

The BJA Executive Session on

Police Leadership

2015

The BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership is a multi-year endeavor started in 2010 with the goal of developing innovative thinking that would help create police leaders uniquely qualified to meet the challenges of a changing public safety landscape.

In support of an integrated approach to creating safe and viable communities across America, the project directors recruited 20+ principals from a range of disciplines. The principals, in turn, led national field teams of practitioners focused on the work of policing and the organization of the future.

To gain new insights on leadership, the *BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership* engaged police chiefs in documenting their own paths and invited leaders to participate in various audio and video forums to tell their stories and discuss the future of policing and police leadership.

Please visit our website, <http://bjaleader.org>, to learn more about this project and to access a broad array of interactive, multimedia resources.

The principals are supported in their work by a team that includes project director Darrel W. Stephens, project strategist Nancy McKeon, and BJA Senior Policy Advisor Steve Edwards.

From time to time the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department Chief Steve Anderson sends his employees email messages to share his thoughts on current issues in policing. In this email Chief Anderson made his employees aware of a speech on race relations by FBI Director James Comey. He also provided his perspective on the challenges police continue to face in developing and sustaining the trust and confidence of the public. The BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership received permission to publish excerpts from one of those emails on its website. Chief Anderson's email has been divided into two parts. In this part he turns his attention to the 50th anniversary of the historic events in Selma, Alabama and their legacy today.

Part 2: Selma - The Nashville Connection and The Long Path to Change

by

**Chief Steve Anderson – Metropolitan
Nashville PD - March 10, 2015**

Last month, CBS news correspondent Bob Schieffer traveled to Selma, Alabama to visit the site of what has become known as “Bloody Sunday”. On March

7, 1965, a group of African-American citizens started out on a 54-mile march to Montgomery, Alabama, to demonstrate the need for a reform of the voting laws. Various voting registration tests were in place to ensure that Black citizens were “qualified” to vote. One such test consisted of determining the number of jellybeans in a jar.

As they walked, two abreast, across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, dressed in suits and other similar attire, attempting to leave Selma, they were confronted by law enforcement officers. The grainy news footage from that day indicates that they were not just confronted but, instead, literally brutally attacked. One of the first to be hit was then Activist, and now Congressman, John Lewis. He was knocked unconscious and woke up later in a church, not knowing how he got there.

Lewis has Nashville ties in that he attended and graduated from American Baptist Theological Seminary and Fisk University. While here in Nashville, he worked closely with Reverend James Lawson and Reverend Kelly Miller Smith as they worked to attain equal rights for all persons. One such effort was attempting to be seated at a downtown Nashville drugstore lunch counter. Over the next few years, Lewis was arrested several times as he took part in protests and demonstrations calling for integration.

Shieffer interviewed Lewis on the bridge where he was knocked unconscious, and again in the Selma courthouse where he was arraigned after his arrest. The scar still on his head from the attack on the Edmund Pettus bridge, Lewis spoke about his life, the change in America over the span of his life and about where we need to go from here.¹ Lewis also talked about the speech just delivered by James Comey and how, he too, believes that we cannot let Ferguson escape our grasp. That if we do not resolve these issues while we have the opportunity, there will be another Ferguson.

On March 8, 2015 thousands of persons traveled to Selma to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of “Bloody Sunday”. Among those attending were more than 90 members of the United States Congress, former President George Bush and First Lady Laura Bush and President Barak Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama and the entire Obama family. As a leader in the “Bloody Sunday” march and as a current United States Congressman, John Lewis introduced President Obama to address the thousands gathered there.²

While it is easy to reconcile our thoughts by proclaiming that this is “ancient history” and all in the past, it is actually only one short lifetime ago. In one life John Lewis went from not being able to sit on a stool in a Nashville drugstore to becoming one of the most respected and influential members of Congress. Certainly, Congressman Lewis remembers those days when he could not enter a “Whites Only” area and when he was arrested, often not in a kind manner, for attempting to do so. While it would be very easy, and very hu-

¹ A transcript of that interview is available at:
<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/face-the-nation-transcripts-february-15-2015-mcdonough-corker-lewis/>

² Portions of that ceremony were featured on the CBS “Sunday Morning” presentation, March 8, 2015.
<http://www.cbsnews.com/sunday-morning/>

man, for Congressman Lewis to be bitter, he is not. He talks continually about the positive change in America and how far we have come, while acknowledging that we still have a long way to go.

How does this change come about? It will come about because those in leadership roles across America will exercise that leadership to bring about positive change. You and I are in a leadership role and have the responsibility to do our part in leading America into the future. Thank you for the work you have already done and the work I know you will be doing in the days, weeks, months and years to come.

Finally, both the Department of Justice report on the “Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department” and the interim report of “The President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing” have been published. These reports will become the hallmark for law enforcement agencies to be compared to in the future. Both of these reports are being reviewed for comparison to our own practices. You will likely hear more about these reports.

Part 1: **The Power of a Single Officer to** **Influence Police Race Relations**

9/29/2015

<http://bjaleader.org>

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