

Lucas: Hi, my name is Lucas Bayne.

Jordan: I'm Jordan Mantle.

Joseph: I'm Joseph Lawson.

Philip: And I'm Philip Norris.

Lucas: And we would like to welcome you to a very special episode of "Podcast PD".

Currently our English class is reading the book *Outcasts United*. The novel has a consistent theme of an unhealthy relationship between police and some members of the community, which stems from a mutual distrust. The goal for this episode is to show that this issue is mimicked in real life. So let's begin our discussion by talking about one of the problems in the book, which seems to stem from a racial root. Can someone better describe how it is showcased in the book?

Jordan: Certainly. So, what happened was, a Nigerian, named Chike Chime, was driving his car and got pulled over by an officer, Timothy Jordan. And he wasn't really doing anything wrong, and he asked the officer if he did anything wrong, and at that point, the officer snapped and beat him with his flashlight, and then maced him for apparently no reason. And it seemed that the reason would be because of his race, and the fact that the officer said, when talking about this issue that "They're not in Africa anymore, they're in America."

Lucas: So how is this problem showcased in real life?

Joseph: Well one of the things that has really scarred the relationship between the police and the community is what happened in Ferguson, MO last summer. Basically, a young, African-American man, named Michael Brown, was caught robbing a store. Him and a police officer started arguing, and it escalated to where he charged at the officer, Darren Wilson, and reached for his gun, so Wilson shot him and he died. And America was basically split, you know, half

the people were saying “cops are racist and out to get African-Americans” and on the other hand other people were saying “well, don’t be a criminal”.

Lucas: But what it seems to me is that the truly important part of this story is not what occurred, it’s that reaction that it produced amongst the members of society, correct?

Philip: Yeah, for sure. Whether or not either party was in the right or wrong is more of an instigator of the true problem than an explanation. The reaction that some members of society showed is a much more important part of the story. Reactions to events like these often have a larger impact than the initial events themselves.

Jordan: Yeah, the immediate reaction of this event was that some of the members of the community grew incredibly angry, which caused them to protest the police, and the decisions they were making, without even knowing what was going on. The reason that such extreme reactions occurred was not solely because Michael Brown was shot in cold blood, but because events like these happen all the time, and the people just learn to think and accept that the cop was in the wrong.

Lucas: And what was the reason that these people felt so alienated or targeted?

Jordan: They felt their race was the main cause. They felt as if the police specifically targeted them due to racial reasons.

Lucas: I see. So obviously there are many cases that may make one think that police are targeting races, but is there any proof or statistical backing that will help show this?

Philip: Well, in the city of Lubbock, TX, the likelihood of a Hispanic person being arrested is higher than that of any other race. Out of 875 people arrested in Lubbock, nearly half of them were Hispanic. However, Hispanic people only make up 32% of the population there.

Jordan: Yeah, and also you can look towards Ferguson as an example. There, approximately 85% of vehicle stops, 90% of citations, and 93% of all arrests were African-Americans, but they only make up 67% of the population.

Joseph: Well, what i think the most important part of all these stories, and data, is the fact that there is a problem clearly shown. And you know, not all cops may target people for their race, but the fact is that some people do. So people are losing more and more faith in the police because of this. For example, we polled the community, and when asked the question “Do you think that there are trust issues between the police and the community?”, 88% of people answered “yes”, and i think that clearly shows that there is a problem that needs to be addressed.

Philip: You’re absolutely right, stories like Ferguson and Lubbock may cause not only the citizens directly affected, but society as a whole to lose trust in the police. Members of the community who see or hear about events like these may lose trust in the police, and that viewpoint is completely understandable. How can people trust the police as their public defenders if they do not have the ability to defend all citizens equally?

Lucas: So from the information that you guys have presented to me, it is obvious that there is some sort of race issue that motivates a distrust in the police between some members of the community. But do you believe that there might be some other factor that can cause this?

Jordan: Yeah, a good example of this would be from *Outcasts United*, where the police would go up to the refugees and kick them off the soccer field they were playing at because they were refugees. And when the refugees would go to the courthouse and to try to work this problem out, they would just say “go talk to the police”, and it would be a never-ending cycle.

