

The Guardian's Voice

NEWSLETTER

Volume Six – Issue One

Fall 2019



Black and Blue – Healing the Wounds Between Police and Citizens

North Haven, CT

(Hosted by the New Haven Guardians Association)

Previews for This Issue

Editor's Perspective	2
Chairman's Corner	4
2019 National Conference	6
Upcoming Events	7
Black and Blue: Healing the Wounds Between Police and Citizens	8
Conference Picture Pages	10
On Your Shoulders, We Stand: Rochelle G. Bilal	14
Law Enforcement Family	21
Children of Courage Scholarship	22
Newark Bronze Shields	24
In Memory Of	26
What's Been Happening?	27
Newsletter Submission	28
Recommended Reading	28
Membership and Renewal	28



(From left to right) **Superintendent Lisa R. Holmes**, Boston (MA) P.D., **Deputy Commissioner Dr. Tracie L. Keese**, NYPD, **Undersheriff Francine Shelton**, Hudson County (NJ) Sheriff's Office, **Detective Kim Nelson-Edwards**, Montclair (NJ) P.D., and **Lieutenant Shari DeShields-Russell** (retired), Rhode Island State Police, participated in NABLEO's Education and Training Conference, on October 10 - 12, 2018, in North Haven, CT. They served on the panel titled **Have Police Sexual Misconduct Escaped the #METOO Movement?** "This was a very enlightening and powerful panel discussion"

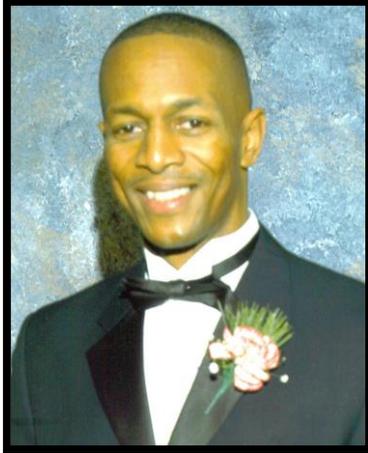
Shawn C. Kennedy

Editor

Contributors

Rochelle Bilal Levi Holmes II Crystal Williams-Coleman Charles Wilson
Members-At-Large

Editor's Perspective



Domestic Violence in the Workplace

Any police officer, who has spent time working in the field, knows and understands how prevalent domestic incidents are and how volatile it can turn. Each time you're dispatched to a domestic call, your adrenalin level increases because of the stress involved with the unpredictability that is inherent with domestic incidents. Even if the dispatcher informs you the caller simply wants someone removed from the home, the offender has already left the scene, or weapons are unknown, your experience kicks in with various possible scenarios – the offender will not leave willingly without a fight, the offender returns upon your arrive, or there is a firearm in the home the caller is unaware of. Officers understand they are required to maintain the upper hand and be in control of the situation, simply for their own safety. Depending upon where you work, it's possible you may respond to more than one domestic incident daily during your tour of duty.

Because police officers respond to so many domestic incidents from working in the field, it is understandable how we oftentimes do not think about the possibility of a fellow officer as a victim of domestic violence, let alone an offender. We sometimes forget that we come from the same general population as everyone else – equipped with the same problems, life experiences, idiosyncrasies, addictions, stress, etc. During the month of October, which is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, it's the perfect time to reflect how domestic violence infiltrates the personal lives' of many men and women in the law enforcement industry.

It would be uninformed of an officer to assume a fellow officer could not be a victim of domestic violence, assuming the fellow officer would handle their personal domestic incident in the same manner as he or she would handle a domestic incident in the field. Domestic violence is about power and control. The same dynamics are involved whether it's physical or sexual violence, coercion, intimidation, emotional or mental abuse, psychological games or threats. (Refer to the [Power and Control Wheel](#) from the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence.) So why would an officer, who is authorized to carry a firearm and has most likely handled hundreds of domestic incidents in the field, be a victim of domestic violence herself or himself? Why might this same officer choose to suffer in silence because he or she is reluctant to seek assistance by calling the police?

One reason is the police victim might not want the "police" in their business. The police victim may feel if the "police" is called into their situation, the police victim might be looked upon as being weak and not able to control their own situation at home. This may be a real perception for a female police victim – concerned with how her peers and supervisors may now treat her. This perception can be even more

prevalent if the police victim is a male officer – who may feel seeking help is a direct question of his masculinity and his inability to have control over a situation. Domestic violence does not take into consideration your occupation. Do you feel it would be any easier for a police victim in a same sex relationship to reach out for help? Not if the offender is using threats to “out” the police victim to his/her fellow officers. These are some of the same dynamics involved when an officer is reluctant to reach out for assistance for mental illness. The officer is overly concerned with how their fellow officers will treat them and how their supervisors will now view them. The perception to the police victim can be so powerful, it can become their reality and can prevent them from seeking help.

In today's police climate, many agencies are becoming more proactive in the wellness of their officers. Domestic violence is a real issue for police officer victims, and directly affects their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. Domestic Violence Awareness Month (October) is the perfect time to start having the interactive dialogue with police officers. Yes, officers are taught the policy and laws regarding responding to domestic incidents and their responsibility to protect the victim. It is understood an officer should know the same provisions apply to them as a police officer victim. That's not enough. Law enforcement agencies should be proactive and have directed communication to officers regarding officers as victims. This should include a discussion of the dynamics of domestic violence, remedies, and a policy in which an officer will not feel penalized for reaching out for assistance. This communication should be extended to police recruits in the police academy. Because of my experience investigating domestic violence as a Detective in the Detective Division and conducting outreach while working in the Domestic Violence Program, I have had officer and recruit victims referred to me based on their reluctance to seek help. Several recruits were suffering in silence as domestic violence victims because they were erroneously informed if they made an outcry of domestic violence, they would be fired based on an investigation being opened. Of course that was ridiculous and inaccurate, but their belief in what was told to them was enough to keep them from initially making an outcry. I have also had tenured police officers who were reluctant to the “police” getting into their business and how they may now be looked upon by their fellow officers and bosses. After explaining how the same domestic violence protections for citizens also applied to them – something they already knew – came the candid conversation of how they deserved more than just suffering in silence; how their fellow officers and supervisors would close rank to ensure the safety of the victim officer; and how important it was to document each incident, even if the police victim did not want to pursue criminal charges yet. I have witnessed judges being merciless with police victims of domestic violence based on no prior documentation – because of the expectation the police officer should know better.

