



CITY OF TAMPA

Bob Buckhorn, Mayor

Police Department

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Chief of Police

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Thank you Commissioner Ramsey, Professor Robinson and the members of the Task Force on 21st Century Policing for allowing me to be a part of this process. My name is Jane Castor and I am chief of the Tampa Police Department. As my 31 year career is coming to a close, I must tell you that it is an honor to appear before you on such a relevant topic.

Historically, when we talk about reducing the number of officer deaths, we begin with a focus on training, officer safety methods and the equipment we provide our officers. All of these are necessary elements of safe policing, but I believe they just scrape the surface of the conversation that is needed to truly make our officers safer out on the streets.

From where I stand, there are three key points that, as law enforcement leaders, we should focus upon:

1. Real-time information for officers responding to in progress calls
2. Community relationships
3. Officer wellness

With the proliferation of cell phones, information moves at lightning speed.

Case and point: we recently had a high-profile theft at a busy mall. In the minutes following the event, more than 100 - 911 calls came in. This is the new normal for law enforcement. The affect is that officers are arriving on scene much quicker, while the offense is in progress. While this increases the chance of apprehension, it also places officers in increasingly dangerous situations.

To enhance officer safety in these situations, we must put information in our officer's hands at comparative speeds. We've been able to do this at the Tampa Police Department, in part, through a software solution that we helped develop. It provides officers with real time, actionable data on suspects, zone activities, hot spots, alerts and bulletins – without delay. We also monitor social media for information that may assist responding officers in staying safe as they come upon a scene.

I was once privileged to hear George Kelling, an author of *Broken Windows*, speak. One of his comments still resonates with me today. It was theoretically simple, but seemingly insurmountable from a practical standpoint. He stated that in every situation there are

people who have a piece of information: the victim, witnesses, suspects and even law enforcement. His projection was that the person who could bring all of those diverse pieces of information together would define success in law enforcement.

With that in mind, I would make two recommendations. There should be a dedication to the research and development of solutions to mine law enforcement databases for information that will not only reduce and solve crime, but keep our officers safe. Based on the rapidly changing technology, this cannot be a one-time endeavor, but rather a continual process.

In addition, we must continue to look for and publicize best practices in the use of social media. The more successful agencies have realized the significance of using social as a tool for preventing crime along with its phenomenal ability to allow us to connect with and inform our audience - the citizens we serve.

Community Relationships

In law enforcement, we are only as strong as our relationship with the community. If they trust us, they will call, text, tweet or message when something is amiss in their neighborhood. So, the question that begs to be answered is, how do we build that trust?

It begins with understanding ourselves and the citizens we serve. Dr. Lori Fridell, who is nationally recognized as an expert in biased based policing puts it very simply, "*all people have biases.*" As police officers, it's critical that we recognize our own biases and make every attempt to set them aside when serving the public. The result will be twofold: officers will develop positive relationships with citizens and they will be safer in their day-to-day activities.

The course that she presents is entitled, *Fair and Impartial Policing*. Every law enforcement officer and key community leaders should be required to complete this training. It's an important yet uncomfortable truth to admit your own biases. But officers need to understand that admitting it only makes them human, nothing more.

FBI Director James Comey said so poignantly in a recent speech that "racial bias isn't epidemic in law enforcement any more than it is epidemic in academia or the arts." He believes, and I agree wholeheartedly, that law enforcement overwhelmingly attracts people who are willing to risk their lives to help others and their mission is to help all people regardless of their race or station in life.

A few years ago, I received a call from the COPS office asking about our four-day manhunt for a suspect who killed two Tampa Police officers. They wanted to know how we managed to have a SWAT response to more than 400 tips without any public unrest. Unfortunately, I didn't have a panacea for them then, nor do I now. I believe that the response from our community was based on years of building relationships of trust with our citizens. It's certainly not a perfect process, and we always have room to grow but the bottom line is we are always working on it.

In 2013, we opened a new safe haven for kids known as the RICH House in a historically high crime neighborhood. I can tell you in the last 10 years, we attempted every known

tactic or strategy to combat the crime in that community. Last year, for the first time ever, crime dropped significantly. Without a doubt, that after school program made the difference. Officers connected with the kids and their guardians. The neighborhood could see the officers cared and that's what made the difference.

Like many other law enforcement agencies, we are constantly looking for ways to attract minorities and women into our organization. This year, we launched an initiative called Be The Difference. We went on a three-week tour of 32 African American churches. In the end, we recruited 629 people as either candidates for employment or to get involved with our department's community programs. It is imperative that our organizations reflect the community that we serve.

Another program that has helped our officers connect with citizens is *Front Porch Roll Calls*. We invite citizens to be part of the solution by holding roll calls in yards or at businesses near our hot spots or high crash intersections.