Joseph: Yeah, and another real life example of police corruption is the case of Javier Ovando. He was a gang member in Los Angeles, CA. One day he was walking down the street, and

police officer, named Rafael Perez, shot him in the chest and head and planted a gun on him, then left. And so, he thought Ovando was dead, but it turns out he was alive and was paralyzed, so he tried to sue the police officer for attacking him unwarranted. It just turned into a huge court case, and he ended up being correct, and it turns out that Officer Perez was indeed going around doing this frequently (shooting people and planting guns on them to make it look like they were the bad guy), when in reality, he was the one causing the corruption. Ovando ended up actual winning \$15 million in the case.

Philip: Oh wow, that sounds like an absolute nightmare. When people hear about cops framing innocent civilians and shooting them without any good reason other than just getting more money for drugs, they'll naturally lose faith in the police as a whole. When the officers who are meant to protect us from harm are making gang members the victims, you know there's a problem.

Jordan: Oh yeah, of course, corruption shown by some police officers causes a rift between the people and the police. If a small portion of the police are potentially abusing their powers, then how can citizens trust them as a whole?

Lucas: Alright, i think we got some very good information out there about the subject, but so far we have only talked about the community. What we are discussing is a fundamental mistrust between both parties. In order to get more inside look on the topic, I have interviewed an officer.

(cuts to interview)

Lucas: Alright, so over the past couple of years, there's been a recent rise in reports of police officers abusing their powers in the media. Why do you think this has been happening?

Officer: I'm gonna go with probably the media, and with social media. It's always been happening, you know, you've got good people and you've got bad people, and it's something

that's not new, it's just that there's more cameras out there, there's more technology, so i'm sure they're getting caught that way.

Lucas: Due to these recent reports, do you think there's been a decrease in trust between police and some members of the community? And if so, how do you think we could work on improving the trust between the two of them.

Officer: I mean, there's a huge mistrust of police right now, mainly because of that. All the big news, all the big court trial cases that are out there. The easiest way to do it is just to continue doing our jobs the best that we can, trying to build closer, stronger ties to the community, going out and doing community policing, socializing with the community on a positive base instead of just on a negative base.

Lucas: Do you think there could be a measure, like body cameras, or maybe an outside investigation if the problem arises? Do you think that would help the trust between police and community?

Officer: With body cameras, they're great. They help show what's going on and back officer's statements. However the one bad thing that the public doesn't realize about body cameras is that once the police have body cameras there isn't any discretion. For example if I pull someone over who has one traffic warrant, I can't let them go. I can't say go get that taken care of. Once there are body cameras it shows "hey this guy has a warrant, I've gotta arrest this guy." Whereas before it was discretion wise. As well as if you go to a call and you feel like no one needs to be arrested, but the law dictates other I have to arrest someone on that call instead of making peace and going our separate ways. That's the big thing that society doesn't really understand with body cameras. Which I have no problem with body cameras, if my department wants to get body cameras and have me wear one I have no problem with it. I'm not gonna break the law, you

know i'll uphold the law to the best of my ability. It's just the aspect that with body cameras, viewer discretion goes way down and it's hard to help people out who make mistakes. That way if you see someone breaking the law you have to take action. You can't just do warnings or stuff like that anymore. You've gotta make an arrest, you've gotta give out a ticket. And what was the second part of that question?

Lucas: About some sort of outside investigation when a problem arises.

Officer: I would disagree with that, because with an outside investigation source they don't know rules, guidelines, special orders that we are given like when we use force they don't know those guidelines, they don't know what the criteria that has to be met is. And if they have never been a police officer they don't understand the stress, they don't understand the quick decisions that we make. There's days where we have to make split second decisions that may save someone's life. And those are quick decisions that we make that other professions don't normally make and don't have an understanding of that. So I would say after one of our cases gets reviewed if they want to bring in an outside source give it to them, but I wouldn't give them the final say in what happens. Maybe give them an opinion or input, but I wouldn't give them a final say as a conclusion to that.

