



For over 39 years, I was a police officer in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. For 15 of those years, I was the Sheriff of Milwaukee County. I've done everything you can do as cop—from walking the beat, to investigating murder, to running the agency. I've met a lot of cops—of every race, ethnicity and background.

Here's what I can tell you:

Cops are not perfect.

That's not a news flash. But this might be: They don't have to be perfect. They have to be excellent.

And most officers reach excellence every single day, and often under very difficult circumstances—circumstances you can't imagine, and wouldn't want to if you could.

Perfection is an unattainable goal. Cops are ordinary human beings. Like everyone else—lawyers, surgeons and baseball players—they make mistakes. But no profession works harder to correct its mistakes. You can mark social progress by the improvements made by police departments over the last 50 years. Today, police are more professional, better educated, and better trained than at any time in their history.

You wouldn't know it, though, if you listened to self-serving, self-righteous politicians and activists. In their version of history, the police are the villains of the story, not its heroes. Like everything else this crowd does, they've got it all backwards.

The police aren't the problem. The politicians and activists are.

The police didn't create the failed urban policies that have locked people into generational poverty.

The police aren't responsible for fatherless homes, failing schools, and bad lifestyle choices.

And they sure as hell aren't responsible for the lack of respect shown to police officers. It is this lack of respect for authority, fostered over decades by the progressive left and its fear-the-police narrative, that has led to the needless deaths of so many young black men.

When Officer Darren Wilson told Michael Brown to get out of the middle of the street in Ferguson, Missouri, did Brown comply? No. When officers in Baltimore told Freddie Gray to stop resisting arrest, did he comply? No. When officers in New York City told Eric Garner to stop resisting arrest, did he comply? No.

Here's a useful tip—if you want avoid a bad outcome with a police officer, follow this simple rule:

When a cop gives you a lawful command, obey it—even if you disagree. Whatever problem you are

experiencing is not going to be settled on the street. People with complaints need to use the process established for that purpose. Though cops don't have the final say, they do in that moment. How you react can be a matter of life or death.

But the idea that a law-abiding citizen has to fear the police is a terrible and destructive lie. Let's get some perspective.

In 2014, 990 people were killed in police use-of-force incidents. Does that sound like a lot? Did you know that, according to a Johns Hopkins study, that same year, medical errors killed 250,000 people? Yet activists aren't marching in the streets, demanding that the medical profession be reformed. Why not?

Why is it that the people who protect you from the bad guys—and I've seen these bad guys close up—are the subject of distrust and anger?

Why is it that groups like Black Lives Matter—I call them Black Lies Matter because it's based on the falsehood that police represent a danger to black people—are celebrated by the media and politicians?

All this is taking its toll on cops and, even more tragically, on the law-abiding citizens in the neighborhoods that most need a strong police presence. The murder rates in these neighborhoods are going up because lawful, aggressive policing is going down.

Heather Mac Donald of the Manhattan Institute has explained why. She calls it "The Ferguson Effect." And it's real. It's also common sense. Why, police officers reason, put your career at risk, if 30 seconds of smartphone video taken out of context can destroy it?

Here's the truth: Police aren't afraid of walking the streets or being shot by random criminals. They're afraid of being involved in an incident that would label them forever as trigger-happy racists.

Are there bad cops? I know first-hand that there are—I've had to fire them.

But the overwhelming majority are good, decent men and women, concerned about the law-abiding citizens in the communities they serve and are willing to put their lives on the line to protect them.

Those who try to convince you, either out of ignorance or out of some ideological agenda, that the police are the enemy—those are the people you should fear.

Run from them.

Not the cops.

I'm Sheriff David Clarke for Prager University.