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**Intro:** Welcome to the Let’s Talk Government Podcast. A podcast that is provided for you by the department of government at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Located in Minnesota in the United States. I am your host Dr. Pat Nelson, the chairperson of the government department. I want to thank you for joining us as we explore different topics about government. Some may be surprising to you and some may not, so please enjoy.

Welcome to episode 21 of the Let's Talk Government podcast. This episode we're doing something a little different and have partnered with Pox Christy, which is a catholic community in Eden Prairie to be a part of their justice speakers series. Dr. Pat Nelson and Dr. Carl Lafata, our guest for the speaker series, specifically their event law enforcement and racial equity. The law enforcement and racial equity episode is moderated by Dr. Miriam Porter, who is from the Department of Government at Minnesota State University, Mankato and Wayne Ward from the Pox Christy community. So enjoy as you listen to Dr. Carl Lafata and Dr. Pat Nelson from the law enforcement program at Minnesota State University, Mankato talk about law enforcement and racial equity.

**Dr. Porter:** Let's go ahead and get started with the questions Wayne.

**Wayne Ward:** Ok, the first issue or the first focus area we would like to ask our speakers to address is the Law Enforcement Education and practice past, present, and what the future looks like.

**Dr. Nelson:** So, thank you for having me, I will start off here; I am a product of the Minnesota professional peace officer education program. So not only do I teach in it, but I went through it before I became a license officer in Minnesota. So in the 1970s Minnesota created what’s called the peace officer standards and training board It’s legislatively created to oversee peace officers in the state of Minnesota. When the board was created, they also created what they called the professional peace officer education program and required that you have a minimum of a two-year degree which is commonly known as an associate's degree to be a peace officer in Minnesota. They accredited a variety of schools, mostly in the Minn-state college and university system, but there are a couple of schools outside of it as well. As time has gone along there have been the development of 4-year programs and Minnesota State University, Mankato was the first four-year program that was approved. We were approved in the 1980s and so we have a long history of providing professional peace officer education. So why did Minnesota require that you have an associate's degree when most other states across the United States only required a high school degree? And that was historically because the post forward and the legislators realized that by having an associate's degree, you have some more maturity, you get to have some formal education on critical thinking and decision-making and professionalism was part of the professional movement in law enforcement. So that was our past as we have gone forward there have been changes to the professional peace officer education program. Right now, we have about 483 specific learning objectives we meet within the program before somebody is licensed as a peace officer. There are multiple components to it, so we provide at Minnesota State University, Mankato what’s called the academic portion. They go through a four-year program. So they get a Bachelor of Science in law enforcement with us and then they have to complete the skills or hands-on portion that is done through a community college. So what's the difference between a two-year degree and a four-year degree? We spend a lot more time on the theoretical level and we get further in depth into critical thinking and decision-making in the four-year program. We have to cover all the same learning objectives, but again we have a broader general education requirement. I would like to think our students in the four-year program are a little more mature because they spent more time in higher education and we really do have some good candidates. Now as we look towards the future and I sit on a lot of committees about this cause I'm heavily invested in this, we're still going to have a professional peace officer education program. Some things that are coming up in the future is standardizing the skills or hands-on training. Ensuring that people, our students, are getting out with more experiential learning experiences within the community and also just realizing their civic engagement and their public engagement outside of the law enforcement classes. I think that's where I see the future going. But I am going to let Carl chime in on what he thinks about the future of law enforcement education.

**Carl Lafata:** Well the history of it has remained actually relatively static. Law enforcement has been seen as more of a hands-on job. It is one that has valued on the job training and that’s not necessarily a bad thing. A lot of what law enforcement does is an actual skill that one performs whether it’s driving a right **[inaudible]** or putting handcuffs on someone. The idea of college educated police officers or college cops are really the first attempt at least in this country for that was when August Vollmer was chief of the Berkeley California police department in the 1920s and he was able to recognize the value of more highly educated police officers. He reached out to people that were graduate from UC Berkeley that couldn't get a job because this was in the throes of the Great Depression and so he had a chance to bring people into law enforcement that would never have given it a thought because they were of upper-middle-class or upper-class backgrounds that were able to go at that time to college. Prior to that, in the United States law enforcement jobs were essentially given to people as political patronage jobs. They were bought, they were awarded. I actually have somewhere in my files an old price list from the New York Police Department that talks about how much it cost to get acquainted and promoted to what rank and so on and it wasn't until the professional policing era after World War II that Civil Service Commissions were established and in large metropolitan areas as well as some states. Minnesota as Pat said came to the fold with their post board in the 1970s and a lot of states did that after the civil unrest in the 1960s and President Johnson's commission report challenge of crime in a free society came out and recommended in-service training and these boards and higher education levels for peace officers. Some states were a little bit on the forefront, the state of Michigan where I was a Michigan State Police Trooper. The Michigan Commission on law enforcement standards, which used to be the Law Enforcement Training Council, they were established in 1965. Just after the civil unrest in most parts of the country, but before the 1967 Detroit Riots. And then the California Commission on peace officer standards and training was established in 1959. So you know some states went a little bit further and generally the more populous states with a greater tax base and so, the idea of whether or not education helps is a peace officer doing their duty? Seems like common sense for many people, but I think the desire for that I think waxes and wanes over the course of time and generally mirrors a variety of factors like tax bases. The economic conditions in the greater society, so you know if you have for example, we push for a little while to have the Michigan State Police education requirement to be greater than a high-school diploma or a GED. Now most of the Troopers came into the recruit school with at least an associate's degree or higher, but the State Civil Service Board would not entertain the idea of a higher education standard because the rank of state trooper or the job title state trooper would be classed as a profession under Civil Service rules and therefore the starting pay would be higher. Many states have a system similar to what Minnesota has though and the reason is, really has to do with tuition revenue. So in the early 1990s, when I finished my bachelor's degree in sociology, I could have completed the tail end of that by attending a police academy. In California you go to a 6-month Police Academy as a Capstone at the end of your two-year academies or two-year degree program. A lot of states do this because they have a captive audience. If you want to go to a police academy or skills-program or whatever you call it, then you have to take this prerequisite work and the Capstone is this hands-on, you know putting holes in paper and running around cones and things of that nature. And so even though Minnesota is unique in that they have a state requirement for a two or four-year degree, many states have that as a defacto requirement because the community colleges control who gets into those programs. And so I don't see that changing anytime soon, there's a huge difference between training and education and as Pat said we try to focus on the more academic coursework and hopefully the students gain an appreciation for that. And what we try to convey to them is that knowledge will help them. A general knowledge. University education gives them a universal perspective and hopefully we can impart some of that on them. The future, I don't believe, and this is my own personal opinion, but I don't believe you're going to see widespread higher education requirements for peace officers. If it was going to happen it would have happened by now. Agencies don't want to, municipalities I mean and counties and State Police agencies, they don't want to have to pay the higher wage that a college educated peace officer requires. That would demand you know of the market. Now, Minnesota, the police officers get paid very very well and that's a reflection that they require the degree to go into the profession. You go down South, you go to parts of the Southwest, you go Southeast of this nation. Police officers are making barely minimum wage. The communities don't have the ability to pay for the cost of a higher educated peace officer. The courts have upheld a requirement for higher education for peace officers and in Michigan we used to see that as a way to weed out candidates when there was a lot of interest in the jobs, in a lot of applicants but they've also upheld the fact that you know agencies can turn down a candidate if they score too highly on an aptitude test or they have too many degrees. And that's actually been upheld by the US Circuit Court of Appeals, the second district. So and that was back in 2000, so the point is I think you'll see things remain relatively status quo from an education standpoint. And then as far as training every State's going to do it differently and it's not like the fire service every state wants to put their stamp on or give, give the training their flavor whereas fire services is based on science. You put the wet stuff on red stuff, it doesn’t matter. Fire is the same here as it is in South Carolina as it is in New York state and so there's a bit more uniformity there. So I think more of a focus maybe on training and things like de-escalation is the topic coming out but I don't think you're going to see widespread increase in the in the educational minimum standards for entry and in-service training simply because money and tax revenue things of that nature are finite.

