

#BackTheBlue: What it is Really Like to be a Police Officer Today

Hearing the Velcro rip and the heavy Kevlar vest hit the floor following the sound of a gun belt slammed on the table is something too familiar for the families of police officers to hear. Thanks to the media and movements such as Black Lives Matter, police officers are terrified to go to work every day.

Being related to a police officer means that you are used to them missing birthdays and holidays because they are out protecting our communities. When you are a blue family, you dread hearing the phone ringing or hearing the words “officer shot” on the news because it could be your dad, your uncle, or your cousin. Even if it isn’t, it is still blue blood.

“My best friend and the love of my life works for the Kansas City Police Department. He works in terrible stressful conditions to uphold the laws of this country. Laws that at times we civilians don’t understand...” Stephanie Stott, wife of a Kansas City Police officer said.

The media has done a great job reporting on the Black Lives Matter movement, but how many media outlets have actually reported on the #BackTheBlue campaign? #BackTheBlue is a public awareness campaign designed and dedicated to displaying public support for law enforcement throughout the United States. Every day, police men and women pin on their badges and risk their lives to protect and preserve our freedoms in our communities. They continually encounter dangerous situations and keep us safe in ways we will never know.

“I back the blue because police officers serve our community every day in often dangerous situations. They are who I will always call in an emergency. It is my privilege

and honor to support them, I back them every day. I'm grateful for their service and protection for our community," Beth Wilson, sophomore at Northwest Missouri State University said.

Many people are not aware of the statistics behind police involved shootings. About 50 percent of fatal police shootings involved whites and 26 percent involved blacks. The majority of these incidents involved criminals who were armed or somehow threatening the officer with a potential lethal force. Whites comprise 62 percent of the population while blacks make up just 13 percent, so there is some disparity in these numbers.

Violent crimes have drastically increased since the Black Lives Matter movement began. Protestors charge the streets of cities screaming "pigs in a blanket, fry them like bacon," or demanding that we need to start killing police officers because when an African American man or woman is arrested, it is considered to be racist even though they are guilty of committing a crime. Crime rates in Kansas City are up 37 percent and up 60 percent in St. Louis since the beginning of the Black Lives Matter movement.

"First of all, parents need to place a greater emphasis on having their children do something constructive with their time. These are the people who are committing the majority of the crimes in these communities...", Sergeant Brad Stott of the Kansas City Police Department said.

Police officers are often scared to police violent neighborhoods because they fear public response to necessary police work. If the officer is in fear for his life, he can use deadly force to stop the threat. This means that a police officer could reach for their gun instead of a Taser if they felt threatened. Research has shown that a suspect who comes within 21 feet of an officer can inflict harm before the cop has time to react so officers will try to distance themselves from

the suspect. Contrary to what you see on TV, police are not trained to shoot to disarm. They are trained to shoot to stop the threat to themselves and the people they are protecting. In 1985, the Supreme Court Case Tennessee v. Garner created the Fleeing Felon Rule, which stated that officers could use deadly force on a fleeing suspect. Today, officers can only do so if they believe that the suspect is going to cause death or serious injury to the officer, other officers, or the public.

Police Officers in Kansas City Missouri are working towards building a positive relationship with the community around them to try to avoid any future conflicts.

“Communication between the community and the men in blue is also vital. If the police have a good rapport with the people, they’ll be more inclined to assist investigators when a crime occurs and the overall view of police officers will be more positive,” Officer Paul Burkhalter of Kansas City Police Department said.

By building this positive relationship, the war on police and Black Lives Matter movement and protests can come to an end. No one will have to fear for their lives on a daily basis. You can visit www.backtheblue.us to donate and show your support to the law enforcement officers who protect you every day.