Law enforcement agencies should also enforce a “no tolerance” policy for officers who are domestic violence offenders. The policy should be progressive but fair regarding the due process of an officer, who might be a victim of false allegations. Sometimes the couples involved are both police officers, one the victim and one the offender. (Refer to the [Model Policy](#) of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), which also reference police offenders.) For immediate assistance, call 911. If you would like further information regarding domestic violence, contact the [National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799- SAFE \(7233\) or 800-787-3224 for TTY](#). Also check your respective state Department of Labor for its equivalence to the Illinois Victim's Economic Security and Safety Act (VESSA), which in summary, allows a victim of domestic violence, up to twelve weeks unpaid leave in any twelve month period, to address issues arising from the violence. VESSA has several distinct advantages over using Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), refer to this [VESSA Manual](#) on page nine (internal document page seven) for more employee rights.

Shawn C. Kennedy
National Information Officer

Chairman's Corner



To the Membership of NABLEO and Our Community Partners

Today, more than ever, we face increasing challenges that must be met with personal forthrightness, organizational excellence, professional fortitude, and a more personalized commitment to both our association and our community.

We must constantly consider the success not only of **NABLEO**, but our community, our profession and our membership, as a journey to be embarked upon together, rather than a destination to be individually led to. And we must ensure that we take this journey with ample provisioning of ourselves and our journey-mates, a strong resolve and an emboldened spirit, as to do otherwise will make our journey longer and more difficult in its passage.

We must continue to fight the scourge of racial profiling, regardless of its perpetrators, be they white or black, as it is a rampant epidemic in communities of color across the country, not just within the confines of those states which comprise our core membership. We can ill afford to remain silent when we view these incidents, as our silence does nothing but buy someone else time to determine how better to undermine our efforts and further erode our rights. ***So speak up, stand up, and be both counted and recognized.***

We must violently fight the scourge of complacency amongst our own ranks, as it is this complacency which will bring about our own downfall. We must constantly and continuously be mindful that, though battles have been fought, and indeed some have been won, the war continues. Until equality of treatment becomes the premier concept and thought of the land, we must continue to fight for its implementation and out-right acceptance.

We must attempt in every way and means possible to eradicate the violence that permeates our neighborhoods, particularly as it pertains to our youth. Too many young, aspiring souls have been taken away from us because of the fallacy that an argument is best decided with the pull of a trigger. We must more affirmatively address this disease for the sickness it is and find an immediate, long-term cure.

Our local organizations must do more to encourage their membership, particularly their younger members, to become actively involved in the workings of the organization, as it is only through active participation in our programs and community works that the true impact of the organization may be felt. And remember, **WITHOUT MEMBERSHIP, THERE IS NO**

ORGANIZATION! WE MUST STAND TOGETHER as a collective force, rather than be picked apart as sporadic pockets of resistance.

We must encourage others to follow in our footsteps and take our profession as their own. It is only from the inside that the systemic errors and faults of our profession can be corrected, and not from voicing complaints, no matter how strongly or righteously, from the outside. And we must ourselves aspire to higher positions of rank and authority, as it is only from those positions that change may be affirmatively made which will impact dynamically the services of our professional counterparts.

We must educate those we work beside, so that, at least in performance of their duties, they conduct themselves as we do. While we must acknowledge that their attitudes towards us will likely not change, we must more positively impact their behaviors. And we must forever cast away the bindings of the “*Blue Wall of Silence*”. We must not, cannot, and **will not** continue to “*go along just to get along!*” **BECAUSE WE MUST ALWAYS REMEMBER – WE ARE STRONG BLACK MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE ENTERED THIS PROFESSION TO MAKE POSITIVE CHANGES IN OUR PROFESSION – NOT JUST BLACK PEOPLE WHO WEAR A BLUE UNIFORM.**

And we must never forget the efforts and achievements of those who came before us, because it was those strong black men and women who provided us the means and ability to be where we are now. We must always remember those who have gone on before us. We must prove to be their legacy.

And so I challenge you to do everything in your power to affect positive change in the way our presence is felt in the community. I challenge you to make dynamic and lasting changes in the way our profession interacts with those who look like us. And I challenge you to stand up, instead of continuing to silently sit by the wayside.

Amandla! Peace.

Charles P. Wilson
National Chairman

**We are not makers of history.
We are made by history.**

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers (N.A.B.L.E.O.) From Warriors to Guardians: Changing the Culture of Policing Conference

October 22 – 24, 2019

Embassy Suites Hotel

9000 Bartram Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19153

Hosted By: Guardian Civic League

Registration Rate (per person) \$200 by August 31st; \$250 After August 31st
(Complete registration by October 14th)

Conference Chair – Sally Thomason
(732) 469-2690 or MZST101@aol.com

[Conference Information](#)

WORKSHOPS

Fair and Impartial Policing Through Understanding Implicit Bias
After The Bang – Anatomy of a Fatal Use of Force
Has Police Sexual Misconduct Escaped The #METOO Movement?
What To Do When Stopped By The Police?
Officer Wellness – Everyone's Responsibility
Retirement: Life After Police Work
Executive Leadership and Supervisory Responsibility
Criminal Justice Reform From a Prosecutorial Perspective
Active Shooter: Special Presentation
Breaking the Silence on Law Enforcement Suicides
Safer Neighborhoods for Stronger Communities
Eliminating Micro-Aggressions to Enhance Police-Community Engagement
Human Trafficking and Its Impact in the Community: Vulnerability, Impact and Action

