

# The Guardian's Voice

NEWSLETTER

The official publication of the *National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers, Inc.*

Volume Two - Issue One

March 2011



## 2010 Education and Training Conference

Buffalo, NY

Hosted by the Afro-American Police Association of Buffalo

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(From left to right) **Officer John Jewell** (member of the Newark Bronze Shield and President of the New Jersey Council of Chartered Members of the NBPA); presenter **Lieutenant David Daniels III** (member of the Bridgeport Guardians); and **Officer Craig Rogers** (President of FAAPO), during a workshop entitled: The Successful Preparation for Promotional Exams.

**Newsletter Editor – Shawn Kennedy**

### Newsletter Contributors

James Baker	John Jewell
Rochelle Bilal	Ted Meekins
David Daniels III	Sally Thompson
Justine Harris	Charles Wilson

**National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers, Inc.**  
[www.NABLEO.org](http://www.NABLEO.org)

**N**ABLEO's 2010 Education and Training Conference was held in Buffalo, NY at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, from July 15-18, 2010. There was beautiful weather to go along with the many activities that took place both indoors and outdoors. Police officers came from several northeastern cities like: Buffalo, NY; Providence, RI; Philadelphia, PA; Newark NJ; Norwalk, CT, Boston, MA; Bridgeport, CT; Cicero, NY, Piscataway, NJ and Yonkers, NY, just to name a few. There was even an invited guest from the Midwest – Chicago, IL.

The Afro-American Police Association of Buffalo (AAPA) put together a very successful conference. The President of AAPA, Justine Harris, made sure she was on top of her game, which included airport pickups and drop-offs, for those officers flying into Buffalo from other cities. After participants checked into their hotel room and socialized a bit, officers prepared to attend the Third Thursday's Mixer at Scarlett. This was sponsored by the Urban Professionals of Western New York and by AM 1400 Solid Gold Soul radio station, which welcomed NABLEO. This "Meet & Greet" gave officers an opportunity to network with many urban professionals and to enjoy some great food.

There were several workshops conducted during the conference which included: **Off-Duty and Plainclothes Police Encounters; Securing Your Future-Planning For Retirement; Basic Grant Writing and Management; Law Enforcement and Veterans; Legal Issues and Court Decisions; The Response to Community – A New Mission; The Power of Simple Talk for Not So Simple Problems;** and **The Successful Preparation for Promotional Exams.** Some of the presenters included: **Elliot T. Boyce, Sr.**, Investigator with the New York State Police Department; **Clifford Bell**, Senior Business Counselor with Small Business Development; **Darrin Strickland**, seasoned consultant with Darrin Strickland Organization Management; **Dr. Patrick W. Welch**, Director of the Erie County Veterans Service; **Garnell W. Whitfield, Jr.**, Commissioner of the Buffalo Fire Department; **George B. Alexander**, former Director of the Erie County Probation Department; **H. McCarthy Gipson**, former Commissioner of the Buffalo Police Department and presenter for **The American Heart Association;** and **David Daniels III**, Lieutenant with the Bridgeport Police Department.

Friday's Award Dinner gave officers and citizens an opportunity to dress-up in some of their finest clothes, eat, drink, dance and network with others. The climax of the evening was listening to a powerful speech given by the keynote speaker, Matthew Fogg, Chief Deputy US Marshal (retired). This is one person you may want to Google, just to learn more about the many court cases he has personally been involved in against his agency. Three awards were presented that evening: the Organization of the Year Award was presented to the **Young Miss Buffalo Pageant**, for their dedication and commitment to the empowerment of young women of color; the Chief Willie Smoot Community Service Award was presented to **FATHERS, Inc.**, for their outstanding commitment to the community and organization; and the President's Award was presented to **Chief US Deputy Marshall Matthew Fogg** (retired), in appreciation of his dedication and commitment to our profession, our community and our organization. **Denzel Williams**, who attends Housatonic Community College in Bridgeport, CT., was the recipient of a \$500 scholarship. I'm sure his mother, Angela Williams, and father, Carl Williams (Norwalk Guardians), are very proud of him. After the Awards Dinner, some members either hung out at the hospitality suite or attended the retirement party for Warren Wright, a fire fighter from the Buffalo Fire Department.

