

The Guardian's Voice

NEWSLETTER

The official publication of the *National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers, Inc.*

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Recruiting For Diversity In Law Enforcement

Providence, RI



(From left) Brown University's **Paul Shanley**, Deputy Chief of Police; **Wendy McRae Owoeye**, Director of Staff Diversity/EEO/AA Officer; and **Suzanne Flynn**, Associate Director, were among the many law enforcement professionals, who participated in the diversity workshop on July 29, 2011 in Providence, RI.

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National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers, Inc.

www.NABLEO.org

Editor's Perspective



During my 21-year tenure with the Chicago Police Department, I have belonged to several local and national police associations, leaving one for the other after making an informed decision to do so. I have never been comfortable with just serving as a dues paying member. I have always had a need to maintain my interest by finding a way to actively contribute to the growth of that association. I am also not one to negatively criticize my organization, preferring instead to initiate positive changes for the better. Sometimes this meant not only being willing to work hard behind the scene but also being willing to campaigning for an elected office to set the example myself.

During this same time period, I have seen many associations come and go; some growing stronger over time while others becoming skeletons of their former selves. Some of the reasons for the latter includes: lack of leadership with vision and commitment; a negative change of leadership; more than 90% of inactive members; financial problems due to not adapting to a downward shift in the economy; associations whose membership consists of more than 85% of retirees or less than 50% of active officers; a rubberstamp Board of Directors; not keeping up with changes in modern technology; inflated egos; failure to tap into the talent pool of its membership; not nurturing and grooming younger officers to join, take on active roles and chair committees and/or run for office; a collapse in continuous communication among membership; disconnection from the community; spending more money than what is made through fundraising efforts; discouragement of innovative ideas from its membership; inability to delegate responsibility; and overall apathy; just to name a few.

Over the years, I have been fortunate enough to not only network with officers nationally, but to have also acquired a wealth of knowledge and first-hand-experience on how successful associations function. This experience was instrumental when it became time for me to implement my ideas and vision by starting a new association. It also assisted me in optimizing my strengths; acknowledging and working to improve my weaknesses; and knowing when to refocus my direction when my interests and/or association evolved in separate directions.

Although the motives for many associations that formed during the 60s and 70s have evolved over time, there is one objective that has remained constant: associations provide a documented historical blueprint for today's officers to be able to optimize a successful career in law enforcement. For this reason alone, we are all responsible for the sustainability of our respective associations. Since there is now an elevated competition for fewer positions, police associations are mandatory for the success of the next generation of African American police officers.

Shawn C. Kennedy

What's Been Happening

Men and Women for Justice held their annual cookout on July 9th at the Log Cabin in New Brunswick, NJ. It was a success with approximately 150 in attendance.

Newark Bronze Shields members **Niles Wilson** (broken ribs), **Tracy Childress** (broken ankle) and **Gene Etchison** (compound tibia fracture) were involved in motorcycle accidents in October. A speedy recovery is wished for all NBS members.

New Haven Guardians members **Lieutenant Anthony Duff**, now heads Internal Affairs and **Officer Jillian Know** will be in charge of Victim Services. NHG hosted their annual Halloween SafeNite on Oct 26th, their Community Turkey Drive on November 22nd, along with the New Haven Fire Department and their Community Toy Drive on December 22nd.

After conducting several meetings, deliberations and correspondences this year, the **National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers** (NABLEO) voted, during their Summer Board Meeting, not to reunify with the **National Black Police Association** (NBPA) at this time.

The **Norwalk Guardians** held their Community Forum on October 28th at the South Norwalk Community Center. It was well attended. The NG also held their Awards Luncheon on October 29th at the Hilton Garden Inn Hotel. The guest speaker was **Chief Daryl K. Roberts**, Hartford PD.

The **Norman J. Downes, Jr. Golf Classic** was held on September 26th in Armonk, NY and was hosted by the **Westchester Rockland Guardians Association**.

The **42nd Annual African American Day Parade** was held on September 18th in Harlem and was hosted by the **New York State Corrections and Law Enforcement Guardians Association**.

The **New York Grand Council of Guardians** held their **2011 Annual Awards Dinner** on September 30th in Long Island, NY.

The **New Jersey Council of Chartered Members of the NBPA** hosted a fundraiser cruise to Bermuda on September 24th – 29th. The ship was sold out with over 30 Council members in attendance. The NJ Council held elections on November 14th. Elected officers are: **President Ron Arbuckle** (Newark, NJ); **Vice President Jay Jewell** (Newark); **Secretary Dwight Bailey** (Linden); **Treasurer Sally Thomason** (Piscataway); **Financial Secretary Mae Smith** (Newark); **Information Officer Leonard Randolph** (Irvington); and **Sergeant-at-Arms Mark Odom** (Irvington). Member organizations of the NJ Council includes: **Batons** (Newark); **Brother Officers Law Enforcement Society** (Trenton), **Bronze Shields** (Newark); **Federation of Afro American Police Officers** (Newark); **Irvington Shields** (Irvington); **Interdepartmental Minority Police Action Council** (New Jersey City); **Kinsmen of Northern New Jersey** (Elizabeth); **Men and Women For Justice** (Piscataway); and **Plainfield Ebony Police** (Plainfield).