Upcoming Events

IACP 126th Annual Conference and Exposition

Hosted By: International Association of Chiefs of Police

October 26-29, 2019

McCormick Place West

2301 S. Indiana Avenue

Chicago, IL 60616

[Website Event Information](#)

MTA Police Guardians 5th Annual Awards Dinner

Presented By: MTA Police Guardians

Friday, November 1, 2019

7:00 PM – 12:00 AM

Leonards Palazzo

555 Northern Blvd.

Great Neck, NY 11021

Cost: \$100

Contact: Ed Meggett

(917) 304-2500

[Event Flier](#)

45th Anniversary Awards Dinner Dance and Scholarship Fundraiser

Presented By: NY Grand Council of Guardians

Friday, November 22, 2019

6:30 PM – 12:00 AM

Floral Terrace

250 Jericho Turnpike

Floral Park, NY

Ticket: \$110

Contact: thecouncilnys@hotmail.com

[Event Flier](#)

Black and Blue – Healing the Wounds Between Police and Citizens

NABLEO's 2018 Fall Conference took place on October 10 - 12, 2017 in North Haven, CT. It was hosted by the [New Haven Guardians Association](#). Charles Wilson, National Chairman of NABLEO, gave the welcoming address. Workshops included: *Has Police Sexual Misconduct Escaped the #METOO Movement?* (moderator: **Deputy Commissioner Dr. Tracie Keese**, New York City P.D., panel: **Superintendent Lisa R. Holmes**, Boston, MA P.D., **Undersheriff Francine Shelton**, Hudson County, NJ Sheriff's Office, **Detective Kim Nelson-Edwards**, Montclair, NJ P.D., and retired **Lieutenant Shari DeShields-Russell**, Rhode Island State Police); *The Good Cop: Knowing the Difference Between Lawful or Effective Policing and Rightful Policing – And Why it Matters* (presenter: **Professor Tracey Meares**, Yale University Law School); *Problems in Stimulating Community Involvement in Community Policing* (presenter: retired **Sergeant Shafiq R.F. Abdussabur**, New Haven, CT P.D.); *Project Longevity: Empowering the Community to Save Lives* (presenter: **Chief Anthony Campbell**, New Haven, CT P.D.); *“Warriors vs. Guardians”: Recruiting and Training Officers Who Are Suited to the Mission of Policing* (presenter: **Investigator Elliot T. Boyce**, New York State Police); *Prevention of Police Misconduct Through Ethical Decision Making* (presenter: retired **Chief Daryl Roberts**, Hartford, CT P.D.); *Responding to Veterans and Police Officers in Crisis* (presenter: **Detective Autumn Edwards**, Yonkers, NY P.D.; and *The Importance of Front-Line Supervisors* (presenter: **Sergeant Shawn Kennedy**, Chicago Police Department).

The workshop titled *“Has Police Sexual Misconduct Escaped the #METOO Movement?”* was very eloquently presented by a panel of distinguished women in law enforcement. It was enlightening to hear a woman's perspective of sexual misconduct and sexual harassment in the workplace. In sharing their personal stories, it was easy to understand how sexism is embedded in the police culture. Many women are treated and feel like they joined a “boy's club” when they joined their respective police agency. Workplace sexual harassment and misconduct can be exacerbated when issues arise for female vs. blacks vs. LGBTQ officers. In order to adequately address issues of sexual misconduct within law enforcement, there has to be change in the organizational culture. Agencies need to develop policies and safe spaces for officers to feel comfortable to come forward. Change begins with a change in policy. Some male bosses may hope the #METOO movement goes away. The perspective of female millennials is quite different from their female predecessors, and rightly so. Evolutionary change may be seen in simplistic ways. Uniform options are no longer designed to only accommodate men, such as a pair of pants and the vest. One of the takeaways from the panel discussion was, “What do you want to tell leaders regarding sexual misconduct in the workplace?” One response was to ensure victims feel safe in reporting incidents. The information has to be safe and not shared throughout the department. The victim must not be ostracized for reporting an incident. The second response was that agencies need to support their officers. Leaders have to set the tone for their department. It should not just be about implementing policy; it's about holding individuals accountable. (The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) published an [Executive Guide](#) regarding Addressing Sexual Offenses and Misconduct by Law Enforcement.)

The Good Cop: Knowing the Difference Between Lawful or Effective Policing and Rightful Policing – And Why it Matters workshop focused on the concepts of procedural justice and legitimacy. Agencies do not always focus on constitutional dictates such as 4th amendment rights (incursion on a person's liberty) and crime fighting by reducing crime by violating citizens' rights. An agency's policing strategy should be lawful policing. Lawful ideas can include outcome of favorability/fairness, quality of decision making (neutrality), and quality of treatment. Four factors of

procedural justice (legitimacy) includes voice, neutrality, quality of treatment (respect people's rights), and trust in integrity of legal authority. This presentation included group and open discussion.

Problems in Stimulating Community Involvement in Community Policing workshop was a free-style presentation due to technical problems with the PowerPoint. The presenter told many jokes which turned the presentation into a high-energy humorous learning experience. The presenter told how he trained international operatives for the Department of Homeland Security. He also discussed community initiatives titled "Cops and Coffee" and "Cops and Pizza".

