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Representing Las Vegas Metro Police Department Officers and Deputy City and Municipal Court Marshals

VOLUME 20 | ISSUE 3

January/February 2025

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LVPPA Embraces New Challenges and Opportunities



2024

2025

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COMPENSATION
UPDATES**
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**2025 WELLNESS
TIPS**
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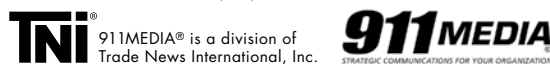
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The Las Vegas Police Protective Association is affiliated with the following organizations at the state and national level:

NAPO – National Association of Police Organizations, representing over 241,000 law enforcement officer members in more than 1,000 police associations nationwide.

"BIG 50" – An informal association of the 50 largest law enforcement associations in the United States.

UCOPS – The United Coalition of Public Safety





President's Message

DETECTIVE STEVE GRAMMAS, PRESIDENT

Prioritizing Wellness in Law Enforcement: A Call to Action for 2025

Wow, 2025 is here! As a child, I envisioned a future filled with flying cars and robots handling our daily tasks. Clearly, we aren't quite there yet, but with AI and cars that drive themselves, I clearly see we are on that path.

I wanted to write my first article of 2025 focusing on a critical and timely topic: wellness. This concept is resonating across the nation in various professions, but it's especially vital for police and corrections officers. The realities we face in our daily duties can be profoundly traumatizing; what would be a "normal" day for us could drive an ordinary person to seek therapy. The experiences we endure — death, despair and suffering — are significant, and how we manage them is crucial. While we cannot avoid or change these harsh realities, we do have control over our responses to them. The trauma we carry from our profession deserves to be addressed and unpacked — not buried away. In previous decades, officers managed trauma through unhealthy habits like alcohol consumption and smoking, burying their feelings deep inside. Unfortunately, this approach has led to alarming consequences, including heart disease, addiction, broken families and even suicide. It became clear that we needed a better way to care for our well-being.


When Sheriff McMahill ran for office, he aimed to establish a Wellness Bureau. I initially viewed this initiative with skepticism — being an officer meant being tough, and we didn't need therapists to discuss our experiences. However, my perspective changed dramatically after interacting with the compassionate staff in the Wellness Bureau and professionals like James Kilber. What I thought I knew about coping was fundamentally flawed. The supportive resources provided by Sheriff McMahill are invaluable; talented clinicians are here to help us and are available 24/7. Confidentiality ensures that our officers can seek assistance without fear.

The supportive resources provided by Sheriff McMahill are invaluable; talented clinicians are here to help us and are available 24/7.

As we stand today, almost 500 officers are engaged with the Wellness Bureau, a testament to its effectiveness, and that number continues to grow. I firmly believe that through this program, we will see a decline in officer suicides and substance abuse at LVMPD. I have two hopes for this initiative: (1) That more of our colleagues take the brave step to access these vital services and navigate the complexities of our work, and (2) That other law enforcement agencies across the nation recognize our Wellness Bureau as a model and follow suit.


At LVMPD, we had a saying about driving safety: "If you don't arrive, you can't assist." This notion applies directly to our work; if we cannot show up due to unresolved trauma, we lose our ability to help those we have sworn to protect. It is essential for us to arrive every day ready to be better than the day before. We must foster an environment where open conversations about mental health are encouraged, recognizing that it's OK to not be OK.

Help is readily available just around the corner from headquarters — the new Wellness Bureau is conveniently located nearby. If you are struggling or unsure where to turn for help, I urge you to visit the Bureau on Tonopah. Your well-being and the well-being of your family and fellow officers will hinge on that courageous decision. Together, we can build a healthier, stronger community in law enforcement. **VB**



CALENDAR

January 20	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
February 14	Valentine's Day
February 17	Presidents Day



*General Membership Meetings are quarterly rather than monthly. If you need to present something before the Board prior to a regularly scheduled General Membership Meeting, please contact the PPA office so you can be accommodated.



Honoring Your Service on Law Enforcement Appreciation Day

CORRECTIONS OFFICER SCOTT NICHOLAS

Vice President

January 9, Law Enforcement Appreciation Day, is more than just a date on the calendar. It's a moment to pause and reflect on the commitment, sacrifice and courage our members bring to this profession every single day. Serving in Las Vegas is unlike anywhere else. Our work isn't just about protecting residents; it's also about safeguarding the millions of visitors who come here every year to experience what our city has to offer.

It's no secret that recent years have been difficult for many of us in this profession. Constant scrutiny and unfair criticism have made our work even harder. Yet through it all, we've continued to show up, rise above the challenges and serve with the professionalism that defines us. But there are signs of change. Communities and voters are showing a renewed respect for public safety. People are recognizing the consequences of neglecting law enforcement — rising crime, frayed trust and vulnerable neighborhoods — and they're standing with us to prioritize safety again.

It's encouraging to see the tide beginning to turn. Across the country, more people are realizing that public safety is the backbone of strong communities. Voters are signaling a renewed focus on supporting law

enforcement, understanding that our work is vital to creating neighborhoods where families can thrive.

On this day, I hope you feel the appreciation that so many citizens hold for us, even if it doesn't always make headlines. A simple "thank you" from a stranger, a kind word from a neighbor, or a community gesture of support can remind us that we are seen and valued. Sometimes, these small moments are enough to reinvigorate our sense of purpose and remind us why we chose this path.

But Law Enforcement Appreciation Day isn't just about others recognizing us. It's also a chance for us to recognize fellow LVPPA members and the bond we share. No one understands what it takes to walk this path better than the person beside you in uniform. Take a moment to acknowledge your peers and let them know how much their efforts matter.

Take pride in your work, and know that your efforts make a difference. As we move forward, hold your heads high and always serve with integrity, honor and resilience.

Thank you for your unwavering dedication. Stay safe, and know that your sacrifices do not go unnoticed. **VB**

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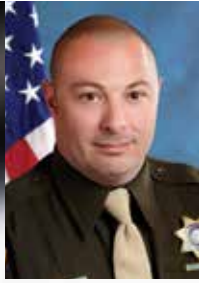
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The Importance of Body-Worn Cameras Being Activated

POLICE OFFICER BRYAN YANT

Sergeant-at-Arms

In recent years, body-worn cameras have become an essential tool in modern policing. The cameras mounted on officers' uniforms provide real-time video and audio recordings of interactions between police officers and the public. Now, the new Axon cameras issued by LVMPD have two cameras that have the capability to record the event. While the use of body cameras has been widely debated, there is growing consensus about their importance in promoting transparency, accountability and trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve. However, to achieve these benefits, it is critical that body cameras are consistently activated during interactions with the public. LVMPD policy is clearly defined as to when officers should activate their cameras and when officers may deactivate them.

The primary purpose of police body cameras is to provide an objective record of events. When officers activate their body-worn cameras during interactions, it ensures that there is a clear, unbiased record of what transpired, protecting both the officers and the citizens involved. These recordings can be crucial in situations where there is conflicting testimony or allegations of misconduct. Without activated cameras, there is a lack of evidence that could help investigators defend the officer's actions, which could lead to potential mistrust and allegations of bias or corruption.