NABLEO will officially launch its online logo store on January 1, 2012 at <http://store.nableo.org>.

Comments to the Editor

Listed are various written comments that many readers of the second edition (July 2011) of *The Guardian's Voice* newsletter have taken time to send me. As always, it is with great pride and humility that I share these comments with you. For our first-time readers, you may still access the first and second editions of our newsletter at: www.NABLEO.org.

"Shawn, I just finished reading the current issue of NABLEO's newsletter. Outstanding work. Love the interviews and other tidbits of information. You're an inspiration to us all Shawn! Peace and Blessings." **Officer Cynthia Modeste – Chicago P.D.**

"Hi Shawn. A blast from the past. Keep up the good work." **Officer Ted Meekins (retired) – Bridgeport P.D.**

"Hello Detective Kennedy. Thank you for emailing **The Guardian's Voice** newsletter to me. It was very interesting and amusing when reading The Twelve Reasons Not To Join...In the meantime, please continue to forward the updated newsletters to me, if it's no trouble...Thank you again and take care." **Officer Cecilia Donaldson – Chicago P.D.**

" Good work with the **Voice**. I knew you were a visionary". **Officer Hubert Smith – Norwalk P.D.**

"Hey Shawn. This is nice. How do I become a member and is there a chapter in Chicago? The paper looks great." **Officer Maudessie Jointer – Chicago P.D.**

"Outstanding job, my brother! Shawn Kennedy, you are 'A Force To Be Reckoned With!'" **Sergeant Ronald Kimble – Chicago P.D.**

"Hey Shawn, I just read your newsletter. Congratulations! It's quite good, and I especially enjoyed reading the interviews. Please keep a file of these interviews, as they'll make a great

archive for a future generation of historians. I'm certain that the narratives of African American policemen will be of interest to someone." **Professor Johari Jabir, Ph.D – University of Illinois at Chicago, Department of African American Studies**

"Dear Shawn, I am thrilled that you wrote me and the newsletter was great! I'm very proud of you." **Officer Mary Lee – Chicago P.D.**

"Hi Shawn. This is a great editorial...Thanks for the plug." **Gloria Bonner (wife of) Sergeant William Bonner (retired) – Chicago P.D. and Featured Officer.**

"Thanks Shawn and congrats on all of your efforts regarding the newsletter. It was nicely done." **Eugene Williams, Chief of Patrol – Chicago P.D. and President of N.O.B.L.E.- Chicago Metropolitan Chapter**

"Excellent newsletter. Tremel's statement was great. You are a great friend, editor and father." **Deputy Vernard Reed – Will County Sheriff's Office**

"Thanks Shawn. Job well done, as usual." **Officer Bridgett McCraney – Chicago P.D.**

"Thanks for sharing the newsletter with me. It was my pleasure reading it! Wow Shawn, you are the MAN!!!! Glad the little people like myself, had the opportunity to work with you!!! Keep up the good work!!! **Officer Michelle Morrow – Chicago P.D.**

"DAMN, YOU'RE GOOD!!!! Let's keep this going.
Lieutenant Charles P. Wilson - Rhode Island College Campus P.D. and National Chairman of NABLEO

"Well done Shawn! I just reviewed your newsletter. Keep up the good work!" **Sergeant Theresa Dishman - Chicago P.D.**

"Shawn, you are to be congratulated!! As someone who has sweated and toiled over newsletters in the past - I FEEL QUALIFIED TO SAY THAT THIS IS A WORK OF SOME SIGNIFICANT STANDARD AND SOMETHING YOU SHOULD BE VERY PROUD OF!! I'm so glad you kept on my case for a contribution and if I can contribute in the future, I will. For example, I was recently in South Africa as a guest of a large police union - an experience which I'm sure would be of interest to your readers. Let me know and I'll put something together for you."
Superintendent Paul Wilson (retired) - Metropolitan Police Service, United Kingdom and Featured Officer

"Awesome job Shawn. I really enjoyed reading about some of the legends and the stories they tell. It is often overlooked or just ignored. We should have learned from our ancestors that it is better to collect and preserve our history and to really be proud of our heritage and progress. After all, they are the reasons we have what we have today. Maybe some may share some photos or news articles one day". **Sergeant Dwayne Betts - Chicago P.D.**