**Dr. Porter:** When we think about the practice of police, what changes have we seen over the decades? And this question really relates to my experience in local government management. when I started in the 80s and 90s, it was protect and serve and then the philosophy has kind of evolved to be more the warrior, you know how to fight it out or protect oneself first and so does that represent what you see in law enforcement Pat and Carl? That evolution of philosophies as far as the practice that officers in the field are engaging in?

**Dr. Nelson:**

So I’ll jump in on this first, I know Carl has a lot of opinions on this as well, but yes there has been a change since and there's a couple of reasons why they changed, but before I get into that let’s talk about the 1980s. The 1980s is where women, the late 70s and the 1980s is where women really got a foothold in law enforcement. Many of the first classes of female officers like in for example in Minneapolis was right at the end of the 1970s. I think 1978 is when they had their first female officer graduate the academy and so we saw the girls of women in law enforcement, but then it plateaued. If you look at law enforcement in general, women make up about 12 to 14% of law enforcement agencies across the board. And this is the same with many of the diverse groups, ethnic groups, racial groups many of them hold at about 10 to 15%. If there is that much representation in there. So it doesn't always reflect the community, but when we look at philosophies in law enforcement a lot of its driven by training and what training is available. When we talk about the warrior mindset or street survival, street survivals one I went to. You know it's hyped up as the training to go to hone your skills as you're working the streets and combating drugs and fighting gangsters and it really took away from the community policing aspect, but if you look at where the federal funding comes from or the funding within the city's comes from. Is if you could get funding to cover training and it was focused on you know drug intervention or if it was focused on gang intervention then the Feds would pay for it and departments would jump on that and do training cause it covered some in-service requirements they didn't have to pay for it, they can get their officers through training. The officers usually were interested in it because it was something different that was going on and then the complete community policing initiatives that might have been funded within the department didn't really have that training component it was we’ll fund a community policing initiative, but you got to come up with it. And when you throw that on agencies they would do what they thought was best or what maybe the latest trend was in community policing. I was in Minneapolis when New York was doing compstead and you know New York and compstead is really heavily studied. It was not as successful as when they first started talking about it, but you know somebody went to a chief’s conference and heard about compstead and decided to bring back to Minneapolis and they called it code four and use that same kind of system. Did it help? Not really, you didn't really see a change in crime, you saw some changes in community policing out of it, but because they model the New York model. What was working or what was perceived to be working in New York did not work as well in Minneapolis because everybody has a different culture. And granted some of the other agencies around Minneapolis didn't use anything like that because again they had a different culture, they had a different population. So I saw a significant change in just what training we would go to, what training was encouraged when we were officers and sergeants and then what we encouraged our officers to focus on in the department and with the surrounding agencies, but I know Carl, this is, this is his area so I'm going to turn it over to him on that one.