After the Saturday Board meeting ended, many members started to relax by attending AAPA's Picnic at the JFK Park. The food was DELICIOUS, courtesy of Officer David Daniels (Buffalo Police Department). There were several members going back for seconds and thirds because you could stack the food vertically on your plate only so high. Many citizens at the park were invited to share in the festivities. This was a very important component in having the community to break bread with police officers. The looks on the children's faces said it all. There were a couple of male teens, who came over

to the picnic area after playing basketball. Maybe the smell of great food temporarily impaired their better judgment because they tried to enter our food line without wearing a shirt and with their pants hanging below their waistline. After being tactfully chastised, they quickly offered their apologies and accommodated our request. I wonder who gained the most pounds from consuming all of the food but there were several members caught laid-back after eating. Everyone had a wonderful time.

Saturday ended with a festive boat ride on the Miss Buffalo II, courtesy of Felecia Helton and Tabitha Pitts. Approximately 200 members and citizens took a ride along the shores of Niagara Falls. Yes, there was a lot of dancing, drinking and old fashion partying. For two hours, members enjoyed the sites, conversations and the final chance to enjoy themselves before returning back to their respective cities the next morning. This was a very successful conference. Many thanks to: **Justine Harris** (President of AAPA); **Sally Thompson** (Conference Committee Chairperson); the **members of AAPA**, the **friends and supporters of AAPA** like **Renita "Neet" Smith** and **Coralyn "CJ" Mayes** (Buffalo, NY); the **Police Benevolent Association** (sponsor); and the **members of NABLEO**. Without your continued support and commitment, this level of a conference could not be possible.

## Spring Board Meeting

April 16, 2011 @ 9:00 AM

Newark Bronze Shield (clubhouse)  
43 William Street  
Newark, NJ 07102

### Youth Scholarship Luncheon

April 16, 2011 @ 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Metropolitan Baptist Church  
(BF Johnson Community Center)  
149 Springfield Avenue  
Newark, NJ 07103

Donation: \$60 Adults and \$30 Youth

Hosted By: The New Jersey Grand Council

### Robert Treat Hotel

50 Park Place  
Newark, NJ 07102  
(973) 622-1000

\$89 plus tax – Queen Bed

\$99 plus tax – Two Double Beds  
(Rates available April 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup>)

**Reserved Under: NJ Council of Black Officers**

For further information, contact:

Sally Thompson: 732-469-2690

John Jewell: 973-715-3246

## 2010

### Local Hero Initiative Award

**Bank of America** honors local heroes, through their Neighborhood Excellence Initiative program. These heroes are men and women, who make vital contributions to their community, through civic and volunteer services.

**Lieutenant David Daniels III**, of the Bridgeport Police Department, was bestowed with this prestigious honor, for his tireless work with his **Officer Friendly Basketball Camp**. This camp, which is in its 14<sup>th</sup> year of youth community services, keeps kids off of the streets, provides positive male role models, teaches vital life skills, encourages success through athletic acumen and promotes positive interaction with law enforcement and authority figures. *"Dave, thank you for your perpetual commitment to the community, its youth and their future."*

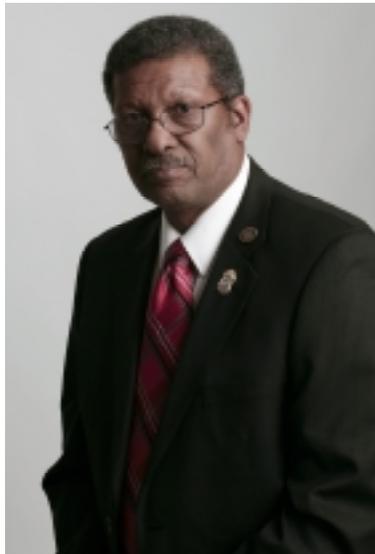
#### Next Camp Dates (Bridgeport, CT)