"I love your interview that you conducted with Mr. Bonner. I was impressed that I actually had heard of some of the things that you both discussed, like the Chicago Park District Police Department. I was just enlightened that it existed. I also admire his advice to younger officers to listen to elders...I was also glad to see your recommendations for those that are members of an organization; don't just join but be a moving force behind the organization. It is a

form of stewardship to me. Do it for self-gratification, not for what you can gain. A question I've been often asked is, 'What are you getting from it?' I get to see my Christian walk of life exposed through doing and giving to others; i.e. my Annual Coat Drive with N.O.B.L.E. IV, NBC 5 News, and the Salvation Army. Now it's with my recent Cell Phone Drive with Verizon Wireless, which helps domestic violence victims. Thanks again! Keep the enlightening process going Detective Kennedy." **Officer Lytshia Pope - Chicago P.D.**

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 share pertinent information with law enforcement officers, both active and retired, about the many things that are taking place in our respective municipalities. It is equally important to share information with the community that we serve. 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.

Visit our website at **www.NABLEO.org** to read our previous newsletters, to view our Photo Gallery and to learn more about our organization.

Chairman's Corner



To the Entire NABLEO Family,

As I leave office, I wish to thank both those who have supported me, and those who have not. To those who have supported my efforts, I can never repay you for your kindnesses, strong and sincere advice, and dedication to our organization. Working with each of you has been a distinct and enjoyable pleasure, which will not soon be forgotten.

To those of you who have not supported me, I thank you as well. Your critical reviews of my actions, the programs that I have presented, and the tasks I have undertaken on your behalf have allowed me to discover my faults and mistakes and made me better for them. And while we have surely disagreed on various issues, we still agree that there is a need for this great organization, both for its membership and the communities we serve.

To the **Chairman-Elect**, I wish you the very best and offer my support in any way that it may be given. Yours will be a serious task, but with personal strength and the support of the membership, I firmly believe you will do well. Always remember that there is nothing personal about what you will, and at times, must do for NABLEO. It is business and you must always treat it as such. Do great things, as it will be desired of you. Do honest and noble things, as it will be expected of you. And do caring things, as it will be needed from you.

Again, it has been my pleasure to have served this great organization as its Chairman.

Charles P. Wilson

Charles,

Thank you for the leadership and business acumen you have provided NABLEO during your four-year tenure as its National Chairperson. Thank you also for allowing me the artistic freedom to resurrect **The Guardian's Voice** newsletter and take it to a level of intuitive creativity. It has been an educational pleasure to serve under a man with your vision.

The Editor

2012-2014 Board of Directors – Elect

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(Newark Bronze Shields)

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Leonard Randolph

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Hubert Smith
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Parliamentarian: **David Daniels III**

Recruiting For Diversity In Law Enforcement

During the weekend of NABLEO's Summer Board meeting in Providence, Rhode Island, a very unique and progressive event took place on July 29, 2011 at Brown University. It was an eight-hour workshop entitled: **Recruiting For Diversity In Law Enforcement: Outreach Strategies for Creating Multicultural Organizations.** This masterpiece was the brainchild of our National Chairman Charles Wilson. He had talked about bringing various police agencies, associations, and ethnicities together, in one room, to strategize a method of not only reaching out to more minorities in the community but to also start an open dialogue among the many law enforcement professionals, who are responsible for assessing potential recruits.

This event was presented in partnership with **The National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers, Inc. (NABLEO); Brown University Department of Public Safety; Rhode Island Department of Public Safety** and the **Rhode Island Municipal Police Academy.** Instead of having a classroom-style environment, the tables were round with name placards strategically arranged so members from the same organizations would be seated with members from other organizations. This was to encourage maximum interaction and networking among the participants. In order to open up an honest dialogue of communication and interaction, it was necessary to get the participants to step out of their comfort zones, which meant no sitting next to someone you were familiar with. As several group exercises commenced, it was apparent the participants became more involved in the various projects and more comfortable with one another.

The event was separated into four segments: 1) **Making Your Agency Culturally Attractive;** 2) **Transparency in Police Recruiting;** 3) **Is This Racism or a Failure to Adapt to the Trend of Today's Candidates;** and 4) **You Can Find What You Search and Seize the Opportunity.**

The respective presenters included:

Dr. Shirley A. Wilson – Associate Professor of Management at Bryant University. Her specific area of instruction is Organizational Behavior and Global Diversity. Her specific area of research is the field of Mentoring with emphasis on Black Female Professionals.

Captain Wilfred K. Hill – A 19-year veteran with the Rhode Island State Police. He instructs various agencies on Racial Profiling, Cultural Diversity, Sensitivity and Recruitment Training. He previously served as the Commandant of the State Police Training Academy and as Officer-in-Charge of the Division's Community Outreach Program.

Investigator Elliott T. Boyce, Sr. – A 24-year veteran with the New York State Police. He served as a Police Recruiter to increase diversity within the ranks of the NYSP.

Cheryl A. Burrell – Administrator for the Rhode Island Department of Administration-Human Resources Outreach and Diversity Office. During her 30 years, she served under five Attorney Generals and is currently responsible for implementing the State's diversity initiative.