Body-worn cameras play a critical role in holding both law enforcement officers and the public accountable. Critics believe that when officers know that their actions are being recorded, they are more likely to adhere to established protocols and exercise greater caution and professionalism. The presence of a camera can deter misconduct, including the use of excessive force, discriminatory behavior and even false claims of police misconduct by citizens. However, time and time again, even at the early stages of the implementation of the body-worn camera project, our officers have shown that we have met this standard with or without body-worn cameras.

Conversely, when citizens know that interactions are being recorded, they are also less likely to engage in disruptive or aggressive behavior. However,

the body-worn cameras are a perfect tool to document and record the interaction and non-compliance of the citizens should the mere officer's presence and body-worn camera not deter their actions. This P# 13064 mutual accountability helps create a safer environment for both police officers and civilians. Critics say it ensures that individuals are more likely to respect the law, knowing that their actions are being captured on video.

Body-worn cameras can also serve as valuable tools in criminal investigations and legal proceedings. For instance, when a suspect claims that they were treated unfairly or unlawfully by law enforcement, body-camera footage can help clarify the events that led to an arrest or use of force. This evidence can be used in court to corroborate or challenge testimonies, improving the quality of the criminal case with unbiased documentation of the scene, evidence, any statements made and injuries to victims, which strengthens the judicial process.

Despite the clear benefits of activating body-worn cameras, there are challenges and limitations that must be addressed. The body-worn camera does not follow the officer's eyes nor see what the officer may be looking at. The camera speeds may not pick up on tactile danger clues an officer may see. The camera records at different speeds than what an officer may perceive in real life. The officer's perception of distances versus how the camera records distances through a fisheye lens will be drastically different. The camera is equipped with technology to enable it to see and record better in low light than what an officer can. Objects or parts of the officer's body may block the view of the lens. The overreliance on body-worn camera footage encourages second-guessing based on what is merely seen. Body-worn camera footage alone can never replace a thorough, unbiased investigation.

The activation of body-worn cameras is essential for ensuring that policing is conducted in a transparent, accountable and ethical manner. By providing a clear, unbiased record of police-citizen interactions, activated body cameras help prevent misconduct, build trust and improve the overall effectiveness of law enforcement. While challenges remain, the potential benefits of body-worn cameras far outweigh the risks, making them an indispensable tool to defend your actions. **VB**

LVPPA Body-Worn Cameras

ACTIVATION OF BWC

Officers will activate the BWC as soon as a call is initiated via radio and/or Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) or as early as possible at the beginning of any self-initiated police action when it is safe and practical to do so.

- All dispatched calls for service involving contact with citizens or potential for contact with suspects
- Officer-initiated activities (i.e., vehicles and person stops, etc.)
- Detentions and/or investigations pursuant to an arrest, arrests, suspect interviews and post-Miranda negotiations
- Search of persons, structures or vehicles, if not already activated
- As soon as possible after the occurrence of an officer-involved traffic accident, if not already activated
- When driving Code 3
- Transport of prisoners
- Any contact that becomes adversarial when the body camera has not previously been activated
- Any other citizen contact or official duty circumstance at the officer's discretion, based on circumstances and reasonableness (i.e., field testing of narcotics, counting of seized money in the field, documenting high-value found property, etc.)

Activation of the BWC is not required during periods of unassigned time, breaks or lunch periods or when not in service.

LVPPA Body-Worn Cameras

DEACTIVATION OF BWC

Officers have the discretion to deactivate the BWC under the following circumstances:

- The incident has concluded prior to the arrival of the officer
- The incident or event is of such duration that deactivating the BWC is necessary to conserve available recording time
- If the BWC controller's battery light-emitting diode (LED) is red, indicating the remaining capacity is at less than 20%, it does not require activation of the BWC until arrival on scene unless traveling Code 3.
- The officer has a reasonable belief there will be no loss of critical documentary information (for example, completing reports at the conclusion of an event, etc.)
- Investigative personnel arrive and begin the formal investigative process
- Arrival at any detention facility and just prior to entering the booking area
- A citizen has requested the officer to stop recording
- If a victim or witness requests not to be recorded or is uncomfortable with being recorded, officers may consider asking a non-consenting victim or witness if they would agree to the option of diverting the camera away and recording only audio.
- Officers should be mindful of locations such as places of worship, certain locations in hospitals or clinics, law offices and day care facilities, where recording may be considered insensitive, inappropriate or prohibited by privacy policies.
- Major crime investigative briefings without ranking ISD/HSD personnel approval
- Resident officers who are responding to calls for service will activate their BWC when they are within five miles of arrival or when responding Code 3.



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The Benefits of Collective Bargaining

CORRECTIONS OFFICER MYRON HAMM

Director of Corrections

“Collective bargaining” refers to the process where a group of employees, usually represented by a labor union, negotiate with their employer to reach an agreement regarding their terms of employment, including wages, working hours, benefits and other conditions, essentially giving workers a collective voice to advocate for better workplace standards; this right is primarily protected by the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), which mandates that employers must bargain in good faith with their employees’ chosen union representative.

Collective bargaining is a way to solve workplace problems. It is also the best means for raising wages in America. Indeed, collective bargaining has many benefits for workers, including:

- **Job security:** Unionized workplaces have lower worker turnover, which can benefit employers by retaining experienced workers.
- **Higher pay:** Collective bargaining can lead to higher pay for workers.
- **Better working standards:** Collective bargaining gives workers a stronger voice and can lead to better working standards.
- **Safer workplaces:** Unions can create safer workplaces by requiring safety equipment and health insurance. Unions can also help workers report unsafe conditions without retaliation.

- **Improved quality of life:** Collective bargaining can improve the quality of life for workers.
- **Better working relationships:** Collective bargaining can encourage cooperation, which can lead to better working relationships.
- **Economic growth:** Collective bargaining can help ensure that all parties involved in the process are growing and their interests are safeguarded.

So, the question is why would anyone who has the opportunity to be a member of their collective bargaining unit choose not to exercise this right? Over the past 24 years, I have heard numerous reasons/excuses as to why people are not members. The most popular reason is that “I never get in trouble, so I don’t need the LVPPA.”

The strength is the LVPPA lies with the members and having a united front. Imagine being a patrol officer and getting into a shooting or working at CCDC and using force, which results in death P# 9222 or serious bodily injury. The stress alone of dealing with interviews and public scrutiny and perception is not an enviable position to be in. The contract that covers our employees deals with more than just discipline; it defines pay, benefits and explains the rights of our officers under 289. Most of all, this organization really and truly cares about its members. Those who choose not to be members come up with the most asinine reasons, and are generally misinformed by a few bitter senior officers who are ignorant about the value of membership. A wise man once said, “The strength of any organization begins with the unity of its members.” **VB**



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Changes to Your Deferred Compensation Contribution Limits

CORRECTIONS OFFICER DANIEL COYNE

Treasurer

According to Google, the third-most popular New Year's resolution is to save more money — but saving money is not always as easy as it sounds. It takes time and discipline. For many of us, as soon as we get our savings built up, we go out and splurge, buying that new car or gun that we've had our eyes on. This is something I have been guilty of in the past. However, there is one easy way available for us to save money without having the temptation of spending it right away. This option is your deferred compensation plan.

With this new year comes new changes to the contribution limits of your deferred compensation plan. Last year, we were able to contribute \$23,000 a year. This year, the government has increased the cap by \$500 to \$23,500 a year. If you're 50 or older, you have a catch-up provision available that enables you to contribute an extra \$7,500 a year in addition to the \$23,500. I know that a lot of us cannot afford to max out our accounts, but I want to remind you that your deferred compensation is one of the most important investments when it comes to your retirement behind your pension.