Project Longevity: Empowering the Community to Save Lives workshop was candid with real conversation. The presenter's mother was a retired correctional officer and his father was incarcerated for selling drugs and died at the age of 40. His presentation included moral engagement, swift consequences, encourage members to leave gangs, deterrence, the damage done to families and communities due to mass incarceration, gang "call-ins" (included 20 members from various police agencies, as well as clergy), gang violence reduction strategy, and custom notifications (send a letter/knock on the door), just to name a few.

Prevention of Police Misconduct Through Ethical Decision Making workshop focused on ethics and leadership in policing. Several topics covered included how children are losing their interpersonal skills due to social media and technology, gratuity, how a leader make the position and not the other way around, ethics in policing begins with excellence in your character, and what is morally correct. Officers should understand that using police discretion is plain common sense. Leadership principles include respect the rights of others, honor your word, honesty, take responsibility for your actions, act in the best interest of those you serve, help others in need, and be fair, firm and consistent. The presenter's mantra was "success is never final."

Warriors vs. Guardians: Recruiting and Training Officers Who Are Suited to the Mission of Policing workshop was very enlightening. It provided candid examples of the warriors vs. guardians' mindset and how everyone is not a good candidate for policing in today climate.

The workshops ***Responding to Veterans and Police Officers in Crisis***, and ***The Importance of Front-Line Supervisors*** both contained a central focus on how to respond to and how to take ownership for officer wellness. Mental illness, police suicide, PTSD, cumulative stress, and the stress of everyday life were discussed.

These are only brief descriptions of some of our workshops. It is always a very positive network opportunity to interact with our law enforcement counterparts across the country. The conference ended with an awards ceremony. **Mayor Toni Harp** (New Haven, CT), received the Community Policing Award; **Chief Anthony Campbell** (New Haven, CT P.D.) received the Law Enforcement Leadership Award; **Chief Patrick Ridenour** (Danbury, CT P.D.) and **Chief Vernon Riddick** (West Hartford, CT P.D.) both received the Community Policing Award; **Chief Ronnell Higgins** (Yale University) received the Community Service Award; and **Sergeant Shawn Kennedy** (Chicago, IL P.D.) received the President's Award. These recipients were also presented with a separate Certificate of Special Recognition from both **Senator Richard Blumenthal**, Connecticut, and from **Congresswoman Rosa L. DeLauro**, 3rd Congressional District – Connecticut. The remainder of the evening consisted of drinking, conversations with new and old friends, and a lot of dancing, which also included a very soulful and energetic Soul Train Line. (Yes, I have video.)

Black and Blue – Healing the Wounds Between Police and Citizens Picture Page (Workshops)



Black and Blue – Healing the Wounds Between Police and Citizens Picture Page (Workshops)



Black and Blue – Healing the Wounds Between Police and Citizens Picture Page (Workshops & Award Ceremony)



Black and Blue – Healing the Wounds Between Police and Citizens Picture Page (Workshops & Award Ceremony)



On Your Shoulders, We Stand

Rochelle G. Bilal

Police Officer (retired)
Philadelphia Police Department

Interviewed by Shawn Kennedy
(August 27, 2019)



If someone asked me to describe Rochelle in three words, I would have to select “courageous, committed, and advocate.” Rochelle is the type of individual who I believe would never feel comfortable “going along just to get along.” Rochelle has no problem bucking the status quo if she feels there is some level of disparate treatment towards a group of individuals. As we live our lives, we will become privy to some level of injustice, whether it’s sexual harassment in the workplace, implicit bias, institutional racism, racial profiling or the killing of unarmed black men at the hands of police officers. Many individuals will discuss and even complain about these injustices among one another, whispers behind closed doors or in the comfort of our homes. But very few of us would be willing to take a stance and voice our concerns on a much more visible platform. Not Rochelle. She would have no problem publicly speaking out regarding injustice. Rochelle didn’t only talk the talk, she also walked the walk. Rochelle is truly a trailblazer and an advocate for the voiceless. Some individuals may look at Rochelle as a shrewd fighter but I look at her as a very compassionate advocate who is not afraid speak out. It’s interesting how some of the traits Rochelle possesses would be misinterpreted as aggressive, but those same traits in a male would be interpreted as assertive. There is still a double standard women face when compared to men in the same arena.

Rochelle is no novice when it comes to filing a lawsuit but she is smart enough to tap into the unified power her organizations provides, for a stronger and more collective foundation. Organizations like the Guardian Civic League, which she has served as the President for many years. Other organizations Rochelle has been active with includes the National Black Police Association (NBPA), the National Association for the Advancement for Colored People (NAACP), and the National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers (NABLEO), to name a few.

Rochelle also has a very active presence in her community. Her organization Guardian Civic League hosts an annual Summer Enrichment Program for the youth. Based on her many contributions, Rochelle has received many accolades over the years for her committed involvement with the community. Some recent accolades include being awarded the Unity Community Center 2018 Honoree for Outstanding Historical Achievements (Nov. 2018) and the Ida B. Wells Award for Excellence in Law Enforcement C.C.N.B.P.A. (March 2019).



I had the pleasure of meeting Rochelle in the mid-1990s. She was a member of the Guardian Civic League (GCL) in Philadelphia and I was a member of the Guardians in Chicago. Our membership in our respective local organization allowed us the benefit of a dual membership in the National Black Police Association (NBPA). We met at our national conference in Detroit, MI. This was my first exposure to meeting so many African American police officers, in one place, who came from cities across the country and abroad. To say how “geeked” I was would be an understatement. Although there were hundreds of officers of color present, Rochelle stood out, in particular, during the national business meeting. I watched how outspoken she was and how members of GCL caucused among one another and with the many other local chapters which made up their regional chapter. I was very impressed. Over the years, we would run into each other at other conferences. Rochelle was always willing to assist other organizations with strategy, information, organizational experience, and sharing her network of individuals. One individual Rochelle helped, who stands out, is Virginia Griffin-Cunningham. She was the Chairperson of the Midwest Coalition of African American Officers – Detroit (MCAAPO) and a sworn officer with the Wayne County Sheriff Department in Detroit, MI. Rochelle is just that type of person. If I ever needed assistance in Chicago, I know I could simply pick up the phone and call Rochelle for valuable assistance and guidance. I have love and respect for Rochelle. On May 21, 2019, Rochelle won the Democratic nomination in the primary election for Sheriff of Philadelphia. Since there is no Republican challenger for the November election, Rochelle will most likely be the first woman elected as Sheriff in their 181 year history. In my book, Rochelle is already a winner!

