

The Guardian's Voice

NEWSLETTER

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

Volume Four – Issue One

Spring 2017



Black and Blue: Rebuilding the Bonds

Piscataway, NJ

(Hosted by the New Jersey Council of Chartered Members of NABLEO)



Between workshops at a conference held on August 12, 2016 in Piscataway, NJ, several officers network in the halls of the Embassy Suites Hotel. (From left to right) **Officer James Baker**, New Haven (CT) P.D.; **Undersheriff Francine Shelton**, Hudson County Sheriff's Office (NJ); **Officer Litoria Wright-Williams**, Monmouth County Sheriff's Office (NJ) (retired); **Detective Frances DeBose-Watson**, Hartford (CT) P.D. (retired); **Captain Michael Belcher**, Toms River (NJ) P.D.; and **Sergeant Sally Thomason**, Rutgers University (NJ) P.D. (retired).

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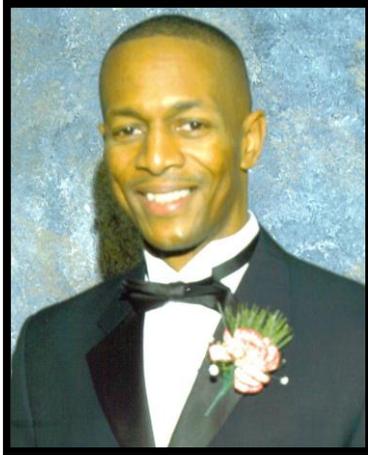
Shawn C. Kennedy

Editor

Contributors

Daryl K. Roberts Shirley A. Wilson
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Editor's Perspective



As the Editor of *The Guardian's Voice* newsletter, my continued efforts have been to highlight the many positive things police officers are doing in their respective communities. This includes allowing our publication to serve as a conduit to encourage officers to share pertinent information with one another, as well as facilitating candid dialogue between individuals, as we strive to network with officers across the country and abroad. This is the same goal I have striven for as the Editor of prior police-related newsletters which includes *The Black Skyline* in the late 90s; *The MCAAPO Review* during the first few years of the new millennium; and *What's New in Area Two* after that. As I periodically review articles from prior newsletters, it amazes me to its testament of how these publications actually served as a vessel of communication for many officers; some who knew one another, but even more who did not.

During my 27-year tenure with the Chicago Police Department and my association with countless police organizations, I have been fortunate enough to network with officers, of various ranks and from numerous police agencies, as I traveled across the country and abroad to attend law enforcement conferences and other events. The friendships developed and camaraderie shared have served as an invaluable tool in my chosen profession, as well as in my personal life. My initial focus was to network primarily with as many officers of color as possible, because it always surprised me to discover that officers of color were worldwide, although in visibly disproportionate numbers. This was more apparent as I met black officers, who were either the only officer or the only frontline supervisor of color, on their smaller police force. Some of their police agencies did not have one high-ranking officer of color in their upper administration. This "phenomenon" put things into a more realistic perspective for me, being employed by a larger police agency myself. It also gave me a better appreciation for the many opportunities afforded me with the Chicago Police Department, although it never blinded me to the disparate opportunities available to me. Remaining steadfast, maintaining impeccable work ethics and **networking** have allowed me to prevail.

As I get closer to the pinnacle of my career and review all of its milestones, I realize the networking that I have conducted did not remain focused only on officers of color. It broadened to include officers of various ethnicities, cultural difference, geographic locations, and personal and professional perspectives that are considerably different than mine. I have learned that change does not occur when individuals subconsciously limit themselves by only networking in a self-imposed segregated bubble. Change begins when an individual decides to step outside of their comfort zone and become willing to learn about the real differences that exists. It is customary for people to gravitate towards individuals they have something in common with, whether it's based on ethnicity, same gender, past interactions, work location or a host of other variables. When we do this, we cheat ourselves from the benefit of having new experiences and from learning new perspectives. We proclaim to want our police agencies to undergo major changes, for the good of the people and its officers. Yet we are expecting institutions to accomplish something that we have not begun to do as individuals. A department can implement policy but cannot change what is in a person's heart or their fear of the unknown. Change starts when each of us consciously decides to learn the many differences that make all people unique. Keep an open mind and remember to **listen**, more than you talk. This encourages tolerance, understanding and breaks down the barrier of fear of the unknown.

Shawn C. Kennedy

N.A.B.L.E.O.'s De-Escalation Training for Law Enforcement and Community Conference

April 06 – 07, 2017

Holiday Inn Danbury-Bethel

80 Newtown Road
Danbury, CT 06810

Host By: Danbury, CT and Waterbury, CT Police Departments

Registration Rate (per person) \$175 – (Complete registration by March 31st)

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

People of Color in Criminal Justice Conference

May 23, 2017

Framingham State University

(McCarthy Student Center)
100 State Street
Framingham, MA 01701

Host By: Middlesex Sheriff's Office and Framingham State University

Early Registration \$50 (Begins March 9th /Regular Registration \$65 (begins April 8th)

Registration: www.middlesexsheriff.org

Chairman's Corner



As Officers of Color, We Need To Become More Vigilant

Most of you who know me are aware that I do not normally talk about politics. But in light of several things that are now perceived to be at issue from the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) regarding fair and impartial policing, there are several issues that I feel bear mentioning.

The new mindset at DOJ seems to be that it is either unreasonable, impractical or downright unpatriotic to consider that the problem with policing in our communities is not the police but the people they are sworn to protect. That police should be given wider powers of discretion to curtail crime; return to the use of practices such as stop-and-frisk; and be encouraged to be more aggressive in their actions when dealing with those they deem to be unsavory or a threat to safety. Unfortunately, history has shown us that these tactics do not work, particularly where they concern communities of color. Yet we are continually asked that, if you see something happening that is dangerous or suspicious, say or tell someone about it. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security and many police agencies across the country have seemed to espouse what they consider to be a new mantra in community involvement in order to make communities safer. They encourage people to report suspicious or dangerous activity to the police in the hopes of curtailing not only terroristic acts, but ordinary street crimes as well. A sort of extension to getting the community involved in helping police to better protect them. Yet while this concept is certainly nothing new, and the currently perceived mindset of DOJ would appear to work strongly against this process, it may have a more practical application where it concerns racial profiling, particularly where it applies to law enforcement officers themselves.

It would seem prudent to recognize that these are actually the first persons to observe, and recognize, when their counterparts are conducting themselves in an inappropriate manner in their contacts with people in the community, especially in communities of color where there seems to be little confidence that the police will act honorably or professionally in their interactions. So it would seem both proper and appropriate that they should be among the first ones to have the ability, and the courage, to report such activity.

Yet the phenomenon best known as the Blue Wall of Silence, is a practice that has become embedded in police culture. It actually encourages officers to turn a blind eye to acts of disobedience, physical and verbal abuse, excessive use of force, and other forms of misconduct, and appears to be based on the constructs of loyalty and trust towards co-workers. Studies have previously found that more than 50% of police officers believe that it is unusual for fellow officers not to turn a blind eye to improper conduct, and more than 60% disagree that their fellow

officers will always report serious criminal violations committed by other officers. The basic problem with this system is that when officers fail to report these occurrences, they then become an integrated part of the problem. They become as much at fault, and as dangerous to the community, as the one who committed the offensive act itself.