You don't have to max this benefit out, but you should have a goal to put something into your deferred compensation, no matter how small the



EDITORIAL POLICY

1. Opinions expressed in *LVPPA Vegas Beat* are not necessarily those of the Las Vegas Police Protective Association.
2. No responsibility is assumed for unsolicited material.
3. Letters or articles submitted shall be limited to 500 words and must be accompanied by writer's name but may be reprinted without name or address at writer's request.
4. Freedom of expression is recognized within the bounds of good taste and limits of available space.
5. The Board of Directors reserves the right to edit submissions and/or include Editor's Notes to any submitted material.
6. The deadline for submissions to *LVPPA Vegas Beat* is approximately 30 days prior to the issue date.

amount is. Every dollar you put into this account will multiply over the years due to "compounding interest." The longer you have to invest, the more interest you'll earn. For example, if someone invests just \$100 a paycheck P# 3934 for 30 years and earns 7% annually on their investments, their deferred compensation account will be worth north of \$245,000.

A good way to increase your contributions without noticing an impact on your paycheck is to increase your contributions whenever you receive a raise. I always planned on keeping half of my raise and contributing the other half to my deferred compensation. That way, you get a raise, and so does your deferred compensation account.

If you do wish to increase your contributions this year, you'll have to into your Fidelity account. From there, you'll have to navigate to the change contribution link and enter the desired percentage that you plan on contributing. I get asked from time to time about other investments available. Mostly, they bring up whole-life products that have a cash value aspect. The advice I always give is to always max out your deferred compensation account first, then a Roth or traditional IRA, before you start investing in other products. I give this advice because these accounts offer some form of tax advantage to your retirement savings.

If you are interested in opening an IRA, which stands for an "individual retirement account," here are some of the basics. You can contribute \$7,000 a year into a Roth IRA, and if you are 50 or older, you can contribute \$8,000 a year. The main difference between an IRA and your deferred compensation is when you can withdraw your money.

With the deferred compensation plan, you can withdraw your money penalty-free when you separate from the Department. With the IRA, you can withdraw your money penalty-free after the age of 59 1/2 or for certain qualified life events.

One of the most important things you can do during your career is to save and prepare financially for retirement. If you have any questions about retirement planning, feel free to reach out to me. **VB**



Time to Stand Up for What's Right

OFFICER JOHN ABEL
Director of Governmental Affairs

When I found out about the 8.73% PERS increase that will likely happen in July 2025, like all of you, I was infuriated. My phone started ringing with calls and dinging with text messages trying to confirm the information the LVPPA has just pushed out to our membership.

Many were mad at us and vented to me about what this PERS increase means and what the LVPPA is going to do to ensure we do not see any loss of pay. Rest assured, the LVPPA will do everything within its power to ensure officers do not receive a reduction in pay. There are, however, things you all can do to help the LVPPA fight this issue well.

PERS is very powerful, so the only entities that can regulate and control them are the elected assembly people and senators who will be meeting at the legislative session beginning in February to approve this increase that will take place next July. If we are truly sick and tired of PERS making decisions in a bubble and not understanding how this large increase affects our profession and families, then we need to fill up those committee rooms when hearings are scheduled regarding PERS.

You do not have to be in Carson City to testify — you can testify over video at the Grant Sawyer building in Las Vegas across from Cashman Field. I will be in Carson City lobbying on your behalf so I can keep you informed of the time and date, but I need you to show up and testify.

I will also send out a list of legislator phone numbers and emails. We need to fill up those email and voicemail boxes of every legislator if we really want to hold PERS accountable. I've been in meetings with the PERS director, and I have heard her make derogatory statements about our profession and the actions she would like to take.

In my opinion, she is envious of our benefits. When she walked into the legislative building last session, she would speak to other union lobbyists except for me. In my opinion, PERS Director Tina Leiss has a clear bias against first responders, so we as a profession need to hold her accountable for her biases, and we can do that by pressuring our elected officials to hold her accountable for the decisions she makes regarding increases among other decisions as well.

On my end, I am already collaborating with other police union leadership from all over the state to form a clear message that this large increase

hurts our families during a time when housing is unaffordable for newer officers and while inflation may be down, the cost of goods is still high. When we testify at the legislative session next year, the Public Safety Alliance of Nevada, which is comprised of most of the police officers in the state of Nevada, will stand on one clear message. The message is that the PERS increase is not needed, and PERS needs to be more transparent with its decision-making.

We will also be looking at legislation that puts a cap on PERS increases. We have said for years that the law enforcement position on the PERS board needs to be someone who represents the largest number of officers, not a handpicked person from a small police agency that Director Leiss can manipulate and control. I hope that reading this makes you mad enough to take time out of your busy schedule to make calls, send emails to your legislator and demand action. I also hope when the time comes, you will show up and testify that enough is enough. **VB**

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Vehicle Collision Board

OFFICER GREG STINNETT

Director

So, you wrecked your sled. Hopefully, you were V2. If not, this article about vehicle collisions and the vehicle collision board (VCB) is for you. Each month, the VCB meets at the Traffic Bureau to review our Department members' "at-fault" wrecks.

However, let us start at the beginning. You are involved in a collision in a Department vehicle. First and foremost, hopefully you and whomever you are in the collision with were not injured. Always consider completing an occupational injury report to memorialize the injuries you sustained, even if it is soreness.

So, what do you do when you are involved in a wreck? If you are responding to an officer(s) who needs immediate assistance with a dynamic event and there is a Code Red on your channel, switch to the adjacent area commands channel and advise dispatch there is a Code Red on your channel, and you were involved in a collision. Don't be the guy who interrupts an already screwed-up situation to create another one.

Request the appropriate resources, medical care for anyone who is injured or complaining of injuries, additional patrol units for PIC, traffic and a supervisor. Obviously, if there is not a red on your channel, all of this can be

accomplished on your primary radio channel.

You will be required to complete a report in Blue Team memorializing the fact that you were involved in a collision. Remember to always review your body-worn camera prior to authoring the report. Keep the report concise. This is not the narrative of an arrest report. Simply articulate what happened. Remember, traffic officer(s) will respond, conduct an investigation and complete a report based on their observations and measurements. Your supervisor will require you to complete a "check ride" as well.

The time range for your VCB hearing could vary. Typically, within two to three months, you will receive a "notice" to appear before the board. Keep in mind that this hearing is no different from an internal affairs interview. Your employer is compelling you, under threat of termination, to appear and answer questions regarding an allegation that you caused a vehicle collision involving a Department vehicle.

About one to two weeks prior to the hearing, the PPA will be provided the packets. We will call you to provide an overview of what to expect and ask you details about what occurred. During the conversation, we will prepare you for your interview.

On the day of the hearing, you will report to the Traffic Bureau. If you are on duty, you will already be wearing the uniform of the day. If you are being required to report on your day off, wear appropriate clothing, dress slacks and at least a collared

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shirt. Remember to complete and submit an overtime slip. You are not expected to appear for free, and the Department must compensate you for your time.

The interview itself will not take long. You will typically be asked two questions. What happened, and was it preventable? You are expected to explain what happened, how it happened and what you could have done or what you will do in the future to prevent it.