July 2011 (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> week)

August 2011 (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> week)

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# Chairman's Corner



## To the Entire NABLEO Family,

I would first like to express my thanks to Shawn Kennedy for taking on the task of putting together this, the first issue of our National Newsletter since 2007. It's been a long time coming and, from what I have seen so far, it will be an excellent addition to both our member and community offerings.

I would also like to take this opportunity to both thank and commend the members of the Executive Committee, as well as the various committee chairpersons and delegates. Acting as the representatives of any national body is no easy task, to say the least. And neither is ensuring the proper, legal management of a non-profit organization. Each member of the Executive Committee has given a strong commitment to the undertaking of their various duties and I firmly believe they have served you well. They are to be congratulated for a job well done.

As everyone knows, we are considering whether to rejoin the National Black Police Association or stay as an independent organization. The committee that was organized during our October 2010 board meeting has been working diligently towards compiling information and facts for us to review so that we, as members of NABLEO, can make a well-informed decision. Having said all this, my continuing concern for all of our chapter affiliates is two-fold. First and foremost, we must find a way to better assist them in motivating their local membership, and particularly their younger members, to participate. This should not only be done at the local level, but nationally as well. No organization can exist without the support of its membership. So I would say to all those who, for whatever reason, have not been active in their local chapters, to stand up and be counted. Your organizations were established to give you a voice in the workplace where none existed before. They were established to provide assistance to a community that counts on you not only for protection from those outside that would do them harm, but from those within the system who perpetrate misconduct as well. So stand up, be counted and support your organization and your community.

Secondly, we must make every effort to discover new revenue streams to financially support both the national body and our chapters. Just as no organization can exist without the support of its members; it cannot survive without adequate funding. And rest assured, we are not the only non-profit organization that is "feeling the pinch" of inadequate funding resources. So I encourage all to donate to the national body, as every dollar helps. Remember, your donations are tax-deductible. That is one of the true benefits that we gain from being a 501(c) (3) charitable non-profit organization. Whether you are an individual, small business owner, or corporate executive, you are able to make your donation work for both yourself **and** NABLEO. And you will please notice that, unlike some organizations, we do not set a specific dollar amount for your anticipated donation. Only you know what you can afford to give. We do hope, though, that you will be as generous as possible, as your donations help fund not only our student scholarships but our programs as well. It is still a pleasure to serve you as National Chairman. *Charles P. Wilson*

## New Haven Guardians

**Officer James E. Baker** was recently elected the new President of the New Haven Guardians. Baker, a 13-year officer with the New Haven Police Department, has several items on his agenda that he plans to focus on during his first term in office:

- Gather more input from members
- Increase member participation
- Partner with the Fire Department for a Sickle Cell Anemia Drive
- Encourage members to make a commitment to the organization
- Become more active in the community
- Establish better communication among members

Baker plans to continue already established events such as:

- Halloween Festivities for the Youth
- Thanksgiving Day Food Give-A-Way
- Christmas Toy Drive

*“Let us extend ourselves by reaching out and providing any support his organization may need under his tenure. Our future is truly in the hands of our younger officers.”*

earlbaker22@yahoo.com

## Tax Benefit

### For Supporting NABLEO

It is now tax season. Did you know that your financial support of NABLEO could be personally beneficial?

The National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers, Inc is a federally-recognized 501(c) (3) tax-exempt non-for-profit organization. That means that certain amounts of the funds that you may have personally donated last year (2010), may be deducted as charitable donations, when you have your taxes prepared. This could include portions of any conference fees (minus the cost of dinner or luncheon tickets), as well as individual membership fees.