During the course of the four interactive workshops, participants learned a great deal of information on the importance of recruiting more minorities from the community; how to better prepare yourself for a career in law enforcement; and the various elements that may eliminate a prospective candidate from the interview, background and/or test taking processes. Besides experiencing the pleasure of networking with law enforcement professionals from such a diverse background, one of the most profound revelations was to discover the personal prejudices that we all bring to work on a daily basis. This affects how we interact and perceive one another: our peers, our supervisors, our subordinates and the members of the community that we serve. This event should definitely be repeated on a national level.

Participating Agencies and Associations at the Workshops

Afro-American Police Association – Buffalo, NY
 Amherst Police Department – Amherst, MA
 Batons – Linden, NJ
 Bi-State Coalition – West Orange, NJ
 Boston Police Department – Boston, MA
 Bridgeport Guardians – Bridgeport, CT
 Bristol Police Department – Bristol, RI
 Bronze Shields of Passaic County – Paterson, NJ
 Brown University Department of Public Safety – Providence, RI
 Chicago Police Department – Chicago, IL
 Concord Police Department – Concord, NH
 Cranston Police Department – Cranston, RI
 Cumberland Police Department – Cumberland, RI
 East Providence Police Department – East Providence, RI
 Federation of Afro-American Police – Newark, NJ
 Hartford Police Department – Hartford, CT
 Harvard University Police Department – Cambridge, MA
 Hudson Police Department – Hudson, NH
 Lincoln Police Department – Lincoln, RI
 MAMLEO – Boston, MA
 Men and Women for Justice – Piscataway, NJ
 Middletown Police Department – Middletown, RI
 Nashua Police Department, Nashua, NH
 National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers (NABLEO)

New Haven Guardians Association – New Haven, CT
 New Haven Police Department – New Haven, CT
 Newark Bronze Shields – Newark, NJ
 Norwalk Guardians Association – Norwalk, CT
 Norwalk Police Department – Norwalk, CT
 Norwich Police Department – Norwich, CT
 Philadelphia Guardian Civic League – Philadelphia, PA
 Philadelphia Police Department – Philadelphia, PA
 Providence Police Department – Providence, RI
 Rhode Island Minority Police Association – Providence, RI
 RI Department of Corrections – Cranston, RI
 Rochester Association of Minority Police – Rochester, NY
 Rutgers University Police Department – New Brunswick, NJ
 Smithfield Police Department – Smithfield, RI
 University of Massachusetts (Dartmouth) – North Dartmouth, MA
 University of Rhode Island – Kingston, RI
 University of Rhode Island – Providence, RI
 Vermont State Police – Waterbury, VT
 Warwick Police Department – Warwick, RI
 Westerly Police Department – Westerly, RI
 Wyatt Detention Facility – Central Falls, RI
 Yale University Police Department – New Haven, CT
 Yonkers Guardians Association – Yonkers, NY

Recruiting For Diversity In Law Enforcement Picture Page



Recruiting For Diversity In Law Enforcement Picture Page



On Your Shoulders, We Stand



Renault Robinson

Interviewed by Shawn Kennedy

"One of the great privileges of networking with law enforcement officers on a national level is that you cross paths, directly and sometimes indirectly, with a plethora of individuals whose connection may find a mutual purpose in the future for the individuals involved. Some of our founding fathers and mothers, affectionately referred to as "old timers", are no longer physically with us in this life. Sometimes their legacy dies with them; sometimes it is repeated inaccurately; and other times it is only known by the remaining forefathers. Rarely do we take the opportunity to tap into our living historians while they are still mentally and physically competent to share their own experiences in law enforcement with us.

In the late 1990s, I had an opportunity to have a telephone conversation with **Renault Robinson**. At that time, I contemplated abdicating from my national association and taking my experience and professional contacts to start a new association, even if just on a local or regional level. During that time period, I took my active participation very seriously. Although I was shy of my 10th anniversary with the Chicago Police Department, I welcomed any experienced guidance I could ascertain to make an informed decision. I could not just pick up a phone and contact **Renault Robinson** because I did not know him. This is where networking came into play. I had an occasion to meet Mavis Sims, wife of deceased Assistant Deputy Superintendent George Sims, while working on a collective project with all of the Black police associations in Chicago. During the 1970s, the latter Sims, who was Deputy Chief of Patrol at that time, gave crucial testimony in the lawsuit that Robinson and the Afro-American Patrolmen's League (AAPL) filed against the City of Chicago. Anyway, Mavis Sims provided me with Robinson's telephone number, which he was more than receptive in receiving my phone call. He gave me a wealth of guidance that I am still grateful to him today. Since he was so hospitable, I had to ask him, "Why are you no longer in the public limelight?" He explained that he had "paid his dues" and was disappointed in how the gains that he, and the AAPL, had made for police officers nationwide were subtly being diminished over time. I thanked him for taking the time to speak with me and placed his telephone number in storage, vowing to never embark on his self-imposed privacy. Who knew we would finally meet more than a decade later?