Studies shows that a person's opinion of law enforcement is not established by the action an officer takes, but how the officer treats them. Does the officer follow what we call the Golden Rule in Tampa, which goes like this "Everyone is treated with dignity and respect?" There is no exception to this rule, officers hear it from me the day they are sworn in and will continue to hear it throughout their careers. Every encounter an officer has is an opportunity to build a positive partnership in the community. It creates trust that must be the foundation of our relationship with our citizens. When I interact with our officers and supervisors, I always remind them to never lose sight of the power they have in their badges, the power to not only take away someone's freedom, but possibly their life. This power must be used wisely and only when necessary.

Officer Wellness

One of my favorite sayings is that the upside of policing is that you get to see things that no one else gets to see, the down side is that you have to see things that no one should have to see. Experiences that the human brain is not equipped to cope with because there is no point of reference. The beating death of a child, untold homicide scenes, the aftermath of deadly force, having to tell young parents that their child will not be coming home after pulling their broken body from the wreckage of an accident, or performing CPR on an officer who has been shot in the line of duty. The list is endless, but the response remains consistent – attempt to bury the memory and move on.

As a law enforcement executive, I have always felt that we fail our officers by not confronting, head on, the trauma they experience throughout their careers. This trauma has many affects, often times manifesting itself in unhealthy, if not deadly, responses. There is little other reasoning for the high incidences of substance abuse, divorce, and suicide that officers face.

It can lead to symptoms common with post-traumatic stress such as irritability or anger. If an officer is responding to calls for service in that mental state, the likelihood of a positive interaction is greatly diminished. These negative contacts undermine all the work agencies are doing to build relationships and trust.

To address these issues, we started the *First Responders Retreat*. The week long, in-house training involves educating officers on the physiological and emotional effects of trauma and EMDR sessions. The evidence-based method is most commonly used with combat veterans, but we have had great success with Tampa officers.

I believe it is the agency's duty to ensure officers have the tools to cope with the stress of their profession. If officers are of healthy mind and body, they will stay connected with why they chose this profession - to help and protect those who can't protect themselves. It will ensure officers are making good decisions while serving our citizens.

WRAP UP

The underlying mission of law enforcement has changed very little since Sir Robert Peel authored the *Principles of Law Enforcement* in 1829. Every officer can find their direction in those nine basic truisms. What has evolved throughout history are the tasks that law enforcement has become responsible for performing. As services continue to be cut, officers have become the de facto mental health practitioners, social workers, and the front line dealing with those suffering with substance abuse. As a result of officers taking on these new tasks, they also absorb a higher level of frustration and anger from citizens for our inability to solve these issues. We simply can't do it alone. They require societal solutions.

Law enforcement has not always had a noble history, there have been specific actions that we as a profession must acknowledge and own, vowing to never repeat. One of the ways this lesson is instilled and passed along is the training program that began with Commissioner Ramsey. The Holocaust training reminds officers of the role that some officers played in carrying out atrocities, while others risked their lives to stand strong against those who violated the basic tenants of human decency and equality. In Tampa, we use the course to remind officers that our role in society requires that we defend the constitution and protect and serve all members of our community equally, never being tempted or averted by the personal or political agendas of others.

As a whole, I believe police officers do an amazing job with the multitude of issues they are called upon to handle, most of which have no clear cut solution. This is because in most instances officers try to make decisions based on the best interest of the community that we serve. Of course, this is not to say that we are always correct. But we must be very careful to avoid holding all officers accountable for the inappropriate actions of a few. This trend, if left unchecked, will compromise the safety of our officers and of the very citizens we have sworn to protect.

Citizens should feel free to critique and criticize officers, and we must be open and accepting of that criticism. However, it should be based on fact. Thankfully, the average citizen has no idea what is involved in dealing with the criminal element. This means we are doing our job well as the thin blue line between law abiding citizens and criminals. At the same time, we are creating a disconnect. It's impossible for citizens to know what challenges an officers must face on a daily basis. While body worn cameras will provide an eye opening experience for the majority of our citizens, there is no tool that will be a cure all for police and community relations, but it is an important step toward more transparency.

Along the same lines, every agency should have a robust Citizen's Academy, where the community can learn firsthand how officers are trained, the need for specific equipment, and how it is used. We end our course with a ride-along, as there is nothing more enlightening than walking in an officer's shoes for an evening.

Lastly, I would like to publicly thank Director Comey for the thoughtful way in which he opened the door for discussion on police and race relations. As stated previously, law enforcement must be held accountable. But as we continue to discuss the role that law enforcement plays, there must be meaningful and frank discussions about crime in America and the responsibility that must be taken if we are to make any meaningful headway. We can all agree that past inequalities, societal oppression and economic disadvantages contribute to crime and disorder. Law enforcement did not create these situations, but we can be an important part of the solutions. We must all be willing to work together to make the necessary improvements, which will lead to safer communities and a safer working environment for officers. It is my hope that the door Director Comey cracked is not slammed shut, but opened wide so everyone can be seen and heard.