

The following was written, as part of an exit interview, by a police officer in Douglas who is leaving. He wanted to share the officer's side of life with you. He was involved in the recent rescue situation on the river. Little did he know when he wrote this that he would soon be called to risk his life to save the life of another. One officer lost his life trying to save someone else. All of us should take very seriously what he tells us. We could substitute the name of any law enforcement officer in our community for his and still be telling a common story. We have many unsung heroes in our community, law enforcement, search & rescue, fireman, ambulance people; and the list goes on to all of you that get involved in helping others. Thank you.

Cops explained.

Any community in the world has a group of people broken up into certain job sets that contribute to the well being of the community. There is one group inside these communities that is the most loved, most hated, most respected, most disrespected, most anticipated, and least missed. This group is completely voluntary and very selfless; I am talking about law enforcement. The police are considered the most highly visible and active arm of government to the citizens. There are two views of police officers, good and bad. These views are based on life choices not by the actions of each and every individual officer. I spoke with an elderly woman once who cursed me as I approached her vehicle on a traffic stop, I asked her what I did wrong and she told me she did not like the police. Without hesitation I asked her why she did not like the police and she told me it was because she received a traffic ticket several years before I was born in a another state. As I spoke with her she said that was her only contact with law enforcement. I finished the traffic stop and started thinking. Why does my uniform bring out the worst in people? How can someone think (how) I am going to treat them before I even talk to them? What did I do getting into this career?

These questions answered themselves over the next two years. Every cop knows there are two views of cops, good and bad. We will be judged, we will be second guessed, but we will make a difference. Ask yourself how many times in your life you have questioned a police officer for what they did or did not do, why they did what they did or why they did nothing. Now think of how many times you have questioned 10 other occupations, I am certain you do not question doctors and fast food workers as many times as you do the police.

Why are police officers judged so harshly by the community? Here is why, we represent government, we are always visible, we are invited into people's lives and we are expected to have all the answers on demand. The life (of) a police officer changes every second without warning. We never know what the radio can (come) up with next; during a typical shift I will experience contrasting emotions. They include, but are not limited to, boredom, excitement, anger, tranquility, terror, joy, frustration, gratification, and the list goes on.

The police are represented in the media as bad or very bad. Any movie that is based on the life of police officers shows corruption and that is another reason we are judged so harshly. In real life media you will very rarely hear a story about a cop doing something good. If an officer does something wrong you will hear about it, and get everyone else's spin on what happened.

What I am trying to get across is; please give us a chance, we are not bad people. We are not always looking to take someone to jail or ruin someone's day. We are protecting and serving you and your community. We work for you, my supervisors have never told me to go to a call, you tell me to go to a call. When we are driving down the street next to you and you observe a traffic violation you think "if that was me they would have pulled me over." Traffic stops are the most common form of interaction with the police and I can sum it up by saying we are simply playing referee. The police are never anywhere they are not invited, if you are speeding you are inviting the police into your life, if you have a brake light out you are inviting us into your life. If you see a traffic violation that we do not take action on we may be going to a call, we may be going to court, we may be transporting a prisoner or someone's dog. We strive for excellent service and we hold ourselves to a very high standard.

In closing, I am asking you to give us a chance and before you pass judgment on us put yourself in our shoes. When you are with your children and you see a cop, don't say "he is coming to get ya." Portraying the police as a negative aspect of society to children prevents them from giving us a chance.

Thank you,

Jeremiah Owens