There are many reasons for at-fault accidents. The most common are driver inattention, distracted driving and Code 3 operations. Something as simple as backing into a pole or another patrol car, reading an MCT while driving, and the most dangerous, operating in a Code 3 capacity and failing to properly clear intersections that are fresh or stale red.

It is weird to think we have gone backward in MCT screen technology. When first introduced, the screens were small; they were more difficult to use. During the early and mid-2000s, we used larger devices, larger on-screen push buttons. They were easier to use while driving. It is absolutely asinine that you could be two pages into reading the details of the call and have to start over because someone updated the call, causing the screen to reset to the beginning.

Regardless, we have to be aware that while the capabilities and available resources at your disposal have increased, the operational friendliness of an MCT has decreased. They are simply harder to use while driving.

Do not allow your head to get buried in your MCT. If you need to, pull over and read it. Or consider stopping a block or two away from your target location so you can read or reread the data on the MCT. You can even do what our predecessors did — listen and remember shit.

Regarding Code 3 driving, please remember to fight the urge to get sucked in, whether it's the details of the call, the type of radio traffic or a squad mate who is fighting it out with a savage. Do *not* get sucked into the radio. Do not outride you and your patrol car's capabilities. People operating other vehicles do not hear our sirens. They freak out when you approach them from behind. We have to always expect them to do the opposite of what they should do because, more times than not, that's what happens.

When you are operating Code 3 and are approaching an intersection with a red

traffic signal, you have to bring your sled to a stop. You have to. Failing to do so could result in you, your partner, and even worse, innocent civilians getting hurt or killed. These are typically high-speed collisions and impact the most vulnerable parts of a vehicle, the driver or passenger side doors. Wrecking out during a dynamic event splits already depleted resources.

So what happens after you answer those two questions? Your representative will have an opportunity to speak on your behalf. To present any mitigating facts that should be considered. If there are facts supporting a finding of "non-preventable," we will argue that. Your sergeant and your captain will also have an opportunity to speak on your behalf as they, too, are compelled to attend. The board will deliberate and determine if the collision was preventable and if so, what level of discipline is appropriate. The level of potential discipline will vary depending on many factors, some of which include the severity of the collision, the severity of negligence, injuries, property damage and prior at-fault collisions.

At the conclusion of the hearing, you will be notified of the discipline rendered. The LVPPA has negotiated with the Department that creating an "accident prevention bank," per the contract, "hours will only be accrued on a non-negligent and/or an accident-free basis and will be credited at the end of a two-year eligibility period. This eligibility period is established based on an employee's graduation date from the Academy. All hours will be recalculated based on this formula. Based on the above parameters, employees will P# 20043 accrue 20 hours of bank time per two-year period. The maximum accrual will be capped at 40 hours." This bank has the ability to mitigate the loss of wages.





Operating your sled safely is as important as the four firearms safety rules. Those of us pushing a black-and-white become very good at doing things that are not normal. We often times lose sight of the fact that it is not normal to drive a vehicle through heavy traffic with lights and sirens blaring while reading a computer screen, reading a map, talking on a radio and drinking a Big Gulp!

Fight the urge to be complacent. Remember to slow down a bit. Slow your mind down; expect drivers to do the opposite of what they are supposed to. Focus first on driving and not the MCT, do not get sucked into the crazy shit, and arrive so you can make a difference. **VB**

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A New Year's Guide to Mental and Physical Wellness

ROBERT GLOWINSKI
Director

Working in this profession means facing constant challenges, and without resilience, those challenges will break you down. The work doesn't take a break, and neither should your commitment to staying strong. As 2025 begins, it's time to refocus on yourself because your well-being should always come first.

Making New Year's resolutions doesn't require drastic changes. Instead, focus on small, sustainable steps. Commit to drinking more water during shifts or take 10 minutes to decompress at the end of the day. It's not about instant transformation; it's about building habits for the long haul. Even a seemingly minor change, like replacing one unhealthy snack a day, can have a noticeable impact over time.

Consistency is key. Just like you don't get stronger in the gym after one workout, resilience builds over time. Small, steady actions can lead to big, lasting results. Keep track of your progress with quick notes or a simple checklist. Pairing with an "accountability buddy" can also keep you motivated. A partner at work or a trusted friend can help you stay on track while offering encouragement. You're not in this alone — lean on the support system around you.

Mental health is just as critical as physical fitness. The challenges of this job aren't "normal," and they leave a mark. Whether it's talking to a peer, reaching out to a therapist or taking a moment to breathe, tending to your headspace makes you sharper, more effective and better prepared to handle anything. A simple conversation can lighten the load and help put things into perspective. Sometimes, acknowledging that you need support is the hardest but most important step.

Physical health supports mental strength. Combat the toll of long shifts with small adjustments. Pack high-protein snacks instead of grabbing junk food, take short walks or stretch during breaks to improve circulation and reduce tension. If you're working late or overnight shifts, set realistic goals to balance your sleep and energy levels. Exercise doesn't have to be lengthy — short sessions tailored to your schedule can do wonders.

The new year is your opportunity to focus on what works for you, whether it's better sleep, more hydration, or working out more. Taking care of yourself isn't selfish — it's what allows you to show up strong for your fellow officers, family and community.

Prioritize your well-being. Start small, stay consistent and make 2025 the year you build habits that carry you forward. **VB**

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The Emotions of Starting a New Position

DETECTIVE JOEL BLASKO

Secretary

We've all had the experience of starting a new assignment. The buildup and anticipation for that transfer date after getting the call off a list. The feeling of eagerness to start something new. Once reality hits that you're going somewhere new, here come the nerves and anxiety.

Cops are creatures of habit, and we get used to our daily routines. If we change the routine or start something different, it throws us off, and we forget how to do the simplest tasks. I've been on the Executive Board for four months, and it has gone by quicker than I had ever imagined. On my first day, the nerves and anxiety hit me. I'm going to a place where it is an absolute privilege to be, and on top of that, my job is completely different than before.

My day-to-day schedule couldn't be more different than before. It's a different type of busy, but a good type of busy.

I came from P.D., and I was used to the day-to-day routine. DTAC was incredibly busy, especially during the summer months. At the start of the shift, we would "cheers" an energy drink as a squad and then brief what cases we had working and what needed to be done. Some days would grow organically, working a case like a prolific nightclub shooting, and we'd be in the field all day. Sprinkle in a Spartan Protocol, and for my fellow DTAC people, you'll know exactly what that's about.

Other days might be spent working the monster that is the P1 case queue. I was used to the call-out rotation and the hours. We'd get called out every so often,

and it was no big deal. I was also able to turn that work phone off at the end of the night. Then I'd wake up the next day and do it all over again. I'm thankful for how busy DTAC was because that's the only thing that has been similar.

Now I'm the secretary for the LVPPA. My day-to-day schedule couldn't be more different than before. It's a different type of busy, but a good type of busy. I'll start with the hours. The majority of my career was spent on swing shift and graveyard, and now I'm on a dayshift schedule. I keep track of membership numbers of the LVPPA. I also keep track of the Board of Directors and all the delegates to ensure all vacancies are filled. I'm in charge of making sure the Board of Directors elections go off without a hitch. I am expected to have a thorough knowledge of our bylaws and regulations. I'm tasked with recording the minutes for all the Board of Directors and General Membership meetings.