It must be an accepted axiom that organizations, and particularly law enforcement agencies, cannot function effectively when employees fail to follow established rules, policies and procedures, not to mention adhering to the various legal standards which guide their actions.

Yet even though the Blue Wall of Silence can be overwhelming, various officers have, in fact, committed what to many of their counterpart amounts to sacrilege, speaking out about racial profiling, police abuse and misconduct, and other illegal acts that they witness on the job. So the question must be posed: How do these officers gain the courage to speak out regarding these incidents? And this question may be especially cogent where it pertains to those many Black and Brown officers who work side-by-side with their White counterparts who are viewed as being those most often to transgress.

Surely, they have viewed these incidents take place. So why do they not talk about it? Is it that they are worried about the fallout from their counterparts? Are they concerned about administrative retribution or ambivalence to their complaints? Or are they just too wrapped up in the concepts of "go along to get along", hoping beyond hope that if their White counterparts see them as trustworthy, they will receive better treatment and respect from them?

The culture of law enforcement is routinely based on high levels of trust, comradery and support among fellow officers. They must be able to believe and feel that their brother officers have their back in times of crisis. And this concept is most certainly made vividly clear to Black and Latino officers from day one on the job. They need to know that their counterparts will be there to assist them when they need them. That they will be treated like it is truly an all in Blue system. The existence of this system, however, exemplifies the failure of efforts to control police abuse and misconduct.

Yet as Black and Latino law enforcement professionals, we have a higher standard to meet in our interactions, and indeed our obligation, with those communities we hail from. We must serve not only as law enforcers, but as law providers. We must ensure that they are treated with the levels of respect and dignity that they deserve, regardless of their circumstance. It then becomes incumbent upon us to ensure that our counterparts act appropriately. We must ensure that they act professionally when they interact with our communities.

The attempt to curtail police corruption and dishonesty is not a new phenomenon, having been associated with agencies both large and small throughout the country, with police abuse, misconduct and related issues being some of the most significant issues to citizens, practitioners, and researchers alike. Limiting the effects of police abuse and misconduct has been found to be a prime factor in ensuring police legitimacy, bringing higher degrees of ethical behavior, and retaining the confidence of the public, particularly in communities of color where the system of justice is often considered highly adversarial.

Yet it is the police themselves who can possibly do the most to stem the torrential tide of racial profiling and police abuse. Investigations of police misconduct and abuse have routinely been distracted by the unwillingness of the police themselves to come forward with evidence of wrongdoing.

First, just don't practice it. Remembering that they were likely taught long ago that they should treat everyone in the same manner they themselves wish to be treated, will be a good start. Secondly, be honest with yourself. You know who conducts their activities in a much less than professional manner, and very likely know why they do so. By allowing them to continue, not only do you become a part of the problem, but you allow them to endanger your own welfare and safety.

So a suggestion, particularly for Black and Latino officers, but for all who have sworn to uphold the law and protect the community. The next time you observe a fellow officer acting in an inappropriate manner (and you **KNOW** there will be a next time), pull them aside and let them know that what they have done is wrong, that you object to their manner, and that they must change their attitude and behavior if you are to continue to work together. Doing this, you will have complied with the unwritten code; your fellow officer gets a chance to correct their behavior without incurring any further wrath; and the community may just become a little more responsive and safer for all concerned, including police officers. And for Black and Latino officers, it should not make a bit of difference who they are or what they look like, as we must recognize that there are those who look like us who may be at fault as well. Some of us have simply, and very obviously, forgotten who we are supposed to be and where we came from.

But after that first warning, *and it should be the **ONLY** one they get from you*, **RUN, DO NOT WALK**, to the nearest supervisor or Internal Affairs investigator. Do not let them continue to be a menace to the community and a danger to you and others.

Recognize that they are one of those true idiots in the profession that must be stopped, and that they do not deserve to carry a badge and gun, and do not even deserve to wear the same uniform that you do. If **THEY** won't do anything about the situation, feel free to contact the news media.

We as police officers are the only ones who can stop this insane activity. As Black and Latino officers, we owe it, not only to the community, but to ourselves. Getting rid of the idiots amongst us not only cleanses the system of its sources of abuse, it goes a long way towards regaining the legitimacy, trust and cooperation of those we have sworn to protect. As police officers, we must accept the fact the incidents like those that happened in Ferguson, MO and Baltimore, MD did not happen only because someone Black was shot by a White police officer. Our own actions, or inaction in the case of those who do not or will not speak out about abuse and misconduct, have much to do with the way the community perceives us, both as professionals and human beings.

And so I urge one and all. Speak out and speak up. We owe it not only to the communities we serve, but to ourselves as professionals.

Charles P. Wilson
National Chairman

The Ability to Reason

By Daryl K. Roberts

Chief of Police, Hartford (CT) Police Department
(retired)



As inhabitants of this planet, we have our likes and dislikes. Unlike other animals, we are conscious of our ability to reason. Therefore, we can make a decision to choose how we feel about everything, especially each other. Even well-meaning individuals have their implicit biases or hidden prejudices against members of other racial groups. I define prejudice as dislike of the unlike.

Implicit bias is a prejudice that applies to us all, however, it can be life threatening when it comes to police officers who subconsciously and in some cases, consciously harbor these bias feeling. These feelings of prejudices can and do influence how those individuals in law enforcement decide who gets treated fairly and unfairly. The major issue with implicit bias is that police officers may use unnecessary force and illegal tactics based on their personal feelings of their dislike of those individuals who are not like them; their dislike of the unlike. When this happens, it is usually defined as a form of poor judgement.

Conscious or unconscious, these judgements are wrong. It is ironic that police officers are able to control themselves and conduct themselves properly when they encounter people they approve of and identify with; the police officers in these cases will give the individual the benefit of the doubt. During these encounters the police officers make decisions based on information and experiences from their life style. This can be misleading, which can result in incorrect judgement, especially when their police training is disregarded. This allows police officers to hide behind these poor decisions when the real problem is that they dehumanize people. Police officers, in most cases, may use unnecessary force and totally ignore their training. It should be no surprise that implicit bias exists within law enforcement.

When it comes to training, I believe that diversity classes are not enough. In most cases, implicit bias trainers cannot provide the proper training because their experience is limited to the class room. Experience is the best teacher. In order to be effective, you must get involved and be part of what you're teaching, not just from a classroom. That is why, in my opinion, the best police officers are those who are part of the community; they actually get out of the cruiser and talk to people. These officers can then share their insight and assist with the implicit bias training.

Acknowledging the truth about our own prejudices is a start to addressing implicit bias. We are the only inhabitants on the planet that have been blessed with the ability to reason and we still haven't figure it out, yet.