Since I came in contact with officers whenever I attended jazz functions, I had an opportunity to finally meet **Renault Robinson** earlier this year. As I enjoyed a glass of chardonnay during intermission at a jazz concert, Ruby Rogers, a retired Investigator Specialist for the Chicago Police Department's Office of Professional Standards (now the Independent Police Review Authority), impulsively asked me if I had ever

met Robinson. After I informed her that I had not, she quickly rectified that. Rogers was from the "old school" so she knew everybody who was anybody. As we walked over to the concession stand, I tried to locate Robinson on my own, from the early pictures I had seen of him and from the preconceived image I had in my mind of him. I had not taken into account the changes that may have occurred over time. As we were introduced and shook hands, I mentally acknowledged that this gentleman who stood before me did not appear to be the same person I had imagined. For some reason, I was expecting a man who would emanate fire, aggression, anger or a demeanor of intimidation. I was momentarily taken back with the fact that this person before me did not remotely resemble my preconceived image of him. Robinson was cordial, humble, articulate and very laidback, in a mature life-experienced sort of way. I was so flabbergasted by my flawed image of him, that I did all that I could to strike up a brief, intelligible conversation before retreating back to my seat in embarrassment.

Over the course of several months, I would see him at the same jazz venue. Since I knew where his subscription seat was located, I always greeted him with a pleasant hello and kept it moving. I still respected his space. During our last encounter at the same concession stand, I gathered up the courage to personally thank him for all of the trials and tribulations he had endured throughout his law enforcement career and the personal sacrifices that he had made, that now affords me the opportunity, as well as thousands of other minority officers nationwide, to reap the fruits of his labor. His humble pride was reflected in his smile and handshake of acceptance. Although I was content in seeing him just in passing, it had not occurred to me, at that time, that I would one day ask him for a personal and professional favor.

When I select someone in the law enforcement profession to interview, I do so based on the knowledge I feel our readers will gain; the personal and professional experiences they may enjoy; the mental notes they may take from it; and the historical content of the many men and women who have paved the way for us to reap the benefits in our chosen law enforcement profession. I wanted our next featured officer to be a person whose professional hardships and personal sacrifices were responsible for laying the foundation that afforded more Blacks, Hispanics and women to join the ranks of the Chicago Police Department, in numbers like never before. This foundation actually set the legal precedent that allowed other cities across the nation to benefit with the same positive results. I knew whom I had in mind. There are prestigious awards which bear his name and are given out annually as special recognition. I sometimes wonder if the young officers of today have a clue of the great honor it is to be a recipient of one of these awards?

So even before I had asked, I knew our next featured officer would be **Renault Robinson**. I started making the necessary preparations that included an in-depth research into his background, as well as prepared very poignant questions for my anticipated interview. I left several messages with Robinson's secretary and sent a couple of emails. I had previously sent him a copy of our prior **The Guardian's Voice** newsletters earlier in the year, just in the spirit of networking. I could not confirm if he had read any of our newsletters but I was sure he discovered something of interest, or so I was hoping. Two weeks had passed by and no reply. I did not want to play my Ruby Rogers trump card so I continued to patiently wait for a response, conveniently adjusting our newsletter's deadline date just to accommodate this special interview. I kept the prospect of this interview close to my chest. Besides Ruby Rogers, only my closest of confidant, retired Captain Ernestine Dowell, knew of my request. I decided to leave one final message and was pleasantly surprised when I received a return phone call from Robinson himself. Although he made it clear that he has not submitted to being interviewed for many years, he was more than happy to accommodate my request. I learned that he did in fact read the two prior editions of **The Guardian's Voice** newsletter that I had sent to him. Networking opens doors that you never know when you may need to walk through one day.

Since I now had Robinson's acceptance in hand, all that remained was scheduling a convenient time that was compatible with both of our busy schedules. I was open anytime outside of my working hours. Although I was willing to conduct the interview on a weekend date, I did not want to intrude on his personal time with his family, unless it was his suggestion. After a few reschedules, we finally sat at the same table, two weeks later, for the interview. It was at the end of his workday, so I felt I had to be very cognizant of his time. I chose my questions wisely and made the best of whatever time he would graciously give me.