Now, introduce the internal affairs interviews, diversity interviews, vehicle collision boards, FIT/CIRT interviews and our benevolent events. Every one of these is a different beast to tackle. Instead of preparing myself to submit a case to the district attorney, my job is preparing our members so they can go into an interview with no surprises. It doesn't matter how long any of us have been on the Executive Board because the membership expects us to be on point and know our stuff.

It still hasn't sunk in that I am one of 10 people who have the privilege of representing our members. Every day brings something new, and I'm enjoying every minute of it. I am constantly picking the brains of all my partners on the Executive Board, taking bits and pieces of their styles and morphing it into my own. Just know you're not alone when it comes to feeling all those emotions of starting a new position. Thank you for taking the time to read this. Please stay safe out there. **VB**

RETIREMENTS

10/1/24	Tracey M. Mackey	P# 13857	CO II	15 years
10/4/24	Suzanne K. Porter	P# 9485	PO II	18 years
10/23/24	Jason W. Nelson	P# 6825	SGT	24 years
10/24/24	Jason F. Auschwitz	P# 5932	PO II	26 years
10/26/24	Michael D. Mordini	P# 8214	CO II	20 years
10/27/24	Scott R. Mendoza	P# 6878	PO II	24 years
10/30/24	Joshua E. Trail	P# 13234	PO II	16 years
10/31/24	Pablo F. Torres	P# 8232	CO II	20 years
10/31/24	Michael V. Boone	P# 7930	PO II	21 years
10/31/24	John Woosnam	P# 6236	PO II	25 years

CONGRATULATIONS

to the contest winners from the last issue!

November/December

P# Contest (\$50)

Timothy Dorion, P# 14942

Kenneth McCaffery, P# 8731



DAVID ROGER
General Counsel

Suicide by Cop: A Different Response

Society expects police officers to solve every problem — even when the matter is not criminal. In the case of suicidal individuals, officers are expected to force the person to seek professional help.

In doing so, officers frequently use force to detain the person so paramedics may transport the individual for a mental health evaluation. Other times, the suicidal individual threatens officers and invites a deadly force response — or suicide by cop. This article will address the realities of such calls and offer alternatives to sending officers to act as mental health counselors.

Statistics

The Department tracks suicide-by-cop critical incidents as discussed in the “Use of Force and Vehicle Pursuit Annual 5-Year Statistical Report 2019–2023.” The following percentage of officer-involved shootings (OIS) involved people who were “suicidal”:

- 2019: 18%
- 2020: 11%
- 2021: 20%
- 2022: 0%
- 2023: 40%

LVMPD’s 2023 suicide-by-cop statistics appear to be consistent with other jurisdictions.

Although dated, but nevertheless relevant, a 2009 study of 700 OISs nationwide found that 36% of the incidents were suicide by cop (Mohandie, K. “Suicide by Cop Among Officer-Involved Shooting Cases; *Journal of Forensic Science*, Vol. 54, No. 2 [2009]).

In LAPD’s 2022 Use-of-Force Year-End Review, 35% of OIS suspects suffered from mental illness.

Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals: Use of Force on Suicidal Individuals

The federal appellate court has consistently held that officers may only use minimal force, if at all, to detain a suicidal individual who is not committing a crime.

In *Drummond v. City of Anaheim*, 343 F.3d 1052 (2003), the court refused to grant qualified immunity for officers who allegedly killed a suicidal individual while restraining him for an involuntary commitment. Applying *Graham v. Connor* factors, the court explained, “When an emotionally disturbed individual is ‘acting out’ and inviting officers to use deadly force to subdue him, the governmental interest in using such force is diminished by the fact that the officers are confronted,

not with a person who has committed a serious crime against others, but with a mentally ill individual.”

Recently, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals refused to recognize qualified immunity for LVMPD officers who restrained an individual for a Legal 2000 commitment. The court concluded, “We hold that Smith and Huntsman were not justified in using deadly force against Scott, a mentally ill person who was not suspected of committing a crime and presented little or no danger” (*Scott v. Smith*, --F.4th — [2024]).

Simply put, a person who threatens suicide is not committing a crime, and if others are not in danger, officers should not use force to detain the suspect. Officers who encounter suicidal individuals may very well escalate a volatile situation. It is also possible the suspect may engage officers to get them to end his life.

Law Enforcement Agencies Refuse to Respond to Calls When There Is No Threat to the Public

According to a *Los Angeles Times* article, “Some small and midsize law enforcement agencies across the state have stopped responding to certain calls because of the potential dangers to both officers and the person attempting to end his or her life. They also present financial liability from lawsuits — especially if the situation turns violent.

“Other departments, including the Los Angeles police and sheriffs and San Francisco police, use ‘disengagement’ strategies that allow them to leave calls without confronting someone in crises. These tactics are used most often when the person is alone and does not present a threat to anyone else, and no crime is being committed. (Chabria, Anita. [August 10, 2019]. Why some California cops are refusing to answer suicide calls. *Los Angeles Times*.)”

Conclusion

Police officers are tasked with enforcing criminal laws — they are not social workers. Suicidal individuals are not committing crimes and are not subject to arrest. Police responses often escalate matters and end with police using deadly force to protect themselves. Thereafter, the decedent’s relatives inevitably file lawsuits against officers and their law enforcement agencies. It should be clear to all that federal courts will not grant immunity to the officers.

Police chiefs and sheriffs should consider dispatching medical providers instead of police when a suicidal person is not endangering others. If officers are assigned to the call, supervisors should also respond. Once the supervisor determines the suicidal person does not want help and the person is not a threat to others, the supervisor and officers should clear the call. **VB**



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THE NUMBERS DON'T LIE

THE TRUTH BEHIND OFFICER-INVOLVED SHOOTINGS



CHAD LYMAN
Director

Officer-involved shootings (OIS) and use of force are messy, hard to look at, unpredictable and often tragic. There is nothing “pretty” about a violent fight, let alone events where one person uses lethal force against another person.

We have OIS events that are complicated and challenging for all involved. These events are rapidly evolving, elevated-heartrate, high-stakes events where officers get snapshots and split seconds to make decisions that will be reviewed and critiqued in static environments. The courts realize the complexity of the situation and have set a requirement that officer response must be

reasonable based on the info they are taking in and processing at the moment they must use force, *not* the actual facts or information they did not know when they were forced to act. *Not* theories or narratives developed after the event by people *not* at the event who key in on this piece of information or that piece of information as if the officer even knew that piece of information.

This type of selective review often comes from the media or attention-seeking attorneys. At worst, it can come from LEO administrators who seek alternative standards on use of force from established case law that makes after-event reviews more complicated and subjective, leading to officers being unsure of what the actual standard is before using force in the field.

When we have an OIS, it can be very common to have media members or the family attack the officers and their use of force. This is done with no actual knowledge or investigation, and then once it is completed and released, it either fades away or calls into question the validity of the investigation. We have current OIS events that are getting lots of attention. It would be inappropriate for me to comment as we have not had our Board review and will not for months, but I am including a very well-written article from my friend and original BJJ coach *Matt Thornton* below. This article demonstrates how a critical look at OIS can be done while still having accountability to actually find the truth and not allowing agendas to drive these conversations.

The Truth About Fatal Police Shootings Might Surprise You (Especially If You're a Liberal)

Editor's note: The following is an essay excerpted from The Gift of Violence: Practical Knowledge for Surviving and Thriving in a Dangerous World by Matt Thornton, who gave permission to include this in LVPPA Vegas Beat.