"Success is never final"

Black and Blue: Rebuilding the Bonds

NABLEO's 2016 Summer Conference took place on August 11 - 13, 2016 in Piscataway, NJ. It was hosted by the **New Jersey Council of Chartered Members of NABLEO**. Workshops included: *Creating Effective Organizations Through Managing Change and Planning* (speaker: Dr. Shirley A. Wilson); *Promoting "Fair and Impartial Policing" Through Understanding Implicit Bias* (speaker: Dr. Shirley A. Wilson); *Dealing Effectively with Community Mental Health Issues* (speaker: Dr. Alexander C. Sutton); *Effective Interactions With Youth* (speaker: Lieutenant Kenneth Reid); *Pre-Retirement Planning* (speakers: Cornell Fields and Richard Parrett); *Hate Crimes and Civil Rights* (speakers: Attorney S. Emile Lisboa IV and FBI Special Agent Vernon I. Addison); and *Prevention of Police Misconduct Through Ethical Decision Making* (Chief Daryl K. Roberts). [One of our most valued speakers, *Investigator Elliot T. Boyce Sr.* was unable to present his workshops at the last minute. His father had a medical emergency and understandably, his rightful place was by his side. *The NABLEO family wishes Elliot's father a speedy recovery.*]

I must say that I was very impressed with the timeliness and subject matter of several of the workshops that were conducted. This included the dissemination of informative handouts, viewing and discussing various video clips, group exercises, and interactive discussions as a whole. During the workshop *Creating Effective Organizations Through Managing Change and Planning*, we learned the key points of strategic planning: planning, leading, organizing and controlling. We broke off into separate interactive groups to discuss the various things that force change in an organization and what or who will resist that change. Many participants felt the public release of several videos, showing officers shooting unarmed black men and the resulting public outcry in the form of protests, have forced many law enforcement agencies to review their use of force policy and increase training for their officers. The participants felt veteran officers are more likely to resist change but some of that is a lack of understanding or trust. Some of the ways to fight resistant are: **educate** officers on why the policy change has to be implemented and **explain** the benefit to the officers; bring in stakeholders to help; do your research/homework; communicate for effective change (coercion will never be received well); and have adequate resources. Organizational behavior was discussed, as well as performing an environmental SWOT analysis (**S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunity and **T**hreats) of an organization to identify the internal and external forces involved and strategic objectives. The participants were also shown how to develop an effective mission statement for their organization and how to develop a strategic plan. Some of the goals to consider are personal, family, financial, community, career, and short & long term goals. The goals need to be revisited to measure their effectiveness. This workshop offered great interactive small groups and provided key resources that can be applied to police departments and associations worldwide.

During the workshop on *Promoting "Fair and Impartial Policing" Through Understanding Implicit Bias*, various movie clips were shown to the participants to analyze its content. It was very interesting and informative listening to the similar and different comments given for the clips, based upon the participants' perspective, culture background, and personal and professional experiences. These video clips were used to discover the implicit bias that everyone possesses. One clip was of a white woman clutching her purse tightly as three young black males approached. If the truth be told (and it was during the discussion), black women would have clutched their purse tighter as well. Although the clip showed the young black males walking by without even paying any attention to the woman walking down the street. The same phenomenon occurs when a woman is on an elevator alone and a black male enter the elevator after her. A woman, white or black, would tend to stand closer to the emergency button or may even choose to walk off of the elevator before the door closes.

This workshop encouraged individuals to take an honest look at themselves to identify their own biases. Some implicit bias is based on stereotype, selective attention, projection and contrast.

The Effective Interactions With Youth workshop started with a televised segment of The Sally Jessy Raphael Show, which described how Lieutenant Kenneth Reid happened to be at the right place at the right time, to save a five-year from drowning. Reid also talked about how he picked up medicine, every two weeks, for the grandmother of a man he sent to prison. Reid sometimes pitched in his own money to defray the cost of the medicine. In court, the man thanked Reid, gave him a bear hug and vowed never to get in trouble again. Reid, who is recently retired from the Plainfield (NJ) PD, informed the audience of how a heart attack and stroke landed him in the hospital. While he was there, he received a fruit basket from an anonymous individual. The note on the basket stated "Thanks for not killing me." Reid realized the fruit basket was from an individual who one day was armed with an AK-47, was high on drugs and was about to aim his weapon at Reid. The individual listened to the verbal de-escalating tactic Reid used. Since the individual never completely squared-off his weapon at Reid, the individual's life was saved. Reid also described one of his prized programs **Coffee with a Cop**. Reid ended his presentation by saying "*Don't make promises you can't keep, when you talk to youths.*"

During the *Hate Crimes and Civil Rights* workshop, the presenters described the difference between a hate crime and a civil rights violation. There was discussion on 4th amendment right, civil rights violations, color of law, human trafficking and grand jury indictments of officers. They emphasized the need for Internal Affairs to conduct timely and thorough investigations; working with your community; and bringing in the U.S. Department of Justice to your police agency in the early stage of a police-involved shooting investigation.

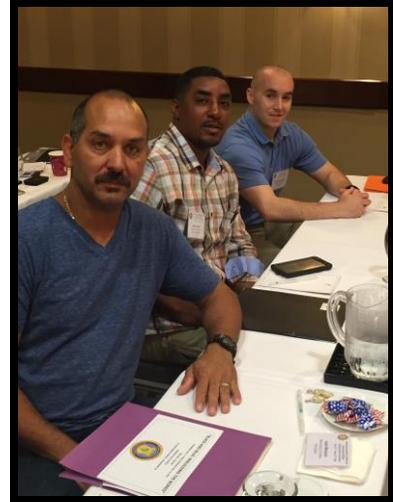
Participants reviewed several videos during the *Prevention of Police Misconduct Through Ethical Decision Making* workshop, which elicited very candid dialogue. This is the type of open discussion that needs to take place for members of law enforcement to understand the various levels of police misconduct, and how when an officer observes misconduct by other officers and fails to report it or address it, that officer is giving tacit approval for that type of conduct. One of the things retired Chief Daryl Roberts emphasized is the need to be fair, firm and consistent.

During our conference, a Certificate of Recognition was presented to **Hubert Smith**, for his retirement from the Norwalk (CT) Police Department with 29 years of service. A Certificate of Recognition was also available for **Mark Odem**, for his retirement from the Newark (NJ) Police Department with 26 years of service. **Digital Divide Systems Youth Presentation** awarded a new computer package to 7th grader **Kaced Holiday**.

During the last day of a conference, many people prefer to sleep in late, if possible, unless they have an early flight or need to grab a bite for breakfast. Around 8:00 o'clock in the morning, a very low, barely audible alarm went off in the hotel. The alarm was so low that many individuals either was not awoken or continued to move at their leisure. It was not until fire trucks and an ambulance from the Possumtown Fire Department arrived at the hotel, that guests became remotely concerned and congregated outside of the hotel. There apparently was an issue in the hotel's kitchen. What a unique wake-up call, just to prepare us for the annual Cook-Out at Possumtown Park! This festive event was hosted by **Men & Women for Justice** and the **New Jersey Council of Chartered Members of NABLEO**. The food was delicious and the atmosphere was relaxing; as we fellowshiped with one another and eat ourselves into a food-induced stupor. What a perfect ending to our conference!

