

The BJA Executive Session on

Police Leadership

2018

The BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership is a multi-year endeavor started in 2010 with the goal of developing innovative thinking that would help create police leaders uniquely qualified to meet the challenges of a changing public safety landscape.

In support of an integrated approach to creating safe and viable communities across America, the project directors recruited 20+ principals from a range of disciplines. The principals, in turn, led national field teams of practitioners focused on the work of policing and the organization of the future.

To gain new insights on leadership, the *BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership* engaged police chiefs in documenting their own paths and invited leaders to participate in various audio and video forums to tell their stories and discuss the future of policing and police leadership.

Please visit our website, <http://bjaleader.org>, to learn more about this project and to access a broad array of interactive, multimedia resources.

The principals are supported in their work by a team that includes project co-directors Darrel W. Stephens and Nancy McKeon.

Charleston Must Take a Stand Against Hatred and Violence¹

by
Luther Reynolds

Having just returned from a 10-day trip to Israel, I would like to share my reflections and perspective on recent experiences, how I think Charleston is doing many things right and why I feel strongly about speaking out against those who bully and spread hate.

During my trip, I met with members of the Israeli community, officers of the National Police Force and representatives of other public safety entities. Sadly, having experienced decades of hate-fueled, anti-Semitic violence directed at innocents of all kinds, including women, children and the elderly, they had much hard-won wisdom to share.

In speaking with them, I learned firsthand that much of this hate is rooted in thousands of years of complex and painful historical events. This lesson was soon driven home even more forcefully when I visited the Holocaust mu-

¹ Reynolds, L. (2018) "Charleston Must Take a Stand Against Hatred and Violence." *The Post and Courier*, Nov 3, 2018.

seum, which movingly told the story of the premeditated murder of more than 6 million Jews. These deaths were perpetrated through hateful rhetoric and lies against innocent people who were fundamentally indistinguishable from my own wife, children, parents and friends.

It is critically important that we never forget the truth of what happened in that terrible time, as our city's own Joe Engel — an amazing and deeply honorable man who still bears the prisoner number stamped on his arm in a Nazi concentration camp — would be the first to tell you.

As a police officer for almost 30 years, I have personally witnessed my share of bullies and have learned of the hate that exists in certain segments of our communities. Racism has plagued our society for hundreds of years and continues to manifest itself in many ways through unfair treatment, discrimination, unkindness and violence.

As a city, Charleston confronted this reality three years ago with the horrific shooting at Mother Emanuel. Rather than having its intended divisive effect, this tragedy brought the Charleston community closer and sparked an important dialogue regarding our city's shared and, at times, painful history.

It is because of responses like this, and the healing that it promotes, that I encourage members of our community to continue taking strides to increase their knowledge and fundamental understanding of our history with regard to past and ongoing atrocities against innocent members of our society.

I encourage them to speak with marginalized members of our society and to listen to their stories of being bullied, taunted, cursed at, called names and assaulted, for no reason but for their appearance, their religious beliefs or their sexual identity.

As I continue to grow through age and life experience, I acknowledge that cases of deep-seated hatred and intolerance are not easily resolved, and can never be erased.

Regardless of the compassion displayed in the aftermath, events like those endured in Charleston and, most recently, in Pittsburgh, leave lasting scars on communities. While we can never undo the pain that is inflicted, we as a community must take a firm stand against displays of hatred and violence in every corner of our society.

As community leaders, we must stand in solidarity and commit ourselves to building bridges, finding solutions, and helping others in tangible ways. When we encounter anything that resembles hate language or bullying — whether targeted at our African American, Jewish or LGBTQ community — we must take action to address it, and teach our children to do the same.

Mayor John Tecklenburg, members of Charleston City Council and our citizens demonstrate this shared purpose through their continued outreach efforts and displays of solidarity, such as the vigil last Sunday night in support of Pittsburgh's Jewish community.

The police department joins them in these efforts, and will continue to have a visible presence in all places of worship, including our community's mosques, churches, and synagogues, not only as a measure of protection, but as a show of support and partnership with Charleston's faith-based community.

I am thankful to be a part of this great community and urge all of its members to continue to work actively to educate and support one another, and to protect each other from those who might seek to do them harm.

I am filled with respect and gratitude when I see the citizens of Charleston unite — an effort that I am confident will continue to make us the greatest place to live, worship, work and lead lives that produce fruits beyond expectations.

This paper is part of the “Leader of the Future” initiative of the BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership.

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The author is Luther Reynolds, Charleston (SC) Police Department Chief of Police.

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