One issue that cannot go unmentioned in any honest discussion about violent crime, especially in today's highly charged climate, is the role of those authorized by the state to use deadly force when necessary: police. What, specifically, does the data tell us about fatal shootings committed by police officers against the very citizens they are sworn to protect and serve? Are police officers actually targeting people for murder based on their skin color, as sometimes claimed? Is this a horrific epidemic or something else? If you've relied only on what major media headlines infer or activist celebrities tell you about the subject, the answers might surprise you.

We have a good idea about how the public at large might have answered such questions in the wake of George Floyd's death thanks to a survey conducted in 2020 by the Skeptic Research Center (tinyurl.com/447c9nf9).

- They asked a nationally representative sample of Americans two questions:
1. "If you had to guess, how many unarmed Black men were killed by police in 2019?"
 2. "If you had to guess, in 2019, what percentage of people killed by police were Black?"

They also asked respondents to say whether they considered themselves to be “very liberal,” “liberal,” “moderate,” “conservative” or “very conservative.”

Before reading on, any guesses on these two questions?

For the first question — “How many unarmed Black men were killed by police in 2019?” — the survey offered a set of possible answers ranging from “about 10” to “more than 10,000.”

Roughly 31% of survey respondents who identified as very liberal estimated that police had killed about 1,000 or more unarmed Black men the previous year, with an additional 22% believing the number to be at least 10,000. For those who identified as liberal, just under 27% believed the number to be about 1,000, with an additional 12% believing at least 10,000 had been killed. For those who identified as moderate, conservative or very conservative, 16%, 9% and 13%, respectively, guessed about 1,000 had been killed, with an additional 9%, 4% and 7%, respectively, believing the figure to be at least 10,000.

In response to the second question — “In 2019, what percentage of people killed by police were Black?” — those who identified as very liberal gave an average estimate of 60%, and those who identified as liberal, moderate, conservative and very conservative gave average estimates of 56%, 46%, 38% and 45%, respectively.

Did the wisdom of the crowd correspond in any way to reality here? The short answer is *no*.

Arguably the best available public data on police shootings, found in *The Washington Post’s* comprehensive database of fatal police shootings ([tinyurl.com/bdhhwxkx](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2019/03/27/body-camera-footage-released-in-police-involved-shooting-kevin-mason/)), reveals the following: Police shot and killed 54 unarmed people in 2019, of whom 26 were identified as white, 12 as Black, 11 as Hispanic and five as other. Of these 54, 49 were male (23 of whom were identified as white, 11 as Black, 10 as Hispanic and five as other).

Two caveats here: First, this data doesn’t include those extremely rare cases in which an officer killed an unarmed person without shooting them, such as through a stranglehold or car strike. George Floyd’s death, for example, would not have been included in these numbers. Second, although classified as “unarmed,” many of these police shooting victims were actively trying to hurt or kill an officer or some other party when they were shot.

Keep in mind that unarmed never means “not deadly.” In any police action in the United States, there is always a gun involved — the officer’s — and, in many cases, an unarmed suspect is fighting to take hold of it. Perhaps the most well-known and highly publicized case involving this exact scenario occurred in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014. At the time, it was claimed that the young victim, Michael Brown, had his hands up when Officer Darren Wilson shot him in cold blood in the middle of the street. This account led to a protracted period of unrest marked by waves of protests and riots. Upon investigation, however, the forensic evidence, as well as a half-dozen Black witnesses, confirmed Officer Wilson’s account: Brown had tried to gain control of Officer Wilson’s gun and was charging at him when he was shot. The widely adopted and repeated “Hands up, don’t shoot!” slogan was based on a lie ([tinyurl.com/4h89ywdr](https://www.tinyurl.com/4h89ywdr)).

If we look closely at the 12 fatal police shooting cases in 2019 involving unarmed Black individuals, we find the following: in one case, a suspect was killed as he was trying to run over an officer with a car¹; in a second case, a suspect grabbed an officer’s taser² and used it on him; in a third case, a female officer was hit³ in the head and knocked to the ground by a suspect before she fired; in a fourth case, a suspect led a trooper on a car chase before fighting⁴ with the trooper; in a fifth case, police shot a domestic violence suspect, who stated, “I’m gonna kill every last one of them motherf—s!” before waving an object⁵ at them, which those on scene mistook for a gun; in a sixth case, a teen fought with officers after “flipping out” on his girlfriend, running naked through a neighborhood, breaking into a house, and knocking out⁶ an officer who had been unable to subdue him with a taser; in a seventh case, a deputy was hit by the rear door of a moving car as a suspect tried to drive away; in an eighth case, a mentally ill man stealing food was shot after a short foot pursuit and struggle⁷ on the ground with a deputy; in a ninth case, an officer shot a suspected drug dealer high on methamphetamine⁸ who the officer believed was reaching for a gun in his waistband after a brief struggle.

When you set aside those cases in which the suspect is actively trying to

harm or kill an officer, or officers have a legitimate reason to fear that their own or some other person’s life is at risk, you are left with just a few deaths of unarmed Black individuals per year in which the police are demonstrably at fault. As of 2024, only two^{9,10} of the 12 cases from 2019 recorded in *The Washington Post’s* database had led to an indictment for the officer or officers involved. An indictment is possible¹¹ in a third case.

Just how misinformed was public perception on this issue? Let’s allow for a moment that *The Washington Post’s* database is incomplete and estimate that the actual number of unarmed Black males killed by police was 25, more than double the database figure. Even with this allowance, roughly a third of those who identified as very liberal would be off in their estimates by a factor of 40, and almost a quarter of them would be off by a factor of 400! For those who identified simply as liberal, just under a quarter would be off by a factor of 40, and roughly one in eight would be off by a factor of 400. Those who identified as moderate, conservative or very conservative would have fared the best, with 74%, 87% and 80%, respectively, estimating the total at about or under 100. They would be off by roughly a factor of four. (Remember, the actual number in the database is 11, not 25.)

Similarly, when it came to estimating the proportion of people killed by police who were Black, those who identified as very liberal or liberal fared the worst, though moderate, conservative and very conservative respondents did not guess accurately either. The average survey respondent guessed that 50% of those killed were Black, but the actual figure was just over 23%.

Again, my focus is on self-defense, so I’ll leave it to others to determine the causes of this disconnect between public perception and demonstrable reality when it comes specifically to this subject. But now that we know the actual data, we can adopt a perspective that maps onto reality. The reality is this: In a nation of roughly 330 million people, where police have more than 60 million contacts with civilians per year, and an arrest is made every three seconds, officers shot 12 unarmed Black individuals and roughly twice as many white individuals in 2019, almost all of whom were men.

When considering that white males make up roughly 33% of the population and Black males make up roughly 7%, we can easily calculate that — holding all else equal — Black victims are overrepresented in these figures.

When it comes to crafting a strategy for personal safety and survival, what assessment can we make given these numbers? Should Black people necessarily be more fearful of the police than white people? Is this the evidence that proves beyond doubt that police are intentionally targeting Black citizens? Indeed, many in the media point to this discrepancy as glaring evidence of racist policing. However, could variables other than racism account for the overrepresentation of Black males in police shootings involving unarmed suspects?