Black and Blue: Rebuilding the Bonds

Picture Page (Workshops)



Black and Blue: Rebuilding the Bonds

Picture Page (Picnic)



On Your Shoulders, We Stand

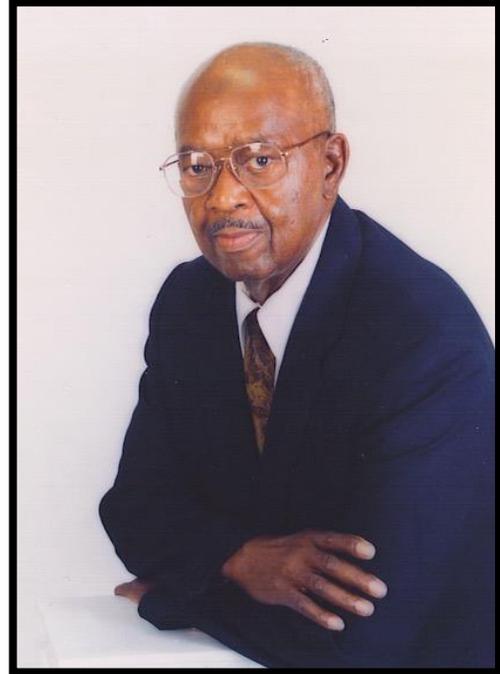
Abraham Wendell Bolden

U.S. Secret Service Agent (retired)
White House Security Detail

Interviewed by Shawn Kennedy

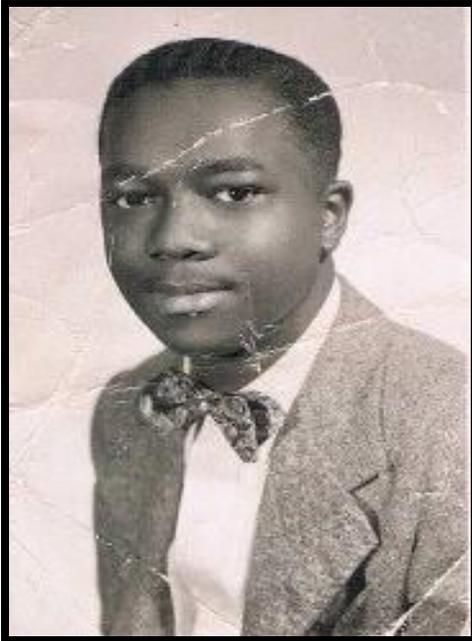
(September 06, 2016)

Sometime in August 2016, I happened to catch the tail end of a documentary describing the first African American U.S. Secret Service Agent who served on a Presidential security detail at the White House, under then President John F. Kennedy. **Abraham Bolden** was that agent. I must admit I never considered an African American being in the U.S. Secret Service in the 1960s, probably because most of my networking has been with local and state law enforcement officers. My exposure on a federal level was limited to my past networking with retired Chief Deputy U.S. Marshal Matthew Fogg (which is a separate article in itself). Anyway, the portion of the documentary I was able to watch happened to capture my interest enough that I decided to purchase *The Echo from Dealey Plaza: The true story of the first African American on the White House Secret Service detail and his quest for justice after the assassination of JFK*. I wanted to learn more about Abraham Bolden, in his own words. I took the book with me on a weeklong trip down South. I had no way of knowing I would devour the book within three days. The knowledge of this 2008 memoir caught my attention for the historical value that it contained. I had not expected to be immediately "hooked" after just reading several pages, let alone totally immersed into Mr. Bolden's life during his limited stint at the White House and his subsequent life after speaking out. As the book developed, each chapter captivated me so much that I simply could not put the book down. I was not willing to wait until the next day to discover what happened next or what the final outcome of Mr. Bolden's traumatic ordeal would be. I am sure my interest was partly fueled by my resentment of the possible extent the government might be willing to go to in order to sully Mr. Bolden's reputation, in an effort to protect the "status quo" of the United States Secret Service.



I find it amazing to know that allegations Mr. Bolden made in 1963, relating to how the inappropriate conduct of Secret Service agents might affect their ability to effectively protect the President, is the same behavior that still existed in 2012, when it became a media frenzy regarding the protection of President Barack Obama:

<https://www.washingtonian.com/2013/03/25/secret-service-prostitution-scandal-one-year-later/>. Racism in America is just as prevalent today as it was in 1963. Racism is still institutionalized and embedded into the foundation of many entities, not just in the hearts of individuals. Breaking down and/or changing the "status quo" can be equally hard to overcome, especially when you take a stance alone. I wonder how the Whistleblower Act of 1989 might have affected Mr. Bolden situation for deciding to speak out. **"At some point of our lives, we have all been guilty of remaining 'silent' because it was the safer thing to do."**



So upon my arrival home from down South, I was able to track down Abraham Bolden and humbly requested him to allow me to interview him for this publication. Mr. Bolden appeared to be as eager as I was about the interview. After sharing several emails and phone conversations, the day came for me to conduct my in-person interview. Although I was quite comfortable in Mr. Bolden's home, I still experienced a slight nervousness. Maybe because of our generational difference or simply because of what might be revealed that was not already known to me from his book. Whatever the reason may have been, I was a professional and Mr. Bolden was a gracious host, who answered my questions articulately, candidly and with a remarkable level of recall. So I will humbly share a condensed version of my interview with you.

Eighty-one year old **Abraham Wendell Bolden** was born in East St. Louis, Illinois on January 19, 1935. His father, who was a student of Black History, gave him the middle name Wendell, as a tribute to the 19th century abolitionist Wendell Phillips. He grew up in a household which included his mother, father, two brothers and three sisters. He had an interest in law enforcement at a very young age. His upbringing really helped to prepare him for what would have a major impact on his life. He is the recipient of numerous awards and recognitions.

SK: Tell me something about your childhood in East St. Louis during the 1930s?

AB: The teaching that I received from my father and mother was very religious. I recalled being highly concerned about the condition in the neighborhood. There was a lot of criminal activity: drugs, prostitution, etc. I wanted to one day do something about the crime I saw as a child. One day I witnessed two friends (Big John and Shorty) in a checkers game and they got into an argument about the checkers. Big John killed Shorty with a switchblade. I can remember seeing the blood shooting out from his neck. I was always very concerned about doing something in law enforcement to change this.

SK: What are some of the moral values were you taught as a young boy growing up in the in the 1930s and 1940s, and by whom?

AB: My father was the disciplinarian. He set the tone and my mother was the enforcer. We subscribed mostly to the 10 commandments. My father was against drinking and smoking. I received influence for "speaking out" from my mother. She was very frank and truthful. If you didn't want to hear the truth, you don't ask her. I received my analytical ability to think from my father, who worked two eight-hour jobs in

order to feed his family. He rode a bicycle between jobs. He set my value of working hard. He said we had to learn music and to do something with our hands. I became a proficient trumpet player. They called me "Lil Satch".

SK: When you were growing up in East St. Louis, which is sometimes considered the South, did you experience the effects of the Jim Crow laws?

AB: Oh yes. East St. Louis was just like Mississippi. We had separate bathrooms, water fountains and showers. Even in the movie theaters, Blacks had to sit up in the balconies. Even the neighborhoods were separate. There were deep customs that were engrained in us like: step down when a white person was walking down the same side of the street or never talk back to a white person. Leo "Fats" Gooden was the Deputy Sheriff (St. Clair County) and Lucius Hogan was the Detective for the East St. Louis Police Department. Both of these black men cared about the community. Gooden hosted a baseball team "Be Bops". Hogan would counsel children and visit our house and talk to our parents. It was a close fit neighborhood. These two men also influenced me into wanting to go into law enforcement. Gooden also influenced me in the field of music because he was an avid listener to jazz. When some guys got out of prison, Gooden would allow some people to stay with him. He weighed over 400 pounds. These two police officers were more like parents.

SK: What racism did you experience as a young boy growing up in East St. Louis?

AB: Separate washrooms; no colored admittance signs; colored and white washrooms, drinking fountain; discrimination in jobs – most Blacks working in the steel mills or railroads had dirtier jobs but it was a good living.