**Carl Lafata:** Well, I think it's an interesting take in terms of the demographic makeup of law enforcement as a whole and you’re right there is a bit of a difference. My agency the Michigan State Police, my main agency where I was for nearly fifteen years. That agency even today is almost 95% Caucasian, 92% white male. Not a whole lot has been done to diversify the ranks, but I think we'll talk about the demographics later on. I think the thing that is interesting, where the warrior mindset has come from is a reflection of governments focus at the federal level not so much in the terms of grant money, but the language that is used. So think about Lyndon Johnson, he talked about the war on poverty. You get into the Nixon era, now we're talking about War on Drugs. The War on Drugs is manufactured to target communities of color and antiwar protestors. (18:38 timestamp) And there was a variety of things that really conservative politicians generally like to traffic and fear in the 1980s with the U.S. still a predominant Superpower. The only thing that we could really be afraid of other than the Red Menace and the Russians was our own internal strife with things like drugs and so you know the Reagan Era led to you know I think more weaponization of law enforcement and then you get into you know this is all the sudden we just came into the community policing era, well for the preceding how many decades we were talking war, war, war. And I think the reason that was tempered even back then was the fact that the you know the vast majority of police officers well over half were Veterans of the military and they understood what being a true warrior was. And it wasn't this cartoonish cliché I watch Full Metal Jacket once and I know what it is to be a soldier you know we know that it was basic training in the commander from my last job in the military was nothing like what you see in the movies. I mean, you know, it’s a caricature, a cartoon caricature. We started recruiting people that didn't have this military background and somehow we were trying to instill in them things like discipline and you don't just having that that presence that a police officer needs in the field and so they develop these warrior mindset trainings in these you know get tough sort of training that we were sending these, literally these kids just wandered into law enforcement from suburbia that have never had any experience in confrontational situations and how those programs are designed to work is to scare the police officer into believing that everyone's out to get them and you have to respond with greater force than they respond to with you and so on and so forth **(Timestamp: 20:11)** to the point, it's got to the point now where for example, California post will not allow officers to go to the street survival seminar they're not post approved so California officers at 1 with 10 have to go to Nevada where apparently there's no rules for anything **[inaudible]** well anyways but all kidding aside the lack of veteran status for the folks coming in to law enforcement really has kind of given them a warped view of what a warrior you know he's supposed to be. My job as an artillery officer was to blow stuff up my job is a State Trooper was to protect reserve, defend. Very very different and so you have people that that have a very kind of skewed idea what a warrior is and then you couple that with the federal government giving them carte blanche on all sorts of military weaponry that they absolutely do not need. You have the rare case where SWAT team needs a bearcat, anti you know army personnel carrier rather, and they’re you know granted that. But we're giving these officers more military grade equipment, we're giving them uniforms that look like battle dress uniforms, we’re giving them this idea that everyone's out to get them. They’re 21 to 23 years old with the first time they've had Authority and responsibility in their lives and given weapons in a souped-up car you know what could go wrong? And so I think all of this kind of summing it up all of this has to do with it creates a culture of fear. And when people are fearful, they are reactionary. When people are fearful they embrace the tenants of the perceived group and this is why that Thin Blue Line us-versus-them is so predominant it is a direct reflection of the fear I think a lot of officers feel because they have been told to be fearful. **(Timestamp: 22:22)** You know I thought it was very interesting when Minneapolis mayor said that they weren’t going to pay for warrior mindset training any longer. The union stepped up and said we're going to pay for that. They never said we're going to pay for legal update training, they never said we're going to pay for evoc, which is an emergency vehicle operations training, we're going to pay for your report writing training, the rest control-- no, we're going to pay-- it says a lot when an agency where officers within an agency believe that the most important thing in their training repertoire is warrior mindset training. It says a lot with how they regard the Public and that’s not necessarily a good thing in that case, and sorry Pat to bash on Minneapolis but it’s an interesting observation coming from you know, myself. You know the agency I worked for, our job was to go in when, part our job, was to go in when the local agencies needed back up because something got out of control and so the state police would go in and we would, we would supplant the local PD’s. And many times when the locals lost control of situations it was because they were too heavy-handed with you know what to do against it or just in general the public had enough and pushed back. So we would come in and it kind of be that well everybody can step aside and we would run police services in that community for a bit so, yeah I hope I answered that.

**Dr. Nelson:** I’d like to jump back in here cause I am a multigenerational law enforcement officer or was when I was in law enforcement. Carl has that too in a different perspective. But when I was-- I’m a fifth generation, so when I would talk to my grandfather about law enforcement, you know his perspective on how he policed was very much about being a part of the community, right? They didn’t go to warrior training, but they had a lot of veterans on the police department. I didn’t get a chance to talk to my dad about this, but my mother was a police officer. And we would actually argue over the dinner table because she worked in North Minneapolis when she was a younger patrol officer, I worked in North Minneapolis when I was a patrol officer. And we would argue about how to respond to things because you know when you add that 15-20 years difference in there about when we were responding, we had different trainings that go with it, and we had different perspectives on it. So, I mean it definitely is a difference in training. I'd also like to mention I did talk about CompStat from New York. That is a computer-aided program that they had that you would—they would weekly put out the crime statistic for an area and bring in the Commander's for each area and ask them what are you doing to address a specific crime. So literally they would interrogate the commanders of different areas, if you had a 2% increase in auto thefts this week, what are you doing to address that? So that's kind of the overview of what CompStat was so that’s what they did for code 4 as well. So I just had to jump on that.

**Carl Lafata:** Interesting thing with CompStat is it resulted in a lot of the police command telling their officers to take Liberties and make bad arrests so that they could meet their quotas essentially. To give you an example how long ago CompStat was started, the reason—CompStat if you think it stands for computational statistics and all these—CompStat, computer statistics is all, it basically was an Ms. Doss and they could only use an eight character name for the files, it was on a floppy disk with the name CompStat that’s where that came from. But yeah, piggybacking what Pat said about the history, my dad was Detroit PD in 1965 and when he got out of the academy he was given brass knuckles department issued, a tommy gun, a led sap, which is a piece of led, wrapped in led that you can hit somebody on the side of the head or neck with and they can pass out. And when you know I would tell him about some of the things that I would do in the communities of color that I would work, he said you don't call those people sir. He says you take your name plate off and put tape on your badge number so they don't know who you are. That was the Detroit way and when we worked in Detroit we had, as troopers, we would have almost as much an obligation to protect the suspected criminal from DPD as we did from you know anything else in the community. So it was a very different, very different generational world that that he and I both worked in.

**Dr. Porter:** I didn't realize we had blue bloods among us and that you two were coming from families of law enforcement too that reach history. What you’ve been talking about as far as education and practice is going to lead us into more discussion a little in another topic area but I would like to move into you know the circumstances as far as race and first of all in our programs or in programs what percentage of students are we seeing of color? Or are minority students? Are we seeing, you know I think that you'd mentioned earlier that things have gotten stagnant or we kind of settled at 12, 14% but –

**Dr. Nelson:**

Yeah. That's actually pretty common is we're about 12 to 14% diverse students. So if you add in females then we get up to about 20% because there are definitely a variety of diversity among our females but about 20%. In the state of Minnesota that is very common, the only school that's really outside of that is our Minneapolis Community College has a larger diversity population but other than that we're all about 15 to 20% of diversity include female.