Let’s take a closer look at the numbers. In 2019, there were 13,927 homicides recorded in the United States. In that same year, police fatally shot 1,004 suspects, most of whom were violently resisting arrest, armed or otherwise dangerous. About a quarter of those killed by police that year were Black, or roughly double what we might expect if looking only at U.S. population percentages (roughly 13–14% of the population is Black).

Continued on page 20

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THE NUMBERS DON'T LIE

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Yet, if we consider crime rates rather than share of population across demographics, the fact that roughly 1 in 4 of those killed by police in 2019 were Black is actually less than what we might have predicted. In 2019, Black Americans accounted for more than 55%¹² of homicide arrests and, assuming statistics from 2018 remained about the same, committed approximately 36%¹³ of serious nonfatal violent crimes. Given these numbers, you could argue that Black Americans were actually *underrepresented* in police shootings in 2019 if you make the basic assumption that the number of police shootings corresponds to violent crime rates. The logic is simple: a group or community with a high crime rate will have more police contacts than a group or community with a low crime rate — especially when it comes to violent crime. The greater number of police contacts or arrests a group or community experiences, the greater the chance for a violent or even lethal outcome.

I want to stress here again that the questions we ask are of primary importance because if we're not asking the right questions, we can't hope to find the right answers regarding important questions involving public safety and civil rights — and we as a society certainly won't be able to protect ourselves or help those who deserve our attention the most: the victims. Of the homicide cases in the United States in 2019¹⁴ in which the victim's race was known, 54.7% were Black and 42.2% were white. Given this reality, for all those who would still argue that the police are intentionally targeting Black males because they are racist, what percentage of police attention do the victims and the communities in which they lived and died deserve? What percentage of police attention should be given to getting violent criminals off the street so that there will be fewer future victims in those communities?

These P# 19443 questions are vital for determining how, when and where police should operate, given their finite resources. Let's take New York City as an example, where roughly 24% of the population is Black. In 2021, 67% of homicide victims were Black, and 61.7% of those arrested for homicide were Black. In 2020, 65% of homicide victims were Black, and 60.2% of those arrested for homicide were Black. In 2019, 56.6% of homicide victims were Black, and 58% of those arrested for homicide were Black. In 2018, 62.6% of homicide victims were Black, and 60.1% of those arrested for homicide were Black.

I could go on, but the pattern is clear. Every year in New York City, a demographic that makes up just under a quarter of the city's population makes up roughly 60% of its homicide victims. We also know that roughly 90% of all homicides in which the victim is Black are intraracial. Again, this is not surprising, as the vast majority¹⁵ of all violent crime is intraracial.

So let me ask: If a group that makes up one-quarter of the total population in New York City accounts for roughly 60% of the homicide victims, year after year, what percentage of police attention should that group receive? Is giving that 60% of victims anything more than 24% of police attention racist? No, of course not.

Homicide isn't the only violent crime where this same pattern of violence occurs. If we look at reported rapes¹⁶ in 2021, for example, 37.7% of reported victims were Black, and 45.4% of those arrested for rape were Black. Do those rape victims not deserve police attention? Does the community not deserve any meaningful protection from future murders and rapes?

If we apply the logic that every disparity in policing is due only to racism, how do we account for the fact that more than 95% of people shot by police in any given year are men when women account for half the population? Does this imply that police forces everywhere are sexist against men?

Or consider this: Asian Americans make up roughly 6% of the total U.S. population, but they account for less than 2% of people shot by police in the United States. Should we infer from this that police are uniformly racist against whites, given police shoot white Americans at a far higher rate than Asian Americans?

If we use post hoc reasoning, assume that only systemic sexism and anti-white racism are at play, and reason backward from there, we could indeed reach a predetermined conclusion that cops hate men and that cops hate

white people. This would be the identical reasoning process used by those who routinely assert that the disproportionate shooting of Black suspects is incontrovertible proof of racist policing. The Creationist fallacy of the "God of the gaps,"¹⁷ in which any holes in our current scientific knowledge are seen as evidence of God's existence, has never reflected a serious attempt at finding the truth. Similarly, assuming any disproportionality in police shootings to be evidence of racism only, without bothering to control for any other factors, is no more than a "racism of the gaps."

I don't say any of this to make light of the issue or to detract in any way from the pain and suffering caused when an individual is harmed or killed by a police officer, especially when they are unarmed or an innocent bystander, such as in the case of Breonna Taylor.¹⁸

In an ideal world, there would be no police shooting deaths, and we should take sensible, evidence-based steps to reduce them. But in the real world, there's no reason to believe police shootings should, or even could, correlate perfectly with U.S. Census Bureau data.

Believing so is a failure to reason honestly about the best available evidence. This includes accounting for crime rates, particularly violent crime rates.

Any honest look at most of the police shootings anti-police activists commonly cite, and I strongly suggest readers take the time to read the facts about each event, will find little to no evidence for racially motivated murders. Instead, you'll see cases like the one involving Michael Brown, in which a half-dozen Black witnesses and forensic evidence confirmed that the initial popular narrative about the case was false. Put simply: If Michael Brown had not attacked a police officer that night and had not tried to grab his gun, he'd be alive right now. And I think most Americans, no matter their race, understand that.

Telling half-truths, believing falsehoods and framing every event through the lens of race has pernicious and dangerous consequences.

Even in those cases that involve a terrible mistake, such as in the death of Daunte Wright,¹⁹ or when there are legitimate questions about whether a suspect's rights were violated, such as in the case of Freddie Gray,²⁰ there's usually very little direct evidence of racism. When Gray died in police custody in Baltimore in 2015, three of the six officers involved were Black. This was also at a time when the United States had a Black president and a Black attorney general; Baltimore had a Black mayor, a Black police chief and a Black deputy police chief; Maryland had a Black state attorney general, and a Black Circuit Court judge oversaw the trials of the officers.

Can Gray's death be directly attributed to police racism? Might the case just show that police brutality, misconduct and negligence sometimes occur, regardless of race, and that's the challenge in need of a solution? And, as the ensuing trials demonstrated, that due process often reveals facts that clash with the public's prejudgment? Indeed, for every case involving a Black suspect that causes justifiable outrage, you can usually find a comparable case in which a white suspect is treated with the same coldness or malice — those cases just don't lead to weeks of front-page headlines. If you honestly believe that white suspects are immune to poor or even dehumanizing treatment or that justice always rewards white victims of police violence, look up the Tony Timpa²¹ case or the Daniel Shaver²² case. The officers involved in those cases usually end up walking free, too.

When mainstream media and anti-police activists tell us that Black

Americans are targeted or shot by police at higher rates than white Americans without also mentioning relevant violent crime rates, they are saying something that is half-true and wholly dishonest. The same is true when they filter news stories, and we adjust our levels of condemnation and credulity according to the race of the victim(s) and perpetrator(s). Telling half-truths, believing falsehoods and framing every event through the lens of race has pernicious and dangerous consequences.