SK: What led you and your family to move to the Chicago?

AB: I went to school with a young girl, who was currently my neighbor. I used to pick on her and trip her when she walked down the sidewalk. One day, my mother asked me why I picked on Barbara. I said I did not like her. She told me I like her and said one day I would marry her. One day when I returned from college, I saw this pretty girl in East St. Louis, which was the same girl I used to pick on. Barbara happened to have really blossomed and we got married in 1955 in St. Louis, MO, and remained married for 49 years. (She died in 2005) After I graduated from Lincoln University in June 1956, I had an offer to go into teaching in southern Missouri. At the same time, there was a job for the **Pinkerton Detective Agency**. Barbara convinced me to follow my first love and become a Detective in Missouri. I was there for one year exactly. I was the first African American Detective for the agency. In 1957, I joined the **Illinois State Police** and was stationed in Peoria, IL, which is where I met Fred Backstrom, Special Agent In-Charge of the Secret Service in Illinois. I asked him if there were any Negroes in the Secret Service. He believed there was one but that I should follow up with that. I did. On October 30, 1960, I was inducted into the **U.S. Secret Service** here in Chicago, under President Dwight D. Eisenhower. That's what brought me here [Chicago]. I hated it then and I hate it now. I was a small-town boy and I moved to a big city with 10 more people and problems. People were coarser and very suspicious. They did not have the same camaraderie. It was like an environmental shock. In Peoria, there were 185,000 people, compared to Chicago where there were over six million people. People were colder. Barbara talked me into staying, although I wanted to leave. (During slavery, the slave block was in downtown East St. Louis.) After the election of John Kennedy for President over Nixon, I had a chance meeting with Kennedy in Chicago at the McCormick Place. At 8:30 PM on April 28, 1961, I was in front of a washroom at the McCormick Place. I was assigned to the bathroom to keep me out of sight. A uniformed Chicago police officer should have been assigned to the washroom, instead of me wearing a suit. I had on my special \$19.95 Sears and Roebuck suit and my Buster Brown shoes for the special occasion. I was clean! My wife made sure I dressed for that assignment. President Kennedy

happened to have used the bathroom I was standing in front of. When he saw me, he struck up a conversation and invited me to become the first Negro Secret Service agent on the White House detail. He asked if I wanted to be the first and I said yes.

SK: Do you go back to East St. Louis to visit friends and family?

AB: Oh yes, many times; to see my family and my father.

SK: You came from a nice size family. Do you have any children?

AB: I have three children Ahvia, Abraham Jr. and Darren Bolden (later changed through the court system.)

SK: What is your educational background?

AB: I have a BA in musical composition from Lincoln University in Jefferson City, MO. I received a music scholarship and **graduated cum laude** from my class. That was an all-black university up until 1954 (Brown vs. Board of Education.) My outspokenness got me into a lot of trouble because I fought for more scholarship for academics instead of sports. I still fought it. They threatened to expel me from Lincoln University. I enjoyed it because I got a lot of people scholarships who otherwise would not have received it. (Alicia Hastings – she was from a family of 13 brothers and sisters. Her scholarship was not enough to allow her to remain in college. She was a straight “A” student with a double major: mathematics and chemistry. Athletes who flunked out of school were having all expenses paid. I fought for her to remain in school and to receive more money. She was Black and eventually became a medical doctor.)

SK: What major differences did you experience living in a big city from when you came from a smaller town?

AB: I found attitudes were the same, as far as the division of the races, which were the same. The technique was different. In East St. Louis, they were more open about their feelings. In Chicago, they were more secretive.

SK: Are you a member of a church?

AB: Yes, I'm a mentalist. I am more of a Universalist.

SK: Are you a member of any social organizations or Greek fraternity?

AB: Yes, Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity. I am also a member of Alpha Kappa Mu National Honor Society, which is a Black national honor society. There were no chapters of Phi Beta Kappa at black universities.

SK: What sparked your interest in having a possible career in law enforcement; first starting with the Pinkerton Detective Agency, the Illinois State Police and later the United States Secret Service?

AB: My interest was in trying to do something that the people would be helped. Also to answer the injustices I witnessed against our own people and to understand the criminality of the situation.

SK: How would you describe your experience with the Pinkerton Detective Agency?

AB: It was a wonderful experience. They would send me to various classes: surveillance, interviewing, etc. I was the first Negro detective for their national agency. (*The founder, Allen J. Pinkerton, was commissioned to protect President Abraham Lincoln, which was the beginning of the Secret Service. Hundreds of years later, I, coming from the same agency, would become the first African American assigned to the White House detail as a Secret Service agent. President Lincoln's secretary's last name was Kennedy and President Kennedy's secretary's last name was Lincoln.*) President Kennedy impressed me because he had suffered much and understood suffering. In his eyes, I would see he

was sincere about helping level the playing field for colored people. I say that because he had a heart that was very sincere. We shared many conversations and he introduced me to many people. He did not have to do this, if it was only for political reason. That's why I made the sacrifice that I did, which was good and also bad. I feel he was one of our best Presidents. He made sure I reaped the benefit of flying on Air Force One and on his helicopter. He impressed me as being a fair-minded person with a compassion for humankind. His sincere treatment of me caused problems for me with other agents. Some agents would call the President a "nigger lover". Some of the Secret Service agents got caught up in the public attitude to stop any advancement for the black man. Some agents said they would never take a bullet for him [President Kennedy]. Some agents were very racists. That's why after my 30-day probation period on the detail, I opted out of the detail. The racism was so intense and the hate for President Kennedy was so intense, that I discussed it with the Chief of the Secret Service. He allowed me to transfer back to Chicago, where I continued to be a "thorn" in the Secret Service.

SK: Why did you leave the Pinkerton Detective Agency and join the Illinois State Police?

AB: For better pay and a substantial advancement in police work.

SK: How long were you with the Illinois State Police and describe your experience while you were with that agency?

AB: I was with the ISP for four years. During my last year, I became a member of the Vice Squad of the ISP. It was a great experience. There were some racism, but not to the level of the Secret Service.

SK: What motivated you to join the United States Secret Service?

AB: I wanted to work my way up; I thought it was better training. My objective was to work up to the FBI. I did not know the inner working of the government at that time. I wanted to go as high as I could go so I could find better solutions. I was looking for the knowledge and the judicial and executive systems.

SK: When you joined the U.S. Secret Service, did you have any mentors in law enforcement who assisted you in your career?

AB: No, not when I joined the Secret Service.

SK: What type of tests and background clearance were you required to pass in order to join the U.S. Secret Service?

AB: I had to take the standard civil service test and a special test administered by the Secret Service. I had top clearance.

SK: Once accepted into their training academy, approximately how long was your training and how intense (rigid) was the program?

AB: I went to Secret Service Treasury Enforcement School for six weeks. Another training came later for approximately 13 weeks. We had 10 hours days, six days a week.

SK: If you can recall, approximately how many other African American candidates entered the training academy with you, and of those who did, approximately how many successfully completed their training?

AB: One, other than myself. He was being trained for the Internal Revenue Service. We were both under the Treasury Department at that time. It's now under the Department of Homeland Security.

SK: Were you excited about being accepted into the U.S. Secret Service?