SK: What is your name?

RB: Rochelle G. Bilal

SK: Are you married, single, divorced, widowed, etc.?

RB: Divorced

SK: How many children do you have and what are their ages?

RB: I have one daughter, age 32. I helped raise my nephew Quincy, 39 and I have six stepsons.

- SK: What law enforcement agency did you worked for?
RB: I worked for the Philadelphia Police Department for 27 years.
- SK: What year did you join the Philadelphia Police Department and what year did you retired?
RB: I joined the department in 1986 and retired in 2013.
- SK: Did you work for any other law enforcement agency?
RB: Yes, the Colwyn Borough.
- SK: If so, describe what positions you held and your experience?
RB: I was the Public Safety Director of Colwyn Borough and responsible for the Police Department and the volunteer Fire Department. My experience in this position was good with the community. I developed programs to work with the community and developed departmental policies for police officers. The political situation was a rough one. The Republicans and Democrats were always fighting with each other. They attempted to lock me up for doing my job. The end of this story, I sued them and won.
- SK: While you were a police officer with the Philadelphia Police Department, were you ever call the “n-word”, to your face by either a citizen or another member of your police department?
RB: No, but I established early in my career that saying the “n-word” to me or anyone else of color would be a problem for them.
- SK: What positions did women of color hold in the Philadelphia Police Department when you joined and when you retired?
RB: They held less positions of rank when I joined but more by the time I left because when I joined the department, I was part of a lawsuit to hire more black and brown people to the department. The Guardian Civic League played a big part in helping members study to get promoted, and they were promoted. So by the time I retired, we had a woman Deputy Police Commissioner and more.
- SK: What specialized units and assignments did you work while at the Philadelphia Police Department during your tenure?
RB: I was assigned to investigative units after my five years in patrol. I worked in the Juvenile Aide Division (known as J.A.D.), Sex Crimes Unit, and High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (H.I.D.T.A.), which is a taskforce consisting of the Philadelphia Police Department (PPD), Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).
- SK: Did you take any promotional examinations?
RB: Yes
- SK: What police organizations did you belong to during your tenure with the Philadelphia Police Department?
RB: Guardian Civic League, National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE), National Organization of Black Women in Law Enforcement (NOBWLE), National Black Police Association (NBPA), Cops and Citizens for Justice, and National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers (NABLEO).

- SK: What positions did you hold in these police organizations?
RB: Virtually all positions from President, Vice Chair, Executive Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and just a member. I saw the need to not only be a member of these organizations but to also be a worker.
- SK: Describe the benefits you gained from networking while you were a member of these various police organizations?
RB: The benefits I've gained from being a part of these organizations have helped me get to where I am today. The educational component of attending conferences and the networking from the people who I've met, who I have always been able to reach out to when I needed some help. It helped guide me in the right direction, and assisted me in my professional development. There has not been a conference I have attended that I did not take an idea back to my organization to help it grow. The benefits also helped me to fight against those in these institutions who wanted to continue to try and keep us down. The benefits have been the support system and the lifelong real friends I have met. Don't leave out the traveling part. Meeting people from other cities and countries is priceless.
- SK: Where are some of the places you have traveled to attend police conferences and tell me about some of the friendships you made along your journey?
RB: I have traveled to Jamaica, Florida, Arkansas, Chicago, Los Angeles, New Jersey, Connecticut, Canada, New Orleans, etc. I can't remember all of the places but the lifelong friends I have gained are priceless.
- SK: What are some of the civic organizations you have belong to?
RB: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).
- SK: What are some of you work you have done with your community?
RB: Community outreach, Adopt-A-School for holiday giveaways, back to school book bag giveaways, career day events, conducted "What to Do When Stopped by the Police?" presentations at many churches and community events, and protested with the community against unarmed black males being shot by the police. I supported the community against racist Facebook posts. I also worked with many community organizations to help build relations with the police.
- SK: How long have you been the President of the Guardian Civic League?
RB: Since June 2007, for 12 years.
- SK: What are some of the biggest accomplishments of the Guardian Civic League?
RB: Before me, the biggest accomplishment was suing the city for the unfair hiring practice, which put a consent decree in place to ensure more black people were hired into police force. I was included in that count. The Guardian Civic League also established study classes to help members get promoted up the ranks. Under my leadership, we established "Steer Straight Program" at the police academy, which allows the GCL to address every graduating class at the police academy on what could cost them their career. We also established community outreach programs: Adopt-A-School, book bag giveaways, and toy drives. We also initiated the lawsuit that shut down a racist police force-driven website called "Dome Lights". We won the lawsuit and helped developed the Internet policy for the Philadelphia Police Department.
- SK: Have you ever experienced racism from the police, as a citizen or an African American police officer?