**Dr. Porter:** Ok does greater representation of minorities bring about greater racial equity? can we say that, and you know again what comes to my mind is in looking at—now we’re not getting into specific cases but just observations about the George Floyd case. Two of the officers, arresting officers were minorities and the police chief of Minneapolis is a minority. So I'm trying to wrap my mind around this as far as does representations of minorities impact our policing for greater racial equity?

**Carl Lafata:** Well there's a lot of different ways to look at it. Now there was just a recent study of Chicago PD, just came out a couple of weeks ago that basically found that Chicago PD Officers of color use their discretion more. In other words they went to the same number of calls but they used a rest or citation less frequently to the tune of 20 to 30%. Yet there are other studies that indicate no difference. In other words, that when a person of color becomes a police officer or someone from another underrepresented group becomes a police officer, they find it more beneficial to assimilate into the group culture. For example in 2015 Freddy Krueger Gray was killed in Baltimore and that is an agency that is 43% or was 43% black at that time. And so you know having that extreme and that is extreme in law enforcement, extremely high number of officers of color is it didn't change that attitude. Baltimore PD has had a number of issues that have come out with you know officers lying, planting evidence, things of that nature targeting the exact same communities that one would think you know these very racist white officers of history and **[inaudible]** would have otherwise targeted. And so the idea that you know greater diversity would help you know, it's really not as easy as that. Now one of the things that I think does help diversify, is higher educational standards because in many cases, and this is actually what my research has reflected, in many cases people of color that get higher degrees or you know go into law enforcement they want to go to an agency or Department that values education. So they would be more apt to go to an agency that has a four-year degree requirement or at least a two-year requirement than one that would not even if an opportunity presents itself. On the external side, from the citizen side its extremely important to have a diverse Workforce because in law enforcement because the police department is otherwise seen as an occupying Army. It's you know of a bunch of you know uniform looking white males going into a community that there's no connection. There was very difficult to make a connection because none of the officers look like the people in the community so it's like the community doesn't have a chance at being a part of that organization and therefore, they don't connect. Plus if it’s a community that has you know immigrants for example, you know--Minnesota Somali, Hmong, what have you, there is less cultural awareness right? Because there is less opportunity to learn, the officers to learn internally and so yeah it's a great thing from a community relations standpoint and you would like for a police department to have demographics that mirror the community it serves because you know I could talk to you about an hour, about this for an hour or so why this is beneficial. But the point is that depending on how overwhelming the culture of that agency is, depending on how much value that recruit puts into assimilating into the Department's overarching culture, will determine whether or not they feel free to use their discretion you know in a way that benefits the citizenry. And you know if they feel as though they will not be singled out for doing so because the other problem is if we just start taking onesie twosies of whatever demographic group a Chief wants to hire then it becomes very difficult to recruit because that person feels like they're a token. And the reason I know this is because I’ve talked to people of color that wanted to apply to the Michigan state police where you know when you look at a recruit school graduation photo it’s like a where's Waldo trying to find you know anybody other than a white male you know. And they would be hesitant to join the agency because they didn't want to feel as though they were a token where if they got promoted within the agency it was only because of, versus who they were. So it's actually a very complex issue and because it is so complex it is relatively difficult to recruit people from outside of the traditional middle class or upper middle-class white male.

**Dr. Nelson:** And then I'll just kind of piggyback on this a little bit and you know we saw this in Minneapolis when we started having a larger Hmong population move into Minneapolis. You know then they started we wanted hmong officers and that was good because you could connect with the community but our Hmong officers also didn’t want to be pigeonholed right? They were hired by Minneapolis they weren't hired by a specific neighborhood in Minneapolis and they didn't want to have limits put on or ceilings put on their abilities to work around the city. Just because they were Hmong didn't mean that they should be the only ones going to a Hmong call. We thought that with our Somali police officers, we had the first Somali police officers in the state and they got assigned to Cedar River Side where there was a large Somali population. Well after a little while they wanted to be able to do more things than—excuse me—than just be the police for the Somali people. It can be a danger to do that. I mean we saw this with female police officers and we still see this today. Oh well we have a female police officer she can go take care of the sex crimes report and she can take care of the sex crime victim because she's another female. Well, that's not all right? That's not all the female police officer can do, they should be able to do everything else that have an officer does. So you can see how that can be pigeonholing but on the other hand if you have no representation, if you are just literally an agency of white males then how can you truly be a part of the community and responding to the community. So it is that double edged sword and whenever you first see the first of anything higher in a department they have to find their way right? They have to find what they want to do, they do a lot of assimilation. If you look at current-- the current chief, chief Arradondo, he was part of a group of black officers that sued the City of Minneapolis for discrimination. And to see that he's the chief now is great but how much has that culture changed in that time and how much assimilation has there been? And do you still have that strength camaraderie between those black police officers or have they been seen as an out-group or are they a part of the in-group? There's a lot that goes on with that. I'm never going to be against making sure we have a diverse workforce in law enforcement but you can't also just put it on their shoulders. I've been, I've been with officers that are African American that were called horrible things you know being traitors, going against their people while we were out on a riot line. And I've sat and listened to what they were called and it's just, it amazes me that they would just sit there and take it. But on the other hand I was called things too just cause I was female. It doesn't automatically give you an in with the community, it really doesn't. You actually have to build those relationships no matter what you are, if you’re female, male it doesn't matter your race or ethnicity. You need to build those relationships too you can't just rely on your diverse officers to do that.

**Carl Lafata:** You know and that’s one of the things I talk about in my race and diversity class. Well, first of all I always joke with the students its nothing like a short haired white guy teaching about race and diversity. But that aside you know one of the things I talk about is white privilege you know because that’s a topic that has to be covered. I say you know, here’s a privilege that I have as a white male if I screwed up on the job as a cop no one goes oh my god look at these white male police officers. If a female officer screws up or an officer of color screws up, well see this is what we get for just taking any old person blah blah blah off the street. Then that burden weighs so heavy because they could be just as confident as any other officer on the department but they feel as though they have to speak for not only every officer of color in that area but also that in that community and it is a burden that I as a white male don’t have to bear.

