

BLACK & WHITE COP STORY

Years ago, I was a cop in a high crime neighborhood. One night my partner and I received a frantic call from two other cops in a gunfight. We raced toward the action, as three felons outgunned them and stole their police car. Ours and several other police cars continued in a highspeed armed chase. The felons drove recklessly away as they madly fired shots out a shattered back window.

I don't recall much more. I regained consciousness in a hospital. The bed next to me was empty and I heard noisy confusion from news reporters and others. I also remember hearing crying. Heavily sedated, I tried to make sense of what happened. It soon became clear my partner was killed. They said I was lucky since I was also pronounced dead.

The felons were arrested. Sometime later, the ringleader looked at me in court and said, "I'm glad your dead partner was (expletive) White too," and bizarrely laughed as he was led away in handcuffs. Witnesses confessed they intended to kill White cops that night.

What they didn't know is my partner was a minister in a Black Baptist Church, happily married to a Black woman, and had two children together. (Please pardon the racial nomenclature.) They also didn't know I too was in an interracial relationship (now married with children as well). And more than half our fellow police officers were Black or other minority, and we regarded each other as one single family. Now years later and retired, we're still family.

But on the streets, we were mostly viewed by others as just Black or White cops. The community we patrolled was mainly Black. The White cops were particularly despised. But we'd all be cursed at, punched, kicked, stabbed, or shot. We learned not to order fast food unless in plain sight lest it be spit upon. We parked our police cars away from tall buildings since heavy objects would be thrown at us from windows high above.

Yet the media sells news, and embellished news sells best. White cops are portrayed as racist, and criminals as victims. Research and studies agree on the following statistics: White cops mostly shoot Whites, Black cops mostly shoot Blacks, and the majority of all suspects shot by cops are White, not Black (pnas.org).

This is not to deny racism in policing. But contrary to popular belief, we considered racist cops a risk to our own safety and a detriment to the community we esteemed as our own. We not only patrolled the streets but became lifelong friends with many in the community, and several, me included, fell in love and married across racial lines.

Now as a retired police officer I'm on a task force that assists cops who endure trauma. We go to shootings or other crime scenes before it becomes news. Some of the incidents later receive national news attention. What they report is rarely accurate. Thankfully there are journalists who deserve high honors. But sadly there also are profit motives that influence the final product.

We should admit racism is real, and also that unsubstantiated anti-cop bias is a danger to police and to the community. Exaggerated conflict keeps police and communities defensive and divided. We all have enough of our own prejudices to work through without the added weight of gossip and slander. And we can better spend our days regarding one another as members of one human family.

Please See References