This is just another benefit of your membership in NABLEO, an organization that supports you **and** the community. If you are in need of a formal letter of declaration for your records, please make sure you contact us.

### Newsletter Submission Information

If you have something that you would like to have considered for print, in the next edition of *The Guardian's Voice* newsletter, or if you have comments and/or constructive criticism, please send all inquiries directly to the Editor at: **shawncken@aol.com**. Please enter the word “newsletter” on the subject line.

# On Your Shoulders, We Stand



## Ted Meekins

Interviewed by Shawn Kennedy

*“As I enjoyed a rare opportunity to talk to Ted Meekins about his experiences in law enforcement, I had to take a moment to reflect back on my 20-year career with my department. I can humbly admit that my career has been trouble-free, compared to what Ted, and many other African Americans police officers, were subjected to during the 1960’s and 1970’s. It’s on their shoulders that we stand. I must applaud them because if they had not paved the way through the hardship and degradation they were subjected to, I would not be in the position to now reap the fruits of **their** labor.”*

The 70-year old Ted Meekins is one of those trailblazers. The father of five children and grandfather of 18 grandchildren, Ted joined the Bridgeport Police Department in 1968 and retired 30 years later. At the start of his career, approximately 10 of the 500 police officers were African American. There were no Hispanic or female officers at that time. Ted’s tenacity, perseverance and fortitude, coupled with several lawsuits filed in federal court, would eventually begin to tilt the scales of justice to benefit the next generation of African American police officers.

SK: How many African American supervisors were on your department when you joined?

TM: There were no black supervisors. I did not know what one looked like. The first one I saw was from attending one of National Black Police Association’s events. I saw black police officers with rank and wearing a white shirt. I could not believe what I was seeing.

SK: How were conditions on your department when you retired in 1998?

TM: I formed the Bridgeport Guardians in 1970 and because of multiple lawsuits filed, things eventually started to change. At first, the union did not take the complaints of black officers, which included: limited job assignments, severe discipline, not being allowed to drive squad cars, only assigned to high crime areas and walking within the housing projects, and few opportunities for upward mobility to specialized units. After winning the lawsuits, we now have approximately 160 black officers, Hispanic and female officers, detectives and about 20 plus black supervisors, which included: sergeants, lieutenants, captains, deputy chiefs, two black chiefs and one Hispanic chief. We even challenged the testing company, which the City eventually went to a black company.

SK: How many promotional examinations did you take?

TM: I took about five for detective and sergeant. I passed both exams but was never promoted. I was told I would never be appointed because of my activist role. The City could scrutinized the list and disqualify applicants through their screening committees.

SK: What specialized units did you work in?

TM: After my litigation and after receiving my bachelor degree in Criminal Justice and one in Engineering, as well as a master degree in Arts and Sciences, I worked in several specialized units. I was given a special assignment in the Housing Police Program. Since black residents had a hostile relationship with the police, I was able to get citizens, living in public housing, to police their own areas, which improved better police relations. I also worked in the Booking Unit, the Traffic Unit, the Police Academy, and the Motorcycle Unit. The latter two units were the best units I worked for. As a training officer in the police academy, I had an impact on white and black officers. We could better train them in a fair manner, keep up with the training mandates and follow up on officer's performance, even after they left the academy and worked in the streets. The current white chief of police is one of the people I trained. He learned a lot from the struggle. The Motorcycle Unit had high visibility and very distinguished uniforms. Young people were very impressed to see us.

SK: What police organizations did you belong to during your career?

TM: I was the founder and President of the Bridgeport Guardians. I served as a delegate and was at the formation of the NBPA, when it used to be called the Black Police Officers Association in New York. I was also a member of NOBLE but their issues were different from the street officers.

SK: What are some of the accomplishments of the Bridgeport Guardians under your leadership?

