

# Black Chicago Cops Fear for Their Children Too, Say They Are Racially Profiled by Colleagues

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Tagged With: Black cops, Chicago Police Department, CPD, Jason Van Dyke charged, Laquan McDonald death, Mayor Rahm Emanuel, racial profiling, Superintendent Garry McCarthy

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Protesters confront Chicago police during a Nov. 25 demonstration in response to the fatal shooting of Laquan McDonald. (Andrew Nelles/Reuters)

A story in *The Christian Science Monitor* explains the fine line Black Chicago police officers walk. They are viewed with suspicion by their own community and their colleagues. According to the article by Nissa Rhee, Black cops also still worry about their children being racially profiled or shot dead by out-of-control Chicago Police Department officers.

Vanessa Westley, a 25-year-veteran of the CPD, fears her 18-year-old son could meet the same fate as Laquan McDonald, a teenager who was shot 16 times by Officer Jason Van Dyke. Van Dyke is currently facing murder charges.

“Do I have to walk the same course as any other mother who has a black son? Yes, I do,” Westley told *The Monitor*. “And it’s a little harder for me because I go to work in the same system that we’re concerned about.”

Rhee said that although Black people make up a quarter of the Chicago police force, they are still subject to racism from fellow officers, especially when they are off duty and in plain clothes.

Kenneth Bolton, a professor of criminal justice at Southeastern Louisiana University, talked to several Black officers for his book, *Black in Blue: African-American Police Officers and Racism*, and found similar complaints. According to Bolton, Black cops complained of their lockers being defaced with graffiti and colleagues making disparaging comments about their hair and taste in music.

In an article in *Vox*, former St. Louis Police Department officer Reddit Hudson said he received a racist email from the president of his academy class after Barack Obama won the 2008 presidential election. “I can’t believe I live in a country full of ni\*\*er lovers!!!!!!” the email said.

Hudson said that although most of the public believes cops are generally good, a significant number of them regularly abuse their authority.

“On any given day, in any police department in the nation, 15 percent of officers will do the right thing no matter what is happening. Fifteen percent of officers will abuse their authority at every opportunity. The remaining 70 percent could go either way depending on whom they are working with,” Hudson wrote.

Richard Wooten, a retired officer who served 23 years on the Chicago PD, said the department has a problem with training. He told *The Monitor* many of their policies are out of date and also complained that Black and white officers were disciplined differently.

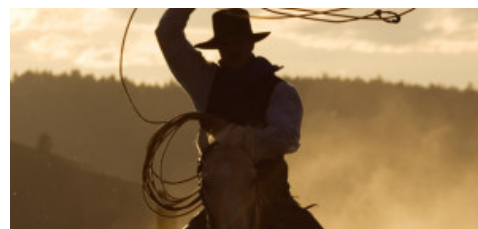
“You have an African-American sergeant [Edward Howard Jr.] who slaps a kid that’s handcuffed for spitting in his face and he immediately got stripped of his powers and he got charged, convicted, and terminated all within a year’s time,” said Wooten.

However, it took the CPD about a year to discipline Van Dyke, who shot McDonald execution style while he was walking away.

“You have a guy [Van Dyke] who shoots a kid 16 times, and nowhere in our police department training

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module are we trained to shoot 16 times when the subject is already down,” Wooten said. “But this person gets removed off the street, put on desk duty, and still draws an income off the taxpayer’s money for a whole year and the case itself almost gets swept under the rug. So when you look at scenarios like that, you say there’s a great deal of unbalance and we need to stop the madness.”

Several cops interviewed by *The Monitor* said the CPD needs to recruit more Black officers to improve its fractured relationship with the Black community. Wooten urged more Black people to consider careers in law enforcement.

“You can complain about not having representation and you can complain about not having black officers, but the fact of the matter is that if you’re not going to take the police test and get involved, we’re always going to be in that situation,” Wooten said. “We have to start taking ownership, but at the same time the city has a responsibility to provide the necessary tools that is needed to get people engaged.”

But as long as there are questionable shootings and Black cops complain about being racially profiled by their fellow officers, the police is going to have a hard time convincing young Black people to join the force. Former Superintendent Garry McCarthy and Mayor Rahm Emanuel staged a recruitment drive last November to try to increase the numbers of officers of color. But McCar

thy, who was fired in the wake of Laquan McDonald shooting, admitted their efforts failed.

“At the end of the day we didn’t get the numbers we wanted as far as minorities are concerned, and it’s been a dynamic in this department that we’ve struggled with for a long time,” McCarthy said.

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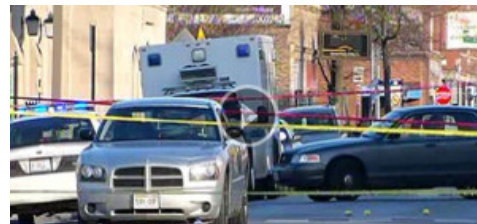
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