As the interview got underway, I found it very difficult to take notes, even though my tape recorder was on. The tape recorder might malfunction, the voice quality could be muffled or distorted or background noises could make the interview inaudible. A tape recorder cannot memorialize facial expressions, hand gestures or an individual's overall demeanor. Robinson is not a man of one-word answers. He takes his time explaining and expressing himself in a manner that provides the listener with a three-dimensional image of actually what he is talking about. It was almost as if he was taking me back in time so that I would get a real-time image of the various incidents as they occurred. I found myself in awe as I sat mesmerized by the very intimate details that he shared with me, clinging on to every word that he spoke. A couple of hours had passed by from just answering several questions. I could have very easily spent the entire evening listening to what he had to say, but his time is a precious commodity that I did not want to waste or abuse. This humble icon, matured with age, experience and wisdom, sat before me with his one-on-one personal history lesson. He is no more human than you and I, but his inadvertent contributions to the field of law enforcement are iconic in nature. Now I will humbly share my one-on-one history lesson with you."

Sixty-nine-year old **Renault Robinson** is a retired police officer whose earlier tumultuous career in law enforcement had an adverse affect on his personal and professional life. Robinson is married to Annette and has four adult children: Renault, Jr., Brian, Kivu and Kobie. He joined the Chicago Police Department on June 1, 1964, at the youthful age of 21 and retired in 1983. He obtained his bachelor and master degrees from Roosevelt University, majoring in Urban Studies and Sociology. Robinson also completed one year at Northwestern University towards his doctorate degree.

SK: Give me an idea of how many black officers were on the Chicago Police Department when you first joined in 1964?

RR: I used to know all of the specific statistics but I would say about 15% of the force were Blacks. The older guys had been grandfathered in from the Chicago Park District Police Department. Some of those guys included Sam Nolan and Fred Rice.

SK: Approximately how many black supervisors would you say were on the job at that time?

RR: Less than 100 sergeants, less than 20 lieutenants and about eight captains. I'm not able to quote the exact figures like I could before.

SK: During your first few years on the job, what was your assessment of the climate of the Department, as it related to black officers and the black community?

RR: It was a very hostile relationship with the black community. Officers did not really serve them, they instead policed them. Any black child, woman, senior citizen or professional could be randomly subjected to unfavorable treatment by the police, without any provocation. This type of unethical conduct was culturally based on how many white officers felt towards black citizens and what they felt was accepted behavior. Blacks did not have the same recourse as they have now. Police brutality, harassment and ill treatment of black citizens were not always administered at the hands of white officers. There were some black officers who would also take part in this type of behavior against their own people. Some black officers simply went along just to get along so they mimicked behavior they felt would keep them in good favor with the powers to be. Remember, who you knew played heavily with what prime assignments an officer might get, including promotions. If you were not in good favor with the powers to be, you might receive an average efficiency rating which could keep you from getting promoted. For instance, a black officer, who was not in good favor, might receive a 75% efficiency rating while a white officer, whose work was equal but who was in good favor, might receive a 98% efficiency rating. Because of this system, the black officer did not have a chance for promotion or favorable assignments. So some Blacks conducted themselves in a manner they felt would be consistent with what would put them in good favor with the powers to be.

SK: What police association did you belong to and what office did you hold?

RR: I was one of the founding members of the African American Patrolmen's League (AAPL) and also served as their Executive Director. We formed in 1968. Our formation had a lot to do with the treatment of black officers and black citizens. More specifically, it was also in response to the conditions that existed directly subsequent to the riots that broke out after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. The treatment of black citizens became harsher than it ever was before.

SK: Chicago already had the Guardians police association at that time. Why did the founding members of AAPL choose not to just be a part of the Guardians?

RR: The Guardians were more of a social organization.

SK: How receptive were black officers in joining the AAPL?

RR: They were very afraid and hesitant. Being a member of the AAPL could have an adverse impact on your police career. There were many officers and bosses who supported our efforts but not publicly. Some of the founding members eventually pulled out of the AAPL because they wanted to be promoted and did not want to be ostracized by their fellow officers. I could not fault any officer who either did not join the AAPL or pulled out because of fear. I had to respect their desire to advance within the Department. That's a choice that each black officer had to make for themselves. I would not want an officer to have to go through the various things that I did, so I understand their reasoning.

SK: Who is Prentiss Marshall and what significant role did he play in the hiring practices and promotions of minority officers in Chicago?

RR: He was a federal judge who was appointed by a republican senator. The AAPL did not know his background so we had no idea what effect he may have on our lawsuit. Originally, our lawsuit was assigned to a black federal judge who simply did not want to touch the case. Sitting judges were afforded the opportunity to give one of their cases to the new judge on the block. Our lawsuit was one of those cases that were given to Judge Marshall so he would have a caseload. Our lawsuit was based on the discriminatory practices of the Chicago Police Department as it related to the hiring and promotional practices of black policemen. There were several lawsuits filed which had been consolidated, along with a parallel lawsuit filed by the federal government. During the course of over a decade of litigation, various key testimony and evidence had been presented that eventually persuaded Judge Marshall to side with the AAPL.