- AB: Oh yes; it was a step up from the Illinois State Police. Just the word "Secret" meant something more. I had studied up on it and just the thing of protecting the President, I thought that was fantastic. I was sworn in by Deputy Chief Secret Service Paul J. Paterni and the next Monday, he wanted me to go to the Federal Reserve Bank to pick up four counterfeit bills. I asked him where it was and he said "That is your first assignment". I found it.
- SK: Can you describe the types of assignments you had during your first year as a Secret Service agent?
- AB: Counterfeiting, check cases. I had 100 percent solution of solving my cases. I had a lot of informants because I knew how to treat people. I got the press, the ink, the paper and the person. Maurice G. Martineau wanted me to give some of my cases, which I worked up, to other agents so they could get my credit. I never did. Martineau did not like me and I felt the reins tighten when he became the Assistant Agent In-Charge. John Hanley was the Special Agent In-Charge. He did not like Martineau so he had me to give my reports directly to Hanley, instead of Martineau, which was against the manual. I was placed directly in the middle. Hanley liked me and wanted to recommend me to become the Assistant Special Agent. Hanley was transferred to Paris and Martineau became the Special Agent In-Charge, so I knew I had to start looking for another assignment.
- SK: During your first year as a Secret Service agent in 1960, did you have aspirations of retiring as a Secret Service agent?
- AB: I wanted to move up to become an FBI agent or a Diplomat to one of the African nations.
- SK: Do you feel your time spent at Pinkerton Detective Agency and the Illinois State Police greatly prepared you to become a Secret Service agent?
- AB: Yes, definitely. Especially the training I received at Pinkerton.
- SK: Do you feel your upbringing played a major role in how well you would do in the role of a Secret Service agent?
- AB: Yes, because I was a lot like my father. I was for justice. I believe my background suited me very well. (As a Secret Service agent, I would arrest someone and sit them down and speak to them. I wanted to learn the commonality of why crime was occurring. I sometimes acted as a sociologist more so than an officer. I had to suffer by going to jail because I had to speak to them, as a criminal to a criminal, instead of as an officer to a criminal. I was interested in the physiological aspect of it. Some people asked if I would go through it again and I said yes. I learned about the things from what I did.)
- SK: Prior to being assigned to the White House detail, how was your experience as a Secret Service agent?
- AB: Not very good in some cases. This was a very stressful time for black people, like hanging a noose over my desk. They would also leave a black face on my desk. I would complain about it. They said I was being thin-skinned. Some racist language was also used in meetings. They thought these things were funny. Some agents would walk outside of the office door and "shuffle along", believing that they were funny. Working with the European agents was interesting because they felt their jokes were funny, but they were not.
- SK: Do you feel this was because you were a black agent and/or because you were very proficient as an agent?
- AB: I feel it was both. I think if I had been European, it would have brought on some jealousy.
- SK: Was being assigned to the White House detail considered to be an "elite" assignment?
- AB: Yes, it was thought to be.

- SK: When President Kennedy approached you in front of the bathroom at the McCormick Place in 1961, was any other significant individuals with him?
- AB: Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley, Illinois Congressman [William] Bill Dawson, Cook County Commissioner George Dunne, and Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson II, were with President Kennedy. He stopped in front of the washroom where I stood, instead of just walking inside.
- SK: Did you feel it was an honor to be asked by President John F. Kennedy to serve as the first African American Secret Service agent assigned to his White House security detail?
- AB: Absolutely. Not in a million years would I have felt that it would have ever happen. I knew I was walking into history.
- SK: How seriously did you take your new assignment of protecting the President of the United States?
- AB: Extremely serious and I was surprised that some of the agents did not have the same attitude. I felt I was protecting something much larger than the presidency. When Kennedy was killed, a lot of other things died in the process.
- SK: Why was this such an important role (assignment) for you?
- AB: It was not only an assignment for me, but it laid the foundation for my people. It was another feather in the cap. I looked at it as an advancement for our people.
- SK: Did you feel that your new assignment to the White House detail was welcomed by your fellow agents?
- AB: No, they had formed the "Good Old Boys Club". When I came in, I broke that chain. They were not allowed to say all of the things they normally would say. I did not feel welcomed by the other agents.
- SK: What did you learn regarding the conduct and behavior of some of the other agents, who were also assigned to the same detail, which made you feel the integrity of protecting the President of the United States could become compromised?
- AB: As a new agent, I heard from other agents in Chicago. I heard of the drinking and having fun with girls. I witnessed these conditions. They did occur. There was a lot of drinking, womanizing and misuse of government property (cars). I had hope this was only rumors but I learned firsthand they were not.
- SK: What did you do with this information regarding the behavior and conduct of some of the other agents who were assigned to the White House detail?
- AB: I went to the Chief of the Secret Service and Inspector [Thomas] Kelley of the Secret Service. I told Kelley that the conduct of some of the agents compromised the safety of the President. Kelley was the person who eventually investigated the assassination of President Kennedy. (While I was in prison in 1966, someone tried to burn down my house by setting fire to my garage, using gasoline. The Chicago Fire Department said it was Arson. This was my current house in Chicago now. My neighborhood at that time was 50 percent black and 50 percent white.)
- SK: Did you ever consider the possible ramifications of deciding to speak out on the conduct and behavior of the other agents?
- AB: Yes, I thought about the ramifications. But frankly, I thought I would get more support from the Civil Rights community, after the assignation [of President Kennedy], but I did not get the support I thought I would.
- SK: In hindsight, would you have still spoken out?

- AB: Yes, with one exception. I later found this out but not at the time. I was unaware that the Warren Commission had already decided how this would play out. I would have never spoken out (walked in to a trap) if I had known a memo already existed identifying who the lone shooter would be. I thought the Warren Commission was truly going to conduct a thorough investigation to get to the truth of the matter. I found out about the memo in the 1990s from someone filing a Freedom of Information Act.
- SK: Was remaining silent ever an option for you?
AB: Not really.
- SK: At the time you chose to speak out, did you hear of the term "Blue Code of Silence" (Blue Wall of Silence)?
AB: Oh yes, but that did not make a difference to me. I felt my allegiance was to the American people and not to any individual who was violating the law.
- SK: Did you speak out regarding the conduct and behavior of other agents, prior to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and/or after his assassination?
AB: Both times.
- SK: What was it about Abraham Bolden that prevented you from remaining silent?
AB: My dedication to truth and justice. I could never bargain with injustice. It was just who I am.
- SK: Once you spoke out against the conduct and behavior of other agents assigned to the White House detail, how did your experience as an agent change?
AB: I felt they were going to set me up some type of way. I feared and sensed they would come after me. Agents would become quiet around me and would have closed-door meetings that did not include me.
- SK: Did you feel the only reason you were being targeted was because you spoke out or because of your allegations challenging the integrity of the U.S. Secret Service, as well as your allegations were in conflict with the Warren Commission Report that no conspiracy was involved in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy?
AB: Yes.
- SK: How did it make you feel when you learned that an arrest warrant had been issued for you and that you were being charged with conspiracy to sell a secret government file?
AB: It was unbelievable. I thought they would try to drum me out of the Secret Service but I never thought they would get together with two gangsters to get rid of me. I requested a transfer to St. Louis but they vetoed that, as well as my request to be transferred to Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- SK: Did it anger you that the government would go to the extent that they did to discredit you, in an attempt to silence you?
AB: Yes, I became very angry because they did not have to go that far.
- SK: Would you describe some of the judicial misconduct that occurred during your trial that surprised you?
AB: The biggest thing that surprised me was what the judge told the jury on July 12, 1964, during deliberation. The federal judge [Joseph Sam Perry] said it was his opinion that I was guilty. They locked us out of the building during deliberation of the second trial on August 12, 1964.
- SK: Do you feel that some of the witnesses for the prosecution perjured themselves during your trial?