- RB: Yes, when I first came into the police department while in the academy. To keep it short, I was in driver training as a cadet, in line waiting for my turn to go on the course. There was a white female classmate in front of me. She said she did not want to ride with new cadets who just got their license. The white male instructor told her it was okay and to get in the next car. When the next car came, she got in and drove away. Now I'm next. When the next car came up, I told the same instructor I didn't want to ride with the cadets who just got their license. The same white male instructor told me I was disobeying an order and he was going to have me thrown out of the academy. It so happened a black supervisor asked me what happened. Once I told him, he said I was not going anywhere. I have been calling him my "police father" ever since.
- SK: What are some of the major differences you see today with law enforcement as compared to when you joined the police force?
- RB: There is a bigger move with police departments with community policing programs than when I came on the job. There are more police civic organizations stepping up and speaking out on issues dealing with police shootings against unarmed black males. There are more community outreach programs initiated by police officers, on and off duty, than when I first joined the police force. We still need to do more.
- SK: What changes have you seen in the effectiveness of police organizations today as compared to when you first became a member?
- RB: To be honest, I don't see as much now as I saw when I first got involved. I think some of us think we have arrived and see no need to keep the pressure on. I got involved because I saw the black civic organizations speaking up, standing up, and putting programs in place to make a difference. Now, I see a lot more of the "crabs in the barrel" syndrome. There are more clashes of personalities than focusing on the mission. I think we need to go back to the basics and renew our mission statements and encourage our young officers to get involved. I'm not saying it's all of us but it's enough of us.
- SK: What do you feel is the importance of joining a police association to network?
- RB: The old fashion saying – backup, strength in numbers, educating each other so we do not have to keep reinventing the wheel, and support. There will come a time when the devil will rear its ugly head and show you how "they" really feel about you, and it's not going to be that you are blue too – but that you are black. Being a part of these civic organizations is like having insurance, which means you may not need it all the time but when you do, it's there.
- SK: List how your tenure as a police officer has benefited your life?
- RB: The benefits were financial stability, educational opportunities, great health care, and pension for my family. Also lifelong friendships and the greatest opportunity to reach out to the communities in my city and make a real difference.
- SK: List how your tenure as a police officer has not been a benefit in your life?
- RB: The only thing I can think of is when I spoke out against my colleagues who I felt was doing wrong, the attack on me hurt my family. The attempts to slander my character pushed me to sue members of my own organization, which I won. Those are the only times I felt that if I wasn't in law enforcement, that would have never happened.
- SK: Has being a police officer negatively affected your family life?
- RB: No, for the most part.

- SK: While you were a sworn member of the Philadelphia Police Department, did you feel you experienced bias more so because of your ethnicity or your gender?
- RB: Yes, based on my race during some points of my career.
- SK: You ran for Sheriff of Philadelphia and won the primary election. What inspired you to run for an elected office?
- RB: I realized politics affect all of our lives, some for the good and some for the not so good. My spirit has been moving me to do more. My city is hurting. When you have 27% poverty, homes are being taken, communities are being devastated and the people we elected to help, just wasn't helping. I was inspired to do more for my city. Being an elective official is one of the ways to try to get some things done to help families and communities.
- SK: Describe the experience you feel you're bringing to the table and what has that process been like?
- RB: I bring my 27 years in law enforcement, my experience as a Public Safety Director, and my 12 year experience running the largest police civic, non-profit organization in the city. My experience is now being brought into this political arena. It's challenging but I have always been ready and willing to challenges in my life.
- SK: What message would you like to give to young officers today?
- RB: To be the change you would like to see in law enforcement. Treat people like you would want someone to treat your family member. Remember the people you come across have probably dealt with some type of trauma in their lives. Never live off your overtime because if you do, it may lead you to corruption.
- SK: If you had an opportunity to relive your career again, what would you change if anything?
- RB: Nothing, I think God took me on my paths for a reason, good or bad. I've learned a lot.
- SK: What words of wisdom would you like to share with police organizations of today?
- RB: Take you egos out of your support of the organizations. Focus on the mission as to why these organizations were formed. If you believe in God, fear should not be in your vocabulary if you are doing the right thing.
- SK: What is your fondest memory in law enforcement?
- RB: When I graduated from the police academy. It was the hardest thing I had ever done, at that time in my life.
- SK: What is your worst experience in law enforcement?
- RB: When I realized how unfair law enforcement institutions are to black and brown people.
- SK: Do you have any regrets in your career choice?
- RB: No.
- SK: What is the biggest impact you feel you had on either the Philadelphia Police Department or the community?
- RB: You can be a police officer and make a difference inside the system. You can be an example to the community you were raised in. You can stay true to yourself and really serve your community. You can speak truth to power and withstand anything they throw at you.

SK: Who were some of your mentors as you rose up the ranks in the Philadelphia Police Department?

RB: Lieutenant Gilesbie, who saved my career at the driver training range; Sergeant Delacy Davis, who showed me the way to standup and speak out; Alphonso Deal, who had the courage to help start the Guardian Civic League, whose shoulders a lot of us stand on; and Howard Saffold, who provided a lot of incite to the way we fight and why black police officers should stand.

SK: What are you most proud of in your law enforcement career?

RB: The fact I was able to help stop some of the unfair treatment for not only our members, but especially for our communities. I will continue to be that person until I die.

SK: What is the legacy you feel you left with the Philadelphia Police Department?

RB: I was never included in that all blue system. I am a black woman who wore a blue uniform and spoke truth to power.

SK: What direction do you believe the Philadelphia Police Department will be going during the next five to 10 years?

RB: This is one future I am unsure of. I hope it will continue to build those bridges between the police and its communities, and look for people to join the force who really wants to protect and serve.

SK: What three words or phrases best describes you?

RB: *Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

- In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.
- Life's most persistent and urgent question is "What are you doing for others?"

Dr. Maya Angelou

- And still I rise.



Hanging out with friends during and after the Guardian Civic League 57th Annual Scholarship Awards Dinner & Dance, on October 27, 2018, in Philadelphia, PA.

