't quite made that step yet, or the ones who have made the step and they're not sure if they're being as effective as they can. So, it sounds like just a wonderful resource and wish you luck now that you're partnering with COPS, that you're going to be able to extend that reach and make yourself known to, like you said, 18,000 law enforcement agencies across the country. But it's a huge opportunity to extend your reach and say we're here.

Miraglia

32:29

It absolutely is, and I just can't say enough about, again, the quality of the work that the COPS Office does. Its reach. Its reputation. We are really thrilled to be part of that.

Donelan

32:39

So, June is Pride Month. What opportunities are there out there for law enforcement to get involved?

Miraglia

32:46

Well, you know, there are many cities that celebrate Pride all year round. June is certainly the most common month where celebrations occur, and I think it is a great point in time for law enforcement agencies to commit to engaging with the community. Now, in these cities that have "banned police" from participating, you know, maybe it's going to be sitting down with those Pride organizers and saying, "Look, we want to start a conversation with you in this month where we're celebrating inclusion. We want to be involved with you. And so, can we at least commit to meeting regularly?" I know examples of agencies, I believe it was Chicago, announced the LGBT liaison program, or the formation of that, during Pride Month, as evidence that the department was wanting to build a good relationship.

You know, at the heart of some of this is that Pride organizers are saying, "Look, we don't want police in uniform, because the uniform is what's making people uncomfortable marching in the Pride parade." Well, maybe an intermediate step is for the agency to say, "Great, we still want to be involved. What about us having a contingent marching in department polo shirts?" And compromising so that we don't just throw our hands up and say, "Well, then fine, if you don't want to invite us to your party, we won't come." We have to make an affirmative step forward, I think, if we're going to mend this relationship at all.

Donelan

34:04

I agree. And I'll say this, nothing hurts law enforcement in the name of humanizing officers, right? These are people who put on a uniform, who put on a badge, who put their lives on the line every time they go to work, but they are mothers, they are fathers, they are sisters and brothers. They put their pants on

just like you and me. They are regular folk, but once that uniform comes on, all of these very same things that law enforcement's being accused of, they are the victim of, and that is being stereotyped, and they are up against a serious level of distrust. And so, I think middle ground is a great place to be, and not to just assume that you're not going to be able to move forward, to go ahead and at least start talking.

Miraglia

34:51

I absolutely agree. It has to happen. And being silent is just the same thing as saying, "Okay, fine, we're not going to play." I think chiefs and sheriffs need to step up and say, "We want to be part of this event like we do all the other community events. We are part of this community, so let's figure out how we can sit down and talk about it, and work through some of the issues that are standing in the way."

Donelan

35:14

I want to make sure that people know how to reach you, and where to find you. So, if you could, again, provide the website for Out to Protect, and is it okay if people actually reach out to you directly? If they have questions, or want to learn more, is there a way to contact you, Greg?

Miraglia

35:29

Absolutely. The website is [www-dot-out-to-protect—all one word—out-to-protect-dot-O-R-G](http://www.outtoprotect.org). [www.outtoprotect.org] And on that website, you can access all the information around training and grants. There is a link to send a question. There's a simple contact form you can fill out. And if you wish to set up a phone call conversation, you can request that, and we'll set up a time and figure out a way to get in contact with you and have a phone conversation.

Donelan

35:55

Greg, I can't thank you enough. I think that this has been a highly enlightening show. I know our listeners are going to reach out. You've provided them an invaluable resource, and I hope they take advantage of the training that you're offering, and the resources that you're offering. And just the existence of Out to Protect is certainly a moment of hope for us all, that we are absolutely proceeding in the direction that is a positive one for law enforcement and our communities.

Miraglia

36:25

Thank you very much, Jennifer.

Donelan

36:26

Thank you. And thank you, everyone, for joining us here on *The Beat*.

Voiceover: *The Beat* Exit

36:32

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Voiceover: Disclaimer

37:29

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