**Dr. Porter:** Some excellent points here. One piece that I have homed from what you've been saying though is I’m trying to put pieces together to what's going to help us to make a change. And what’s gone wrong is that education, higher education might be one of those pieces to bring us to the next level. So what percentage of officers have college degrees right now and how many are coming out of Mankato? Mankato’s a big program but what percentage have degrees? Do you have a feel for that and how many might be coming out of Mankato?

**Dr. Nelson:** So right now there's about a thousand police officers in Minnesota it's really close to that number and the last ones before the 1970s have actually retired. So of right now everybody in Minnesota, except for maybe a handful I don't know about, have at least an associate's degree because they fall under those post rule that were created in the 1970’s. We graduate about 100 officers a year so we have 18% of the workforce have graduated from Minnesota State University Mankato. Most of them have 2-year degrees. Overall 25% have a 4-year degree. Now you might think that that's really small but you have to realize most agencies in Minnesota are smaller agencies. Minneapolis has an authorized strength of 800 they’re the largest agency, but most of them have officers of that are either 15 or less officers so that's why we have such a large spread of that. So yes we do have 18% of the workforce has graduated from Minnesota State Mankato and again about 25% have a 4-year degree whether they got it before they started the job or after the job.

**Carl Lafata:** Nationwide the stat is closer to 40% of agencies that requires some college and it's a little bit misleading because as I said before in many states, not all, but many states the community colleges run the academy or skills program so the officer by default is going to start with an associate's degree. I know that I just happen to check the chat and Martha had a question about veterans being held at the same degree standards in states that require you to attend a academy or skills program? Then yes if you are lateraling in somehow there are some states that require you to lateral in or that allow you to lateral in with experience as a military police officer even though the jobs are divergently different. Military police today is not like it was, without getting into the technicalities of it, they are essentially, army military police today are essentially a more heavily armed mechanized infantry unit. That's what they are, they're not cops running around on the basis of making traffic stops anymore that’s the department of defense has their own police department that does that. And so if you have somebody who did say 6 years as an infantry, as an infantry man or somebody in you know any other branch or you know service, marine, air force, whatever. They would still have to come; they would come back to Minnesota and they would have to go through a 2- or 4-year degree and a skills program just like anyone else. Aside from again, those exceptions where some states would count military police experience. You know the training has to be the same because the liability would be enormous for those agencies if they just took some guy, let’s say some guy from his deployment in Afghanistan, gave him a badge and a gun and here you go. Believe it or not that's what you **[inaudible]**. And we found that that’s not necessarily the case. Yes, military people you know tend to be very disciplined, very work-- have a good work ethic that kind of thing, but the job of a police officer today is so much more civilian oriented than military oriented. I think the only reason we haven’t gotten rid of the ranks is just because we don’t know what else to call each other you know. But otherwise it’s a civilian organization now. So basically that assimilation process for the veteran is one that essentially gets them used to working in the civilian environment. Where the military is obviously a different place but as it pertains to some of the other things that we talked about in terms of getting education to be the standard you know. I came into the Michigan state police, there was 110 of us in our recruit school and I was one of two master’s degree holders and they looked at us like we were just like, why are you here? And you know because it just wasn't required you could have gotten in with much, much less. And now agencies see the light of day and they’re using graduate degrees. For example, if you wanted to send to the rank of lieutenant or higher, you know you need to have a master's degree. But otherwise you know it’s still because they need so many people, and I’ll throw one more thing at you here. The Michigan State Police prides itself on its recruit schools. It’s a 20, its now a 28-week school in **[inaudible]** 6 days a week. They are so desperate for people now that I just found out from a friend of mine they're going to do the unthinkable and allow laterals from other agencies to go to a **[inaudible]** recruit school and that was never allowed in its 100 plus year history. And so now you know we had to lower the standards a little bit to get more people and that is I think something that you're seeing across the board. Yeah they’re going to pass the same background, yeah they’re going to be you know people that have the modicum of education training necessary but having that extreme amount of training that used to be the mark of the Michigan police state trooper. They just can’t can't do it anymore, they just can’t get the number of people they need. **(timestamp: 43:41)**

**Dr. Nelson:** Actually, Mary before you talk, can I just jump on the question that came up in chat here? Do the best and brightest graduates tend to head to the suburban courses? No. Everybody that goes into law enforcement kind of has an idea of where they want to work, right? I knew I wanted to work in Minneapolis and it wasn't because my mom worked there. It was because I knew I had the opportunity to work in multiple precincts, I knew I had a lot of opportunities to do like if I wanted to do canine, which I don’t. I love dogs but I didn't want to be a canine officer. But we had opportunities and we had a lot of training and it was the largest agency in the state. So I knew that if I wanted to move up the ranks, I had a lot of opportunity to do that. Those that want to work in suburban agencies maybe that was home, maybe that was there where they were comfortable, maybe they had a mentor or an officer they met there that they know I want to work for that agency. Maybe they wanted to work for State. We have students that want to be State Patrol officers. We have students that want to be DNR officers. So many times when a student comes into law enforcement, they kind of have an idea of where they want to work. I mean I give Carl lot of credit for being in the state patrol. I never wanted to be a trooper. I always wanted to work in Minneapolis and when I said I work in Minneapolis a lot of my students will go: well weren’t you scared the whole time? No. You know just like people want to work for Chicago, people want to work for Oakland, California. So its not always the best and brightest goes to the suburban agencies. Its where people want to go work is usually where they kind of go off into.