The constant attacks on law enforcement, whether through ill-advised budget cuts, regressive anti-policing policies or the climate of hatred fueled by irresponsible media, have effectively halted proactive policing in many American cities. What makes matters worse from a public safety standpoint is that many violent offenders are either not being charged with felonies or are being put back on the streets in various cities thanks in part to far-left district attorneys, activist judges and reckless government agencies. As a result, more than a dozen U.S. cities saw record-breaking levels of murder in 2021. Thousands more innocent victims will needlessly die in the years to come from such “progressive” policies. The people who will suffer most from these changes won’t be the upper-middle-class urban elites who foolishly push them through. Most of the victims will be poor, many will be children, and the majority will be Black. Our most vulnerable populations will also be at elevated risk. Indeed, we have already seen a dramatic uptick in brutal and sadistic assaults on the elderly, especially against the Asian American community. The blood that covers the media personalities, policymakers, activists and donors who’ve pushed the defund-the-police narrative will never wash off.

But don’t just take my word for it. Listen to what the communities most at risk and in need of protection are saying.

When asked to identify the single most important issue facing the community they live in, 17% of Black Americans answered violence or crime — by far the most common answer²³ (only 3% answered racism, diversity or culture). It’s no wonder that Black Americans want increased police spending and a greater police presence in their cities and towns. The good people who live in high-crime neighborhoods know better than anyone that cutting police funding doesn’t solve our violence problem; it only increases it. And that’s exactly what we’ve all watched happen. I would also caution everyone to remember that in many cities and towns, a sizeable percentage²⁴ of police officers are themselves Black, many police chiefs are Black, many mayors and city council members are Black and many attorneys general are Black.

Once you actually look at the evidence, read past the headlines and ignore the current moral panic about our legal and judicial systems, you see that George Floyd’s murder isn’t an indication of any kind of trend or bias. Floyd’s death stands out precisely because it’s an aberration — an incredibly rare, if tragic, event. An officer with his knee on Floyd’s head no more represents the honest and hard-working men and women of American law enforcement than a single Black gang member represents Black Americans, or a single white school shooter represents white Americans.

We shouldn’t let the media or activist groups that fundraise by stoking divisions ever cause us to forget that. As political scientist Wilfred Reilly wrote²⁵ before the murder of Floyd, “A remarkable irony of the modern American conversation is that while race relations have empirically never been better, many members of different races are terrified of one another.”

In today’s tense political and cultural environment, you would think some caution as it relates to stirring up racial animus would be appropriate. And



yet, our media shows little to no self-awareness about its own culpability in eroding trust in our most vital public institutions. Heather Mac Donald, who has written for years on this topic, has called this the “high-volume delegitimization of American justice.” As long as the mainstream media remains determined to recklessly repeat half-truths and outright lies — regardless of the facts — you can expect these attacks on our poorest and most vulnerable populations to continue.

The core truth is this: The police are a threat to your life — but *only* if you are engaged in criminal activity and violently resist arrest, no matter your race. Of the 5,787 known white homicide victims in 2019, before the giant spike in 2020, at least 388 of them were armed white suspects killed by police, accounting for roughly 6.7% of all white homicide victims that year.

Of the 7,484 known Black homicide victims in 2019, at least 238 of them were armed Black suspects killed by police, accounting for roughly 3.2% of all Black homicide victims that year. For those of you who aren’t in an armed gang or involved in illegal activity, you’re much better off taking simple precautions against lightning strikes than worrying about getting shot by the police. (Note: the average American has about a 1 in 500,000 chance of being hit by lightning in any given year.)

Beyond that, when it comes to interactions with police, the best guidance I can offer for avoiding any type of physical harm is to simply comply. This means: (1) obey any and all orders; (2) show your hands; (3) move slowly; and (4) be as respectful as possible. If you’re being stopped for some reason or arrested, definitely don’t try to run or drive away, and definitely don’t resist.

Those acts are crimes themselves and will greatly increase the likelihood of a violent response by the police. As any lawyer will tell you, compliance doesn’t mean you have to answer police questions, at least in the United States. You have every right to remain silent. But I’m not giving legal advice here — I’m giving *safety* advice. Even if you believe that you are being arrested for unlawful reasons, or that the police are abusing their powers, save your fight for the courts.

And remember, police officers aren’t mind readers. In a country like the United States, where there are more guns than people, they have an especially dangerous job and want to get home safely — just like you. In

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2019, police died on the job at a rate of 11.1 per 100,000 full-time workers, more than triple the rate for all occupations combined (3.5 per 100,000). That same year, in which police shot and killed 54 unarmed individuals, 86 police officers died while on duty. Also, keep this fact offered by Mac Donald²⁶ in mind before having a knee-jerk reaction about the next tragic police shooting in which an officer mistakenly kills an unarmed Black man due to a poor split-second decision in a moment of chaos: "A police officer is 18-and-a-half times more likely to be killed by a Black male than an unarmed Black male is to be killed by a police officer."

I certainly don't say all of this to excuse every police action in which an innocent person is killed, but these statistics should give us pause. The prudent, sensible and measured approach is to reserve judgment until all relevant facts are known about any given shooting — and not to reflexively shout racism with every breaking news story involving the police.

Given all the data, are you better off with an active and engaged police force in your community or without one? The answer couldn't be clearer, and it's shameful that so many innocent people have to die simply because people are often too cowardly to state it. This doesn't mean that policing can't be improved, training can't be modified, tactics can't be adjusted, law enforcement policies can't change, and tragic mistakes can't be addressed. After all, any police shooting of an unarmed innocent is one too many, but a strong, well-funded, well-trained, well-supported, accountable, ethical and responsive police force — one that has the backing of local government, is engaged with the community and is visible — is vital for the healthy functioning of any society.

Now, what of those very rare instances in which an individual officer assaults or, worse, kills an unarmed suspect on purpose, whether for personal gain or due to rank racism? Can this ever be fully avoided? Sadly, probably not. After all, police officers are human, and some assuredly fit the very

profile of a severely character-disordered predator. No amount of initial screening will be able to weed out all bad actors — racists included. In a nation of 330 million people, we will likely always have a few such cases per year. But remember, if you point to those rare cases of police brutality or racist misconduct to generalize against all police officers and enthusiastically march under a banner that reads, "All Cops Are Bastards," then the bigot with the character disorder might just be you.

This essay is excerpted from The Gift of Violence: Practical Knowledge for Surviving and Thriving in a Dangerous World, which is available for purchase at these paid links: Amazon (tinyurl.com/25n4cnwz), Bookshop (tinyurl.com/58nx76u6) and Pitchstone (tinyurl.com/bdhnmdpn). Matt Thornton has been teaching functional martial arts for more than 30 years and holds a fifth-degree black belt in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. His organization, Straight Blast Gym (tinyurl.com/bddv7sdc), has more than 70 locations worldwide and has produced champion MMA fighters as well as world-class self-defense and law enforcement instructors. He lives with his wife, Salome, and their five children in Portland, Oregon.


I am grateful that Matt gave me permission to use this essay in our magazine. His book, *The Gift of Violence* referenced above is an amazing read. I can't recommend it enough.

The rumor mill at Metro can be extensive. The folks in briefing who have the loudest opinions about others' actions and whether what they did was correct or not are usually those who have never been in those situations. Please *do not* base your opinion of whether an officer was "right" or not on press conferences and statements from family or attorneys. Every event has lessons to be learned and things that could be done better, and we will get there. Let the process run its course and then learn the real lessons that will inevitably come from our fellow officers stepping into the fray and doing the best they can in split-second violent encounters.

Know that when the day chooses you, if you are a PPA member, skilled, dedicated and capable representatives will respond directly to you and stand with you no matter the public perception of the event. **VB**

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