TM: Besides filing several lawsuits, we tried to get black men and women to join police departments but it was difficult because of the negative impact of the Civil Rights Movement and because of the battle with the Black Panthers, who saw cops as "pigs". White officers did not want blacks to be a part of their department but we felt blacks needed to patrol our own neighborhoods. During the 1970's, a white cop killed a Hispanic citizen in the Hispanic community. The citizens put out notices to kill the white officer in car A23. The Chief reassigned me to car A23 and relocated the white officer to an inside job. During the 1970's, we also filed a lawsuit against the Bridgeport Fire Department. Of the 400 firemen, none were black or Hispanic. We challenged their hiring practice and won a \$6 million lawsuit against the City of Bridgeport for their discriminatory hiring practice. Bridgeport Guardians just left the federal court in New Haven, CT and closed a federal discrimination lawsuit that I, and the Bridgeport Guardians, won over 30 years ago. There was so much pain and sacrifice but there were also so many rewards.

SK: What social organizations do you belong to?

TM: I belong to various community outreach programs. I run the Eastend Community Council, which feeds needy families and conduct outreach. We also provide toys during Christmas. I used to be a Mason.

SK: Because of your strong advocacy for fairness, have you ever been suspended?

TM: I have been suspended five times, in retaliation for my civil rights efforts and my lawsuits. I was once suspended for a two-year period but I won the case with back pay and full reinstatement. I had one of the best lawyers: **Koskoff, Koskoff and Beider**.

SK: What racism did you experience as an African American officer?

TM: Everything! You name it; I experienced it.

SK: What subtle or overt racism did you observe during your tenure?

TM: We could not work in the white areas. We were only allowed to work in black or high crime areas. We were not allowed to work in specialized units and did not receive specialized training. There was a lack of promotional and career opportunities. During the 1960's, a new black officer (Sam Palmer), wanted to drive a police car. He told his white partner this, which escalated into a fistfight. After Sam knocked his partner to the ground, his partner pulled his revolver and shot at Sam. Sam was suspended but his white partner was not disciplined. My wife, Sergeant JoeAnn Meekins, had a hangman's noose placed under her police car. Former Bridgeport Guardian's President, Lieutenant David Daniels III, was also a target and received similar treatment. The NBPA and NABLEO have always been there in one way or another for me.

SK: What are some of the positive changes you see today with your former department?

TM: As a direct result of our litigation, we had two black police chiefs. The City went outside of the Department to hire a black chief, who in turn, made major changes.

SK: What changes have you seen in the effectiveness of today's police organizations?

TM: If you don't know your history, you are bound to repeat it. We are seeing some of the same issues arise as before. Black officers and firemen need to document those issues and fight them in court. The Department is becoming more sophisticated in fighting complaints. Some of today's organizations are more social in nature, instead of activist.

SK: How has your tenure as a police officer benefited your life?

TM: I felt my role was to help police officers by opening doors and helping them. I wanted to see young officers join the force. I help paved the way for others. My own wife is now a

sergeant. My daughter is now a detective in another city. I have five brothers and one sister who became police officers.

SK: How has your tenure as a police officer been a handicap in your life?

TM: I missed being promoted to high-ranking positions because of my activism. I probably could have been a police chief or a high-ranking official.

SK: Has being a police officer had a negative impact on your family life?

TM: I guess being a civil rights activist has an impact, as well as my suspensions and being terminated. It made me closer to God and my community. I was blessed to have a conversation with Dr. Martin Luther King. I have also met Jessie Jackson, Sr., A. Phillip Randolph, Nelson Mandela, Bishop Tutu and Rosa Parks.

SK: What message would you like to give to young officers?

TM: Stay close to your community. Be a role model and mentor to young boys and girls. Go into the high schools and help resolves some of the issues confronting our youth.

SK: If you had an opportunity to relive your career again, what would you change?

TM: There is nothing I would change. I have been blessed to see and witness the changes of who made supervisors, as well as who are now patrolling our streets. Many white officers have better attitudes. Black people's opinions mean something. In the past, a black officer had to get permission to arrest a white person.