**Carl Lafata:** You’d look good in a hat, honestly. That’s kind of a running **[inaudible]** state troopers, wear their hats. And just to clarify, there’s a big difference between a state police and a state patrol. A state patrol, like the California highway patrol or the Ohio highway patrol, they have a very limited range of what they do in terms of basically traffic. Whereas the Michigan state police, New York state police, Pennsylvania, we are full service. So we’re more like the Mounties. We get dropped into an area and we’re it for law enforcement so, you do your own investigative work from day one. You do traffic on the wait of other calls and so it’s a very, kind of a different mindset. And so the cool thing about that is I got a taste of rural policing. But I also had to go into Detroit, flint, and I was posted out of battle creek, which is where Kellogg’s and post had their headquarters and it had a higher per cap murder rate in Detroit—than Detroit at that time. I used to joke there were a lot of serial killers, get it? Kellogg’s.

**Dr. Nelson:** Ok mute him, he’s done now.

**Dr. Porter:** Not yet, not yet. He hasn’t quite crossed the line. Well we’re getting questions really that go into the next area that Wayne’s going to introduce. And we’ll continue to try to tie some of these pieces together.

**Wayne Ward:** Ok so we've been talking about the culture and we want to change the culture I think to, towards racial equity. How do we do that? What strategies can you use to change the culture?

**Dr. Nelson:** I think Carl's waving me out, I'll start with this. There are things we can do in higher education to start the change so I'm going to start there and then kind of move over into an organizational culture. So what we can do in higher education is definitely instill ideas about ethics, about good decision making. We can actually start working on that us vs them idea by exposing our students to interactions with people that are different than them in situations that are not crisis situations. What I mean by that is if you are, if you have a student that’s come in that they're only real life interaction has been with people that look like them and all they think is if somebody is a black or African American person, is everything they’ve seen on the media, that's how your interactions going to go, that's not healthy. You know we are all people and if you base your knowledge and your decision-making on things you’ve seen on the media or your very first time you've interacted with somebody from a different race is during a crisis situation and then you carry that stereotype forward, that's not healthy and it’s not going to help build relationship. So we can in higher education, through our general education, through experiential learning, help expose people to different people that think differently than them, that have lived differently than them and have been raised differently than them. We can also encourage the culture of asking questions and not just blindly following authority. And I know Carl spends time on this, I spend time on this. And then the last thing is to combat the media images. If we did law enforcement like the TV shows did law enforcement, we would be in so much trouble. In fact in my one class what I would call mindset right now, I spend half of the semester combating media. You know we’re not like criminal minds where you can just kick in a door, put a gun to somebody's head and say you know just make the wrong move or confess your sins, that type of thing. There's a lot of things we have to follow and we still have to also combat some of the media of what is perceived as news or social media. So we can do some of that in higher education. We can also help with your organizational cultural change by getting our officers--our newer officers in there where they can ask good questions. We can have maybe some active bystander training which is asking questions without being accusatory, without seeming like you're always questioning authority but also understanding why they're doing things. Before I get off here can I describe experiential learning? That is where people go out in the community and either do community events with people different than them. Experiential learning is where they go take the knowledge that they learn in the classroom and apply it. So you know our skills of experiential learning. We’re trying to work on a course where people will go out with and maybe help host community events, internships are experiential learning. So there is some things we can do with cultural change but it can't just be our students that are coming in as brand-new officers being the only ones that change the culture. And you can't just have a brand-new chief or a chief come in and say that's it we're changing the culture. You have to get everybody in the organization on board to change the culture.

**Carl Lafata:** Yeah, that’s really a great springboard for me. Because I spent a lot of my time in law enforcement kind of and I just found myself in those types of situations kind of speaking truth to power. And if you google my name at Pacific Grove, you’ll see me you know in a suit and tie, bad mouthing my chief who was a very shady individual and yeah. She and I did not get along. She did a few things that I would consider to be not right. And I certainly let people know about that. I dropped infernal affairs complaints on command officers and defensive of an officer, we had an LGBT officer that was being harassed and she confided in me. You know I’ve had situations where I've had to help build packets to get officers terminated. It's not fun, it's very difficult and I was a union rep in California and Michigan you know just essentially your supervisor doing those kinds of things to clean house and get the folks out that shouldn't be there. And you know part of the reason I never promoted beyond sergeant is because I didn't want to. I didn't join up to be a carpet cop or a cubicle cop you know what I mean? I wanted to stay in the field and most places when you pin that gold badge on you are effectively no longer a police officer, you’re a manager. But the point is, is that I continuously pushed back against those negative aspects of law enforcement culture and you know some people you know respected that, some people especially, the command officers you know had some difficulty with that but if you are complying with law and policy you are always going to be in the right. And the luxury that I had was that I entered the business with a graduate degree and I got a graduate degree while I was working on my doctorate while I was working. So I always had kind of a plan B and so I felt comfortable really kind of pushing back against that culture and you know was able to effectively stay true to my own sense of integrity and values and try to instill that in the officers. To the point where you know, here; you have problem, you come to me, we’ll work on it. You know if you see something, say something and if you--I will always back you, that sort of thing. But I didn't see that in a lot of supervisors and this is the reason why these problems perpetuate the idea of staying true to the group, staying true to the group code is very powerful for a lot of officers and in many cases it's not because they fear retribution let’s say from their colleagues or they fear some sort of, some sort of other reprisal. It's just they don't want a negative work environment. When you're working with these folks 12 hours a day, you know 6 days a week, it’s difficult for you to go against the grain. You know especially in smaller departments where like as a state trooper I can just go to another part of the state if I work for a municipality. You know pushing against that negative culture is very difficult. So what you see instead are officers that lateral. In other words they’ll go from one department to another to escape that negative work environment and you know it allows that person to go to a better fit but it also allows that negative culture to perpetuate in those particular departments. And so it's very difficult to weed that out and so what I tell students you know when they go looking for jobs to apply to is you know do ride-a-longs, talk to officers cause officers love to gossip about other departments. You know see if what-- see if the culture that you experience and that you hear about meet your expectations. And we've had students that, theres one I'm thinking of in particular, made his way all the way to the chief’s interview, which is the final stage. And the chief was talking about the relationship with the community, the police-community relationship and the student was not comfortable with what the chief was saying, it was too adversarial and he pulled his application and got a job with another agency that met his vision. And I'm sure that chief found someone who was you know, in their image in likeness and you know again those problems perpetuate. So you know the thing about all of this is that we wish there were easy answers and there just isn't because law enforcement is essentially 750,000 sworn individuals give or take, and they all come from the broader society. And with that they bring the same biases and bigotry’s and issues that society at large contains.