Law Enforcement Family



New Haven Guardians and NABLEO member **James Baker**, and his lovely wife **Dr. Michelle Baker**, treated NABLEO's Information Officer and Chicago native **Shawn Kennedy**, to an enjoyable and relaxing dinner at the upscale John Davenport's at the Top of the Park on October 11, 2018. The restaurant is located in the Omni New Haven Hotel at Yale. Our outing took place on the second day of NABLEO's conference in North Haven, CT. The Chicago native also had an opportunity to purchase souvenir sweatshirts from Yale University prior to dinner.



Guardian Civic League and NABLEO member **Crystal Williams-Coleman** and hubby **Alphonso**, are looking good together during GCL's 57th Annual Scholarship and Awards Dinner & Dance on October 27, 2018 in Philadelphia, PA.



Once again Chicago's finest **Officer Ronald Burrell, Jr.** (left) and **Sergeant Shawn Kennedy** (right) attends the Eagle (Nigerian) Social Club annual event, at the Hilton Hotel on December 1, 2018. This is in support of **Officer Eric O'Suoji** (center) for his continued connection with Nigerians who also came from the Mother Land.

NABLEO's Children of Courage Scholarship 2019 Winners

NABLEO's *Children of Courage" Scholarship Award* is aimed at improving the relationship between law enforcement agencies and the youth of the communities of color who they serve. This program seeks to enhance higher education opportunities among qualified high school graduates. It will provide a financial award which will afford students the opportunity to have higher educational training in the academics of law enforcement or other related areas, for the betterment of the Criminal Justice System.



Elijah Khalil Davis is just a regular 18 year old from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was actually born in Charlotte, North Carolina on October 19, 2000, to the incredible Wanda Doreen Davis. Unfortunately, Elijah has never met or seen his own father, but this has surely not set him back from what he needs to do. His very proud mother has taken care of him for 18 years, almost single-handedly. All Elijah wants to do is make her proud and buy her a house before he gets his own. Yes, sweet isn't it, but life hasn't always been so sweet, and it started out sour with a move to Philadelphia in 2000. Mom and Elijah moved back to Philly just in time for Thanksgiving. They moved in with one of his mom's youngest siblings, as a live-in nanny, who's only son was taken from her, hence pursuing an ugly custody battle. Ultimately Aunt Angie, with the help of family, won as a result of moving back and brought home cousin Charles!

Elijah began his Pre-K studies at Settlement Music School in South Philadelphia. Along with studies, he began to take piano lessons at the age of four. At a young age, Elijah learned his very unique and gifted skill of being able to hear music or beats in his head, and play them back on the instrument. He later quit lessons and taught himself how to take on the master craft of learning the piano. Today, he teaches piano to three students, one six-year old girl, one 45-year old woman and his now best friend, 15-year old, autistic male named Trey Williams. From kindergarten to fifth grade, Elijah attended Philadelphia Performing Arts Charter School, which is now referred to as String Theory, located downtown at 16th and Vine. Kids being kids and not wanting to change, Elijah was enthusiastic on staying at PPACS and continuing his studies and fun of French, ballet and chorus, but his mother saw an opportunity that was too hard to pass up. After a bunch of calls, visits and a summer program, and stepping stones, Elijah attended William Penn Charter School during his sixth grade year.

Today, he is a proud graduate of Penn Charter and will be attending Morehouse College, a prominent, private Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) in Atlanta, Georgia. Currently, his major is undecided, but we would love to see Elijah pursue his passion for acting and theatre. He has been on the stage numerous times performing arts like *The Laramie Project*, *Les Misérables* and even appearing on PECO billboards and Kramer's School Edition Books. Since a young age, Elijah has loved being in the spotlight, but never took away anyone else's shine. His mother, his church, Mother Bethel AME, and his community, are very proud of Elijah and cannot wait to see the great things he will do along his journey of life.

His winning essay was entitled [*Blue or Black, They're Still Just Colors*](#).

NABLEO's Children of Courage Scholarship 2019 Winners



Katelynn Young grew up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and attended Friends Select School. During school, she took many art classes and submitted multiple pieces of jewelry and other glass creations to the Scholastics Art and Writing Competition, and won multiple honorable mentions and a silver key. During her senior year, she received an internship with the Fabric Workshop and Museum. She helped lead workshops on teaching children and seniors how to screen print and about the truce flags from the civil war. She also talked to other high school students about finding internships and college application tips. Katelynn was in various clubs and committees, one being the Black Student Union. In the clubs, she utilized her time to help promote change in her community by bringing forth issues that students of color face on their campus. Another club Katelynn was very involved in was the Helping Hands Club. She performed many charitable work and helped raise money for many organizations.

When Katelynn isn't in school, she enjoys playing squash. She was captain of her school team for two years and has won various awards. Aside from squash, she is also very passionate about giving back to the community. She has volunteered with various organizations including the Bethesda Project, American Red Cross, and Glory Unlimited Ministries, where she took a trip to Puerto Rico to help people who were affected by the hurricane. She helped by working in a medical clinic so people could get the medicines they needed, and also care packages with water, lights, canned foods, and other essential things they might have needed. She also enjoys traveling and learning new things. During the spring break of her senior year, she went on an exchange trip to Germany and stayed with a host family. She had the opportunity to exchange many different cultural experiences with the students at the Phorms School and also learned to step out of her comfort zone.

In the fall, Katelynn will be attending Dickinson College where she wants to study forensic science, diversity studies, and computer science. She hopes to one day be able to create programs to be involved in STEM and help bring more diversity and inclusion in workplaces. She knows the science departments in law enforcement and having a more diverse workplace, will help benefit these places tremendously. She knows this is a very big dream but with hard work, she believes she will be able to accomplish anything.

Her winning essay was entitled [*Hitting Diversity at the Roots*](#).

Newark Bronze Shields



Newark Bronze Shields are building relationships at the Nigerian Consulate in New York City.



Newark Bronze Shields attends the Association of Caribbean Chiefs of Police Conference, in the Grand Cayman Islands (May 2019).