Lucas: The next question i'm going to ask is: do you think this problem is growing throughout the nation? Do you think it's going to get worse?

Officer: I think it's gonna get worse. I mean ever since Ferguson everything has been getting steadily worse. Like you look at the colleges with what Mizzou and other colleges are doing with almost handcuffing people to make decisions that shouldn't be made, but they are. And also with all the technology and all the cameras, like I said, there's gonna be good police officers and there's gonna be bad police officers. Just like there's good teachers and there's bad teachers.

Every profession has it. Bad apples. And right now police are under a very fine tuned microscope and anything that goes wrong, the media is one of the big things behind it. They want high reviews and the best way to do it is “oh this is a bad police officer, or bad situation.” To heighten reviews and that, so I don’t see it going away any time soon. With everything that’s been going on.

Lucas: That was all the questions I had to ask you. Thank you very much for doing this and answering our questions.

(end of interview)

Jordan: You something I think we should bring up that the officer talked about it the fact that people can completely misinterpret events, people are often subject to something called the Rashomon effect, which basically is where two people can witness the same thing happen and due to their biases they will believe that two different things have happened or will have contradictory reports of what happened.

Philip: He also hits on how the people who record events may not get every single thing that leads up to the action. For example, when a video is released of a police officer beating up a seemingly innocent civilian, we we may not see the origin of it, which is extremely important. The citizen may have somehow provoked the officer in a way that made it necessary to use force.

Joseph: Yeah, this is why his opinion on body cameras is very interesting. He wants them and is not afraid of them causing trouble. Rather he believes they can clear up anything that happens, but at the same time he makes the point that a police officer can no longer let things slide. For example if he pulls someone over and they were speeding you know. Everyone has heard a story about someone being pulled over but is let off with a warning. Well if you catch that on camera he can’t do that because then he’s not following the law and is in turn breaking the law.

Philip: Exactly. With a detailed and unbiased account of the events, citizens would be able to better understand the situation.

Lucas: So you guys believe that some citizens are a source of mistrust?

Jordan: Well yeah. If one person spreads misinformation which puts an officer in a bad light, this can sway the opinion of others who see it. It would just breed more distrust. For example, mainstream media will put cops in a bad light sometimes. They'll take the side of the victim, and even in some situations the mainstream media will take the side of the cop.

Joseph: I think the most important part about that happening leads to the police not being able to trust the community. Some police officers may feel as if they are in an "us vs. them" situation, which is basically people try to get the police and community to disagree with each other. And basically the citizens who the officers are trying to protect will actually root for the officers to fail and in turn create more turmoil.

Lucas: So both sides are growing a sense of mistrust between each other?

Philip: Exactly, and it will only get worse.

Lucas: How is that?

Philip: The problem, which is clearly evident, is that there are individuals on *both* sides who actively make this worse. If a police officer abuses his or her power then the populace may be more prone to believe that this is an everyday occurrence. While on the other side you have officers who feel as if the people they are trying to protect are targeting them and wanting them to fail so they can use this as more ammunition to use against the police.

Jordan: Exactly, these behaviors just feed off each other. When one side loses faith in the other it negatively impacts them to filling a mould which the other side loses more trust in. The distrust only breeds more distrust.

Lucas: So if both sides are to blame, how are we to fix this problem?

Joseph: Well I think the only way we can resolve this problem is by eliminating the distrust. For example, the town of Decatur, Alabama, one of the police chiefs, Chris Jones, is trying to actively make his police officers associate with the community more. He's telling them to go to community meetings, do community service, and actually at one point he told them just to talk to people. So just by initiating friendly conversations between the police officers and the community, some members of the town were calling the police department saying what a good job they're doing. I think that if this can be done nationwide, even if we can't completely remove it we can build more trust between the two parties.

Lucas: One thing is evident: there is a problem that stems from years of distrust between the two parties, which will only worsen as time goes on unless the police and community work together to solve it. Clearly this issue isn't going to resolve itself overnight, however the sooner steps are taken to improve upon it the sooner people will see results.

Announcer (Joseph w/ deep voice): Thank you for listening to Podcast PD where we bring you the story no matter the cost.