**Dr. Nelson:** And I would also just say that yes, and this actually relates to one of the questions here, every organization has their own culture. And both Carl and I encourage our students to figure out what culture do you want to be a part of? What organization do you want to be a part of? And make sure you understand what their culture is before you even apply and as you're interviewing and ask questions about that. Because yes each one is unique. I mean we used to always give St. Paul, you know there's always a rivalry between St. Paul and Minneapolis. The two largest agencies in the state but they had very different organizational cultures and if you talk to people they were either very; I really want to be like Saint Paul or I really want to be like Minneapolis. You’ll hear that in the suburbs too. I know Eden Prairie and Edina, the cops in both of those agencies tease each other all the time and you would think they're both fairly affluent suburbs of the Minneapolis area that they should be very similar and they have different organizational cultures. And one is not better than the other it’s just fits their organization. So yes, we can't always change that in higher education but we can key in our students to make sure they ask questions about the culture before they get there and they understand what they’re being a part of.

**Wayne Ward:**

How about unions? What role can and what role do they play in moving towards racial equity?

**Carl Lafata:** Well, it's a double-edged sword again. You know I was the president of the Peace Officers Association of my department in California and they-- I got elected to that position. Nominated and to that elected that position within six months and so I didn't know whether to shake hands or punch somebody I really didn’t because that was such a mess there because they were having such a confrontational adversarial relationship with the city as it pertained to staffing and money and things of that nature and of course we had issues with the administration. So I work very, very hard to help get not only the economic benefits that the agencies in that surrounding area had that we didn't, we’re the lowest paid agency in that area. But also to recruit the best and brightest, to recruit the, you know, a very diverse workforce and without those economic benefits it made that very difficult. So what we did was we sold the culture and as the union rep, one of the things that I had--a union president rep, one of the things that I was able to do was really, from the line officer side, really stress the culture of the agency as the majority of members wanted it to be. And so you know community oriented, working with the community, valuing diversity you know. And it was a stark reality or stark difference rather, the reality of what we were talking about that maybe some of the other agencies in that area you know what we focused on was I think somewhat different and it wasn't all about just the economic benefits even though those were important. If you have an organization that has a very adversarial relationship in you know terms of being held accountable by the governmental entity, then you know that's a totally different ballgame. You have a organization that is the union pushing back against any attempts to be held accountable and the interesting thing about law enforcement unions I've always found is that law enforcement agencies were created in the late 1800s early 1900s to push back against you know a variety of threats. And I use my little air quotes there, “a very of threats.” But one of them was organized labor. One of them was you know the communists that were trying to organize the worker. The Michigan state police was founded in 1917 to go up in the upper peninsula and get the Finnish and the Welsh and the Italians back into the copper mines. So we were started as strike buster's and you know the last line of the communist manifesto was “workers of the world unite” and yet somehow law enforcement unions are seen as very patriotic as opposed to you know them being this anti-communist force police departments in and of itself. And so that’s why law enforcement unions never really been fully embraced by the way labor movement in this country. They've always been seen as working for the benefit of their members and those who empower them and not for the greater good. Because again when you're talking about arbitration for example. That process, its seldom affect **[inaudible].** The case that’d I give you as an example is a St. Paul officer Palkowitsch case where Palkowitsch was fired for kicking a semi restrained individual, and we’ll go into the whole story, but kicking him multiple times in the ribs and he posed no threat to the officers on scene. Flattened his lung, broke his ribs, there was a canine that was taking a chunk out of this guy's leg. The arbitrator—chief Axtell fired him, the arbitrator said well you know he wasn't specifically trained not to kick a prisoner when they were down on the ground. That was—and so he gets his job back, he winds up getting convicted in—indicted and convicted in federal court. This was back last November and he’s awaiting sentencing. He’s looking at 10 years in the federal pen because what he did was so egregious. But the union and the arbitrator's said give him his job back and so it's a very negative thing for the public to see the fact that a police officer can do these heinous things and still retain their job and what's more, be on paid vacation essentially while the investigation is ongoing. And so, you know the unions are seen as facilitating this as opposed to you know doing whatever you need to do which is you know the greater good for the labor movement and so on and so forth. So, its yeah again a complex issue.

**Dr. Porter:** Well let's move it to, you know we talked about communities. Let’s move to the community’s role in shifting law enforcement toward racial equity. This is something that the International City County Managers Association has done a survey and this is very important in communities with finding the way to help shift that culture and you brought up so many reasons why it's difficult to shift is what they are up against. So what are your thoughts about that? As far as the community’s role and shifting law enforcement toward racial equity.

**Dr. Nelson:** Well I would start out by saying the community's rule is they need to be the ones demanding the shift. You know they need to be the ones asking for it, they need to be the ones asking for accountability from their law enforcement agencies, not just their chief law enforcement officer but all of their employees, and they need to be the ones that are identifying what they think the shift should be. We are used to having you know, government you know, our cities or our local government say ok we're going to do this program to make things better for the community and we have found, and Mary can probably can agree with this, that's not always the best way to do it cause maybe the government doesn't know what the community needs. Well if we're going to be talking about racial equity and expectations from the community, the community is the one that needs to identify that. I'm going to use North Minneapolis as an example here just cause I'm still in a lot of groups there. But when they were taught, when the defund the police came up this last little last summer here, there was very loud voices talking about defund the police but if you were on a couple of the Facebook groups in North Minneapolis you had many of the residents saying wait a second I don't agree with that because we still need some of our law enforcement here. And as they came together various groups in North Minneapolis, in fact a group of the educators up there, the principles of the high schools up there, came together too saying wait a second defund the police is not what we want. We would like to see other things happening, but we don't want you to take all of our police officers away. That was the voice from within the community and they were the ones that were saying we live here, we work here, we go to school here, this is what we would like to see in the future. And I think we need more of that not just in large cities but across all of our communities to actually get to a point where we do have what the expectations of a community meant, and that law enforcement can understand what is expected of them too.