George Sims, who was a high-ranking black exempt member of the Chicago Police Department, gave compelling testimony in court. In part, Sims explained how the Superintendent compared the AAPL to the likes of the Ku Klux Klan. This was done during a morning command meeting of exempt members, which included black exempts. There were many officers who empathized with our mission but not necessarily publicly. One of our sympathizers told me that a special unit of IAD had kept secret files on the AAPL, as well as community organizations, which were not disclosed during discovery. When Judge Marshall learned of this, he was so incensed that he recessed the trial and ordered the Corporation Counsel to accompany me to Police Headquarters to retrieve those files. When we arrived at Police Headquarters, all of the bosses were out to lunch. The lone police officer, who was in charge of security for the secluded room, quickly gave us access. There were over fifty file cabinets which contained information on various individuals, police officers, community organizations, politicians, activists, businessmen and the AAPL. It was just an amazing revelation.

One day at court, my attorney told me the City of Chicago wanted to settle out of court. They were willing to offer me \$250,000 and a promotion to Deputy Superintendent of Community Relations. I knew the City of Chicago would never make that type of offer unless they felt they could lose the case. Against my attorney's advice, I turned down their offer. Yes, I could have easily taken their offer. I was on an indefinite suspension from the Department with no money coming in. I did not know how I would be able to pay my bills. I was already several months behind in my rent. But what message would that have sent to black officers and the citizens of our community? All that I had gone through at that point would have been in vain.

We continued with our fight until the day Judge Marshall ruled in our favor. The Department was found to be guilty of racial and sex discrimination in their hiring and promotion practices as it related to Blacks, Hispanics and women. The 1971 police examination was ruled invalid. Millions of dollars of federal revenue sharing funds were withheld from Chicago until they complied with all orders of Judge Marshall. The AAPL, and myself, were collectively awarded almost \$600,000 in damages. Part of the quota that Judge Marshall ordered the Department was to hire 42 percent Blacks and Hispanic surnamed males, as well as 16 percent women within 90 days. During the latter part of the 1970s, the Chicago Police Department saw a substantial increase in Blacks, Hispanics

and women as police officers, instead of only Youth Officers or Matrons. The height requirement, that was used to disqualify many individuals of Hispanic descent, as well as many women, was tossed out. This precedent set the foundation for additional lawsuits in major cities across the United States. Yes, this precedent had a national impact that affords many officers in the aforementioned groups to be on the job today. The prior pecking order on the Department was: Irish, Italians, Polish and then Blacks.

SK: Did you ever consider yourself to be a militant or rebel during your heydays with the AAPL?

RR: Not at all. I just wanted a more equitable Department that afforded black officers the same opportunities for advancement and favorable assignments as other members of the Department. I also wanted to see more blacks coming onto the job and not being knocked out for "heart murmurs" or "flat-feet". I also wanted to bring some sensitivity to the Department to make the police-community relationship better. I felt having more Blacks on the job would help this. I know you cannot change how a person feels or what is in their heart but you can change perspectives of what will no longer be permissible.

SK: What personal and professional sacrifices were you required to make based on your involvement with the AAPL?

RR: I was the most notorious person on the Department. I had obtained over 100 complaint register (CR) numbers for a variety of fabricated infractions. My involvement with the AAPL ultimately killed my professional career. It also had a great impact on my family. My wife and I received many phone calls from police officers threatening to kill my wife and children. I knew the calls came from police officers because you could sometimes hear the police radios in the background. AAPL members were on guard, off-duty, at my house so that my wife would be safe. On-duty officers were assigned to my children's school to stand guard outside of their classrooms. The stress of worrying about the safety of my family because so overbearing that I decided to send my children out of town for their safety. I had become too involved with the AAPL to ever turn back. Everything that I went through was ultimately worth it because based on the precedent set by the AAPL's lawsuit, our case went around the country. More black police officers were recruited in 35 major cities across the nation. The impact on police departments and the country turned out to be great.

SK: Do you feel you were passed up for promotions based on your involvement with the AAPL?

RR: I know I was. I was told that when I first started the League [AAPL]. When it was time for me to come out of the Police Academy, I did not go to the Patrol Division. I was transferred on a telephone order and became a Vice Dick [Detective]. I was in favor while I worked this assignment, receiving 98% efficiency ratings. When things became crazy and what I considered to be dangerous on the streets, I requested to leave the unit and go to the Patrol Division. When I became involved with the League, everything started to change. My efficiency ratings dropped to the 60s and 70s.

SK: Who were the biggest supporters of the AAPL?

RR: Citizens, ministers, congressmen, aldermen and in particular, Father George Clements of Holy Angels Church.

SK: Did you ever feel that some of your fellow black officers ostracized you based on your involvement with the AAPL?

RR: Yes. Associating with me would subject them to the same black cloud over their heads.

SK: What is meant by the phrase: From the Alley to the Hall?