Newark Bronze Shields, New York Giants, Rutgers University, and Mayor Ras Baraka (Newark, NJ) partner to donate \$30,000 to three Newark high school football teams for new equipment.

Newark Bronze Shields



Newark Bronze Shields Annual Scholarship Dinner (March 2019). There were 600 attendees who helped NBS to support their youth. NBS has donated \$140,000 since 2000.



Newark Bronze Shields is promoting physical fitness by participating in Mayor Ras Baraka's 3K run.



Newark Bronze Shields created its own police recruitment program, which registered 328 individuals. The five phases take place before the academy begins, which includes orientation, physical fitness, civil service prep course, CPR certification and firearms training. The program took place on August 14th and 17th, 2019. NBS partnered with Mayor Ras Baraka and the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) Department of Public Safety.

In Memory

Officer Paul Escamilla, a 17-year veteran of the Chicago Police Department, took his own life off-duty on September 16, 2019. He was 40 years old.

Retired Detective Shelby Lanier, of the Louisville Metro Police Department (KY), passed away on March 24, 2019. He was instrumental in a successful racial discrimination lawsuit against his police department, which resulted in the hiring and promotion of more black officers and a \$4.7 million settlement to 96 black applicants who were denied a job. Shelby was a founding member and President of the Black Police Officers Organization and President of the NAACP – Louisville Chapter. Shelby was 82 years old.

Detective Eric Conciardi, a 16-year veteran of the Chicago Police Department, took his own life off-duty on March 10, 2019. He was 44 years old.

Sergeant Lori Rice, a 21-year veteran of the Chicago Police Department, allegedly took her own life off-duty on February 2, 2019. She was 47 years old.

Officer Dane Smith, a six-year active member of the Chicago Police Department, took his own life off-duty on January 1, 2019. He was 36 years old.

Officers Eduardo Marmolejo and Conrad Charles Gary, who both had less than three years with the Chicago Police Department, were killed on-duty after being struck by a train, while responding to a shots-fired call on December 17, 2018. They were 36 and 31 years old, respectively.

Officer Samuel Jimenez, who had 18 months on the Chicago Police Department, was killed on-duty by gun fire, while responding to an active shooter on November 19, 2018. Samuel was 28 years old.



Sallie A. Wyche, mother of NABLEO's Information Officer **Shawn Kennedy**, passed away on August 22, 2019. She fought long and hard to overcome her illness. She was 79 years old.

Wishing You a Speedy Recovery

Detective Juan Monzon of the New Haven (CT) Police Department and an active member of New Haven Guardians and NABLEO, has been recovering from knee surgery from a work-related injury. We're wishing you a speedy recovery.

What's Been Happening?

Lieutenant Levi A. Holmes II, President of the Newark Bronze Shields, retired from the Newark Police Department on March 1, 2019, with 25 years and two months of dedicated service.

Rochelle Bilal, was recognized by The Philadelphia Tribune on September 19, 2019, as one the African American Leaders in Philadelphia, during their reception and awards program honoring Philadelphia's Most Influential African Americans of 2019. Rochelle, who is the President of the Guardian Civic League and a retired police officer of the Philadelphia Police Department, is also the recipient of the distinguished Ida B. Wells Award for Excellence in Law Enforcement C.C.N.B.P.A. (March 2019) and the Unity Community Center 2018 Honoree for Outstanding Historical Achievements (November 2018). On May 21, 2019, Rochelle won the Democratic primary nomination for the Sheriff of Philadelphia, PA. She is slated to become the first female Sheriff in their department's history, during the November election.

Officer James Baker retired from the New Haven (CT) Police Department in January 2019. He is a member of the New Haven Guardians and NABLEO.

Detective Crystal Williams-Coleman, Special Assistant to the President at the Guardian Civic League and member of NABLEO, retired from the Philadelphia Police Department on January 19, 2019, with 32 years of dedicated service. Crystal was also presented with the Guardian Civic League President's Community Service Award during their 57th Annual Scholarship Awards Dinner & Dance on October 27, 2018.

Levi A. Holmes II, President of the Newark Bronze Shields, was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant with the Newark Police Department on July 30, 2018.



Lieutenant Levi A. Holmes II (navy blue suit coat) enjoys his retirement celebration on March 1, 2019. Levi is the President of the Newark Bronze Shields and retired from the Newark (NJ) Police Department.

Newsletter Submission Information

We are always looking for personal articles of interest, newsworthy pieces, photographs, interviews and information on upcoming events. It is very important to network and share pertinent information with law enforcement officers, both active and retired, about the many positives things that are taking place in our respective municipalities and communities. It is equally important to share information with the community we serve and to remind them we are the **guardians** of our community and have a vested interest in keeping citizens safe. If you would like to have your article considered for the next edition of *The Guardian's Voice* newsletter, send it to the Editor at: **shawncken@aol.com**. Please enter the word "newsletter" on the subject line when doing so. We also welcome feedback and constructive criticism.

If you are interested in reading past copies of *The Guardian's Voice* newsletter, feel free to review our previous issues at: <http://www.nableo.org/newsletter.cfm>

Recommended Reading



Coming of Age in Mississippi
By Ann Moody

The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross
By Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Donald Yacovone

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl
By Harriet Jacobs (pseudonym Linda Brent)

I Am Not Your Negro
By James Baldwin (with Raoul Peck)

Membership and Renewals

To join N.A.B.L.E.O. or to renew your membership, feel free to visit us at:
<http://www.NABLEO.org/membership.cfm>

*"Remember we are the **guardians** of our community, therefore we must work hard to rebuild their trust in law enforcement. This is our moral and social responsibility, not to mention, part of our sworn oath of office **[to serve and protect]**. Each day, think of what you can do, individually and collectively, to help rebuild that trust. Treat **all** citizens with respect."*

Please Stay Safe