- AB: I know they did. One of the witnesses later admitted it, Joseph Spagnoli, before the same judge and said the U.S. Attorney told him what to say, using a piece of paper.
- SK: Why do you feel that your attorney was not allowed to introduce the necessary evidence, during your trial, which may have resulted in an acquittal?
- AB: He was just not allowed to do it. I was to be discredited at all cost.
- SK: Were you mentally prepared for your guilty conviction and subsequent six-year prison sentence?
- AB: Yes, I was prepared. It was a normal reaction, standing before the judge, to beg for mercy.
- SK: Why did you feel that even after your guilty conviction and prison sentence, the Secret Service wanted to further discredit you and to destroy any bit of respect or credibility you might have had?
- AB: Because it might reopen the Kennedy assassination, which might challenge the security of America. I might raise questions about our democracy.
- SK: Please describe some of your experiences in prison, at the various locations you were transported to?
- AB: I spent time in the psyche ward in the U.S. Medical Center for Federal Prisoner (Springfield, MO). I felt I had to overcome that time, if I ever expected to rejoin society.
- SK: How did you feel while spending time in solitary confinement?
- AB: It was very trying. I just knew I had to survive it. I wondered if I had the strength to endure it. It was like a chess game. I had to figure out how I would counteract what they were doing. I obtained the divine strength that I looked for my entire life. That helped me to endure.
- SK: What do you believe was the overall objective to sending you to the psyche ward while you were incarcerated?
- AB: They were hoping I would have a total mental collapse so the judge could certify me as being insane. The Creator did not allow that happen.
- SK: While serving your time in prison, were you ever threatened and/or harmed?
- AB: I was threatened a number of times, in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas in 1967. Three times within 10 days.
- SK: How were you able to maintain your spiritual sanity while in prison?
- AB: I had a lot of self-help on that. My wife visited me and gave me confidence in myself and reminded me that I had something to live for.
- SK: Did you ever consider taking your own life while in prison?
- AB: No.
- SK: Your attorney filed an appeal all the way up to the United States Supreme Court, but it was turned down. How did this make you feel?
- AB: It was a big let-down because I still had some level of confidence in the judicial system. With the evidence that was revealed in how my rights were violated during trial, it wiped out my confidence in the judicial system.
- SK: Do you feel the government wanted to break you financially and spiritually?
- AB: I was already broken financially but they wanted to break my reputation; more mentally than spiritually. Break me down mentally to the point I would not be able to think or be a reasonable human being.

- SK: You were paroled from prison in 1969, just four months before completing your entire sentence and having no further obligation to the government. Your two-year parole required you be under the government's jurisdiction for two additional years. Do you feel this was done by design?
- AB: It was done by design. Absolutely.
- SK: Describe how you felt when you actually walked out of prison?
- AB: It was almost like a dream. I wondered if this really happened and how I survived. I knew I had a job but I wondered how I would merge back into society. I wondered how I would be accepted by my neighbors and society. I knew it would be an adjustment. The green suit they gave me was too tight.
- SK: Describe how you felt when you were able to return back home to your family?
- AB: Oh man, it was great! My wife Barbara was standing there when I got off the bus in Chicago at 3:30 AM on September 26, 1969. I started to cry. She said "I told you that you could do it". When I went into prison, the last thing my wife told me was "be strong".
- SK: Describe what type of impact your incarceration had on your wife and children?
- AB: On my wife, it had a negative impact. The children did not really understand. My wife told them I was teaching. I could see it in her face that she was doing time as I was doing time, because she had to keep the family together. It killed my mother, figuratively. My mother cried hard when I went into prison.
- SK: Describe what type of impact your incarceration had on you, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually?
- AB: I believe it caused a lot of health problems: heart and back. Spiritually it gave me more faith. Mentally – it lessened my confidence in the government and it increased my faith in God.
- SK: How did your experience make you feel about the government, or more specifically, the United States Secret Service?
- AB: I did not hate the Secret Service or dislike them. I felt, in a way, sorry for them. Especially because after I was telling the truth years ago, the same things I complained about is occurring in the modern times. I did not glee in it, but it crippled my ability to see myself living in a true democracy.
- SK: How long did it take you to regain some level of control and normalcy over your life again?
- AB: I did a lot of writing during the first two years, spiritual writings. It took a couple of years and things seemed to settle down. I still tried to clear myself and worked diligently to recover as much of my reputation as I could.
- SK: How have your experiences made you stronger or diminished you?
- AB: It made me much stronger spiritually. It answered many questions I had wondered about all of my life.
- SK: What job were you able to obtain upon your release from prison?
- AB: I had a supervisor job with Ingersoll Products – Quality Control.
- SK: Would you describe your job?
- AB: I stayed there for a year before they moved. I did quality control for other engineering companies for 35 years and retired September 11, 2001.

- SK: If you were able to go back in time, do you believe you would still speak out regarding the conduct and behavior of some of your fellow agents assigned to the White House detail?
- AB: Yes, definitely. I am elated with the final outcome. If there was an assurance I would learn as much as I did, I would do it again. I thank God that I went through that experience because I learned what I had been seeking all of my life, although I suffered through the process, mentally and spiritually.
- SK: Do you regret how your family also paid the price of you speaking out?
- AB: I do. I regret that because my wife never regretted it.
- SK: How do you feel about the Blue Wall of Silence (Blue Code of Silence) as it relates to today's law enforcement?
- AB: I think that it has to be torn down. If we are going to progress in civilization, we have to make note of it and try to correct it.
- SK: At the remarkable age of 81, who is Abraham Bolden today?
- AB: **A man dedicated and consecrated for the search of truth and the uplifting of humanity.**
- SK: If you had an opportunity to live your life over, would you venture into a career in law enforcement?
- AB: Probably not, now that I know what I was really seeking was in a spiritual field. I would not follow it into police work. I would go directly into theology.
- SK: What was your best experience in law enforcement?
- AB: Meeting President Kennedy.
- SK: What was your worst experience in law enforcement?
- AB: Meeting Harvey Henderson of the Secret Service. He was the Assistant Special Agent In-Charge (July 3, 1961 @ 6 pm. in Hyannis Port, Massachusetts.) He told me I was a nigger, I was born a nigger, I would die a nigger and I would never be anything else but a nigger, so I needed to act like a nigger. (Henderson saw me having an in-depth conversation with Robert and John Kennedy and felt I was out of place.)
- SK: What are you most proud of in your law enforcement career?
- AB: Two things: one is becoming the first African American Secret Service agent. The second is the many people I helped in giving people a second chance and going to the U.S. Attorney to speak on their behalf. I have helped many of our people to stay out of jail. I found solace in that. (I was able to use discretion in my position.)
- SK: In light of all that is being revealed in today's climate in law enforcement, what words of wisdom would you like to offer to police officers, and also to those in positions of authority to establish policy?
- AB: Always treat all individuals the way you would want to be treated.
- SK: In 2008, you published a book titled *The Echo from Dealey Plaza*. What motivated you to write a memoir of your experience as a Secret Service agent?
- AB: My wife was responsible for that. I wanted to only write a book for my family members which was 755 pages. This was so my family would know the truth. My wife suggested I publish my book so I started sending out my manuscript. I sent it out to several publishers who rejected it originally. I sent out a second wave of manuscripts, which so happened to be sent to one of the previous publishers who rejected it before. That publisher decided to read it and flew me out to New York to discuss the

manuscript. Three of the largest publishers wanted to publish the book. I went with the second largest publisher, Random House (Shubert and another big publisher.)