RR: I was assigned, as punishment for being the voice of the AAPL, to a small area behind the old Headquarters building on 11th & State called Holden Court. It actually was an alley that had rats and smelly garbage everywhere. When I inquired about there not being a street sign reflecting the name of the street, one was put up within the next two days. Since Holden Court was such a narrow "alley-like" street, there was no parking allowed because it could impede the flow of any traffic. I decided to checkout two ticket books and I wrote parking citations on every police car and wagon that parked there. Because of the limited available parking in front of the building, officers would use Holden Court to park their department vehicles while they went inside of Headquarters to take care of police business. Needless to say, my ticket writing did not go over well. I was then assigned to a much smaller area of Holden Court, about a 15 feet area, where police vehicles did not park. That reassignment was to keep me from coming in contact with any illegally parked police vehicle. I can still remember looking up on the fire escape as Internal Affairs kept me under their watchful eye to ensure that I did not go beyond my small boundaries.

SK: What role do you see today's police associations serving in?

RR: They are either a social organization or they mimic the efforts of the AAPL. NOBLE [National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives] is for the senior officers and the NBPA [National Black Police Association] is more proactive. Many organizations have lost ground over the years. Many are no longer controversial. There were so many black organizations in Chicago that the unity of black officers was broken into several factions.

SK: Who were your male mentors on the Chicago Police Department that influenced you?

RR: I really did not have any.

SK: Why did you decide to retire from the Chicago Police Department in 1983?

RR: The lawsuit filed by the Afro-American Patrolmen's League had concluded and it was time for me to move on to something different. Under the newly elected mayor, Harold Washington, I had the opportunity to serve as the Chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority.

SK: During my 21-year tenure with the Chicago Police Department, I have heard your name mentioned many times but had never seen you at any police-related function. After you retired in 1983, did you consciously remove yourself out of the public limelight and into a more reclusive background?

RR: Yes, I tried to improve things during my tenure with the Department. I feel that I actually accomplished a lot, which benefitted officers that came on the Department after me. I decided to get a life so I did some work for the new mayor [Harold Washington]. I have always been the type of person to speak up when I saw injustices. Prior to Harold Washington, Jane Byrne was the mayor. She appointed me to the Chicago Housing Authority. As a board member, I observed how the current Chairman was not doing the things to truly serve the citizens that occupied the housing projects. I made it clear that I was going to have him removed from the board. Byrne was originally okay with the idea but later asked me to reconsider because it might affect her chances of re-election. After I made it clear that I was going to do what I had to do, I worked to ensure that she would not win her re-election. I then assisted with the election of Chicago's first black mayor.

SK: You served as the keynote speaker this summer during a national police conference in Chicago. What enticed you to participate in such a public venue after being out of the limelight for so long?

RR: I know a lot of those guys from years ago. I go back over 25 years with some of them.

SK: How has your involvement with the AAPL affected your family life?

RR: It caused a lot of problems, especially my instable income during periods of suspensions.

SK: What message would you like to share with the young officers of today?

RR: Be a real, true officer; someone who upholds the law fairly and equally.

SK: Does the apathy with today's black officers make you feel that your personal and professional sacrifices were in vain?

RR: No, I think it is just the way it is. During my tenure, conditions for Blacks were so different than today. We had specific causes to fight for and certain incidents, such as the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement, which added fire to our fight. Today's officers do not have the same challenges to address.

SK: What words of wisdom would you like to share with police organizations of today?

RR: Figure out a way to get together on some of the issues. Support a better attitude of law enforcement in the black community. Impact your crimes, gangs, afterschool activities and mentoring. Create a real image to be proud of.

SK: What is your fondest memory in your law enforcement career?

RR: When we won our lawsuit.

SK: What is your worst memory in your law enforcement career?

RR: The threats against my family.

SK: Do you have any regrets in your career choice?

RR: No, I always had God on my shoulders.

SK: What are three words you feel best describe you?

RR: **Ambitious; Determined; and Proud.**



Newark Bronze Shields members (left-front) **September Phillips, Carrie Reed, Lavita Johnson, Renay Shiggs, Stephon Waddell**, (left-rear) **Anthony Williams, Anthony Roberts** and **Levi A. Holmes, II** are taking a break during the Summer Board Meeting in Providence, RI on July 30, 2011.

Upcoming Event

The **Jamaica Constabulary Force** will host its Annual Athletics Championship on May 25-26, 2012 in Kingston, JA. For further information, contact Ealan Powell at: ealanpow@yahoo.com or contact Hubert Smith at: smithhubert@msn.com.

Historical Website

Visit the **Chicago Cop.com** website (An Unofficial Source) **Documents Archive** section to read vintage publications that dates back to the early 1900s.

http://chicagocop.lapa1961.com/htm/history/documents_archive.htm

Membership and Renewals

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

Recommended Reading



The Spook Who Sat By The Door

By Sam Greenlee

The Blacker the Berry

By Wallace Thurman

Push Has Come To Shove

Getting Our Kids The Education They Deserve
(Even If It Means Picking A Fight)

By Dr. Steve Perry