**Carl Lafata:** And I know I've used this example in one of the earlier podcasts that we've done but it's just a favorite example of mine. Where--regarding defund the police where a Washington Post reporter asked people in a housing project in DC about this defund the police. And they said no we don't want to defund the police; in fact we want more police. We need more police. We just want them to be better trained. We want them to understand their communities. We want them to appreciate us. We want them to be held to a higher standard and that's really what we're talking about. You know the defund the police movement you know, again we talk about--I talk about authoritarian leaders using fear as a motivating device for their voters and their supporters. And that’s obviously nothing I came up with, that’s been proven over and over again over the course of history and was studied extensively after World War II. But the point is, is that what defund the police really meant to a lot of people was let's defund this aspect of law enforcement. In other words let’s take, we’ll use Eugene Oregon as an example, let's take the responsibility for non-violent mental illness or drug or alcohol-related calls and we'll give it to this organization that has trained social workers and medics that will go out to these calls and we'll take this money from your budget, but you don't have to do these calls anymore. That's defunding the police, that's what people are really, really talking about. I wish they would have chosen a different name for but I guarantee, you talk to any police officer on the planet; hey would you like to deal with more mental illness calls or fewer? You know what do you think they're going to say right? So what they're really talking about when it comes to defend the police is something that I think most police officers, if not all police officers, could get on board with and that's given the responsibility for calls that don't need a law enforcement response, to have that, to have another option. And the other aspect is you know I think what the law enforcement community needs to understand is, we work for the public. It doesn't mean you kowtow; it doesn't mean that you don't enforce the law, but as Robert Peel said in 1829, the people are the police and the police are the people. We are empowered by the people and if we screw up and we are seen as violating that social contract where the public says we're going to loan you this power and authority, we expect you to use it judiciously. If we are seen as not using it judiciously, then what happens? Well, laws are passed, court decisions come down and they said you can have this much power, now you have this much power and they take that away from us. And rightly so. And so you know I think what the public needs to understand is, just like--I think it was Thomas Jefferson who said you know “the government you deserve is the government you elect.” You know the police officers you deserve are the police officers you hire and the police officers you tolerate. If you are unhappy with what's going on in your community then you need to make change by working with the local community leaders to get that law enforcement culture to change and if necessary replace the chief. You know I’ve worked on that, it can be done. You know you can get the chief **[inaudible]** employees and if they are not doing something that is in line with community expectations, same with the prosecutors, throw them out and get the kind of law enforcement culture that you want. Because that individual officer, that 23 year old kid is not going to be able to do the same amount of change community activist can to diversify the workforce and have greater respect for the public and have a prosecutorial environment that reflects the concerns and the priorities of that community. You know we talk a lot about the internal things and there’s a lot of internal things that we can change. But ultimately the power is with the people and they can make a lot of change if they mobilize.

**Dr. Porter:** Some good points that you mentioned. The 23-year-old kid, this is the last point I'm going to bring up before we open it up to the questions. But what can the 23 year-olds or the 20-somethings and teens be doing to help—to have a voice in this cultural change? What do you see are some good places to focus their energy? I happen to have one of those 23-year old’s who is too often in the protest lines which I don't like, I don't you know but that's what he does. He's in Downtown Minneapolis every morning as the jurors are selected for the George Floyd case. But how else could they be operating to be productive?

**Dr. Nelson:** Well I would really encourage them to start getting involved in their local politics you know? If you want to support people that have the same ideas as you. So if you’re that 23 year old and you think it's important that law enforcement has some sort of reformation or that there is some demanding of accountability, when there are political elections and there are elections every year for different positions, that's where you put your support behind that person. Maybe you go out and door knock for them, maybe you go ask them the hard questions at the Town Hall meetings about what is your vision for our law enforcement in our community? So that's the way to get involved without even costing money. I mean you can go to a Town Hall; you can always give your time to be a part of that. You can also look for organizations that share your same values and join them, volunteer for them. They may need help just calling people, they may need help distributing literature. There are ways to get involved. You can be a community activist, you can get your point of view across, you can support those that share your same vision for the future without having a lot of money. Many times, it’s just time to do that support. I mean and if you feel passionately, if you want to be down on the protest line make sure you know why you're there and make sure that they actually share the same vision as you, not that you might be protesting with a group of people that have a completely different vision than you. So make sure you know who you're with that's my biggest piece of advice there.

**Carl Lafata:** For sure and you know the other thing you could do is get involved by going on ride-a-longs, citizens police academy’s, go to City Council meetings where they're talking about police budgets or you know the chiefs love to get out there and crow about the arrests. You know ask questions about what was the demographic makeup of those arrests? And out of those arrests how many convictions did you get or are you just pulling people off the streets and weak cases? You know there was a newspaper report about this carjacking unit that they had in the Twin Cities and they rested 46 people and what only six charges were—its woah, that’s a whole batting average. You know, lets learn more about that. You know the news is getting a lot wiser in the recent years by asking about, ok you got the fish on the hook, did you reel it into the boat, right? See I had to throw—I’m not a fisherman so I had to throw a Minnesota fish reference in there. But the point is, is that letting the officers know that number one, people are paying attention and number two, that you know maybe there's that officer who doesn't feel that they can push back against the prevailing culture within that department. Then they start talking to people in the community and guess what? The communitys got the same view they do and that might embolden them to be more you know just I guess resistant to those culture to speak up on a scene, to you know pull that individual you know officer you know, hey you’re kneeling, move your knee or something like that you know. Just take those little steps to correct those behaviors. That’s how this is going to change. It’s going to be baby steps, it’s not going to be this you know blinding flash of the obvious where police officers are like oh my god, you mean I’ve been doing this wrong this whole? No, no, no. It's going to be this gradual shift and it's going to start with you know just that little nudge and weather that comes internally or externally, I'm here to tell it's going to be a lot more likely to have long lasting impacts of the communities behind such changes.

**[music]**

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