SK: What would you hope that readers will learn from reading your book?

AB: Constancy and trust in God.

SK: What would you hope members from the field of law enforcement, would learn from reading your book?

AB: Courage.

SK: Are you still trying to receive a pardon for your conviction from President Barack Obama, prior to him leaving office?

AB: Yes, on the basis of innocence.

SK: Is there anything else you would like to add to this interview?

AB: No, I am grateful of the opportunity to discuss my experience with you.

SK: What are three words or phrases that you feel best describe you?

AB: **Compassion, empathy and spirituality.**

"I cannot begin to express the depths of my gratitude in having been granted personal access to delve into the mind, heart and soul of such a remarkable individual. I now have an even deeper understanding of perseverance and the pursuit for truth and righteousness. I hope Mr. Bolden's experiences and pain is a catalyst for members in law enforcement to discover their own inner strength and moral compass, as it relates to not remaining silent in the face of injustice or misconduct. Mr. Bolden, I thank you for the historical and heartfelt education!"



Chicago's finest (**Officer Ronald Burrell, Jr., Officer Eric O'Suoji and Sergeant Shawn Kennedy**) in attendance at the Eagle (Nigerian) Social Club annual event, at the Hilton Hotel on December 2, 2016.

Newark Bronze Shields, Inc.



The **Newark Bronze Shields** partnered with the **Believe in Newark Foundation** and other organizations to host the largest Holiday Toy Drive in Newark, NJ. We provided over 2000 Newarkers with toys, canned goods and love!



In 2011 the **Newark Bronze Shields** petitioned the Newark Police Department to create a new police explorer program. We created the **Newark Police Explorers Post 2808**. To date, we have over 50 youth enrolled in our program. We meet every Monday and Wednesday from 6:00pm-8:00pm every week, every month, every year! No breaks!! They need us, we're there!



Kiddie Korner Learning Center reached out to the **Newark Bronze Shields**. They did not have any presents for their preschoolers! Well, you know we showed up! Our Children...Our Future!

Newark Bronze Shields, Inc.



Over the past seven years the **Newark Bronze Shields** has provided over \$75,000.00 in academic scholarships to college bound Newark residents. Our 2017 Scholarship Dinner Dance was attended by over 500 supporters!! We will continue to work for Our Children...Our Community! (2016 scholarship recipients)



The **Newark Bronze Shields** received the **Guyton Callahan American Legion Post 152 Community Service Award** tonight!! A unified team of police officers committed to making great things happen in Newark, NJ and beyond!

WHAT TO DO WHEN CULTURAL AWARENESS IS A LOW ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITY

By Shirley Wilson, PhD.
Professor of Management, Bryant University

Police officers have all heard about the importance of increasing cultural awareness in the workplace. It enables police officers to deal with minority and immigrant populations more effectively by understanding the beliefs, values, and customs of people different from themselves. But, if the organization does not value, or places a low priority on the development of cultural awareness, how does the individual officer develop competency in dealing with cultural differences?

Police officers are charged with the responsibility of protecting and serving the citizens they represent, investigating crimes, issuing arrest warrants and helping community members in times of crisis and emergency to name a few of the many tasks they perform. As a result, police training often focuses on criminal law, crime scene investigation, patrol officers, firearms training, domestic violence and other tactical topics.

As police service immigrant and minority communities, the residents may become targets of crimes or witnesses of crimes. Some of these diverse residents may never even report crimes or reach out to police because of past bad experiences and lack of trust with law enforcement. Therefore, police need to develop an understanding of cultural differences in order to gain access to and protect minority communities. The police are expected to effectively serve communities while engaging in safe interactions with community members from all cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Community residents expect to receive fair, equitable, and safe law enforcement services from police departments without fear of excessive force, racial discrimination and brutality.

This intersection of expectations is where cultural awareness and law enforcement meet. Law enforcement professionals that possess cultural awareness better understand the needs of citizens and exhibit actions that take into account the cultural context of citizens. Therefore, police officers should be trained to respond appropriately in cross-cultural situations which involve cultural awareness and sensitivity when dealing with culturally diverse citizens. Unfortunately, leadership within some police departments may not provide this type of training for a myriad of reasons including lack of expertise, cost, staffing and cultural blindness. As a result, the overarching question becomes how does an individual police officer develop cultural awareness without the support of his or her department or agency?

If this is the case in your department or agency, individual officers must take responsibility for developing cultural awareness on an individual basis. Some strategies include:

- **Self-awareness:** become aware of your own feelings towards differences. Tap into your own self-awareness skills by asking yourself “Why do I think this?” and “Why am I feeling this way?” and be prepared to adjust your responses or actions as necessary.
- **Observation and sensitivity:** There are several ways to become more culturally aware. Studying up on diverse cultures is the first step. Use your powers of observation by paying attention to how community members interact with each other. Increase your level of sensitivity by listening more than you talk.
- **Communication:** Outstanding communication skills are valuable in any employee at any organizational level. They're even more important when dealing across cultures. While it is helpful to speak the language of the community residents, an understanding of the local culture can help you become a skilled communicator.
- **Appreciate differences:** A culture is built on more than just food, music, art, and clothing. Its foundation includes stories, values, and beliefs passed down through generations. Learn to value a culture's contributions to the greater society.
- **When in doubt ask:** Don't be afraid to ask questions and talk to people. By being humble and acting like you genuinely care about residents, you are more likely to gain acceptance by residents and develop trust.

Remember, anyone can increase their own cultural awareness by paying attention to their own behavior, attitudes, and beliefs.

In Our Prayers

Ernest Tyrone Brown passed away on January 7, 2017. During his 34 years in law enforcement, he achieved the ranks of Deputy Superintendent, Chicago Police Department; Chief of Police, Darien Police Department; and Director, Cook County Homeland Security.

Leila Bailey, wife of NABLEO and BATONS member **Dwight Bailey**, recently lost her brother **Larry Adams, Jr.** and her half-sister **Althoria Jones** in March 2017.

Robert “Bobby” Rivers, who was a staunch member of the National Black Police Association (NBPA), passed away in January 2017.

Newark Bronze Shields member **Stephon Waddell** suffered a massive stroke in 2016. He is still in serious condition. Our prayers are with him to make a speedy and full recovery.

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 positive things that are taking place in our respective municipalities and communities. It is equally important to share information with the community that we serve and to remind them that 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



The Echo from Dealey Plaza
By Abraham Bolden

***Breach of Peace: Portraits of the 1961
Mississippi Freedom Riders***
By Eric Etheridge

**Simeon's Story: An Eyewitness Account
of the Kidnapping of Emmett Till**
By Simeon Wright

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

National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers, Inc.
www.NABLEO.org