SK: What words of wisdom would you like to share with today's police officers?

TM: Don't forget.

SK: What are your fondest memories working in law enforcement?

TM: Winning our lawsuits and being reinstated on the Department. I came to Chicago in 1972 and received the Renault Robinson Award from Minister Louis Farrakhan. He spoke at an NBPA conference.

SK: What is your worst experience working in law enforcement?

TM: Being terminated for standing up for filing discrimination lawsuits and the alienation from other black officers, who were afraid. I can now understand what slavery was about. That one person made it hard for everybody else but you needed that slave to rebel.

SK: What three words best describes you?

TM: **Fair. Balanced. Fearless.**

## The Makings of a Good Leader

By Shawn Kennedy

I decided to revisit an article I wrote 11 years ago, for The Black Skyline newsletter. Let's see how this article, with minor revisions, holds up today.

An organization is made up of its members. Collectively, they will either make or break their organization. An organization needs the guidance and leadership that is generally provided by the person in the form of a president or chairperson. If that person is lacking in the vital attributes necessary to be an effective leader, the organization as a whole may suffer. Some of the qualities a leader should possess include:

- Have a working knowledge of the organization.
- Know the history of the organization.
- Understand that decisions should be made based on the collective majority of its members and not what the leader wants individually.
- Understand that decisions should be made based on what's best for the **entire** organization and not for a select few.
- Don't be afraid to delegate responsibility. Match responsibility appropriately with individuals who can competently carry out the assigned task. Also, delegate as a learning tool for the growth of individual members.
- **Lead by example.** When members observe your visible presence and hard work ethics, it encourages them to share in the workload. If a leader delegates all tasks, it can create an

atmosphere of animosity. Since there is no pay involved in volunteer organizations, members need to have an incentive that entices them to work hard. Hard work starts from the top – down.

- Recognized the talents and skill level that each member possesses. Encourage members to utilize their skills, interests and expertise to enrich the organization. Do not burnout your “workers”, by over burdening a few with excessive responsibilities. Spread out tasks as evenly as possible. If necessary, **you** should be willing to take up the slack.
- Communication is very important. Keep in touch with your members. Although communicating via text messages and e-mails are efficient and technological savvy, it will never replace the personal touch of a one-on-one phone call.
- Realize that your way is not necessarily the right way or the better way.
- Encourage and be willing to accept **constructive** criticism without taking it personally. Remember, this is about business. All members, with their many personalities, will not always see eye-to-eye on every issue but they have a right to express their opinion and to be heard.
- Do not have a lackadaisical attitude in handling business or people. You must respond to both in an expeditious manner. It is not good business to put people off. You can lose business by taking your time to handle your business.
- Be a person of your word. Reputation is everything. Follow through with whatever you give your

word on. If you can't, communicate your inability to do so and don't let it become a habit. Your word is your bond.

- Do not straddle the fence. Take a stand and put both feet firmly on only one side of the fence. Don't be afraid to stand alone. A leader does not have safe zones.
- Be flexible enough to change with the times. You must know when to alter your current policies, procedures, directions and perspectives. Nothing remains constant. We do not live in a vacuum.
- Network with individuals and organizations that you may not share the same ideals with. There is always something to learn from others. You owe it to your organization to seek out new information, even from the least likely of sources. You must understand the power of networking.
- Come prepared to meetings with a working agenda. Each meeting should be a progression from the former meeting, and any updates in between. You should never meet just to meet.
- Try to retain current members while **actively** seeking out new and former members. Don't alienate members with arrogance, abrasive language or a closed mind.
- Realize that a good leader wears many different hats, sometimes, simultaneously.
- Ask yourself, "Why you want to become a leader?" If it's for personal gain, a status symbol or for control, then you need to rethink your position. If your heart is not in the right place, you will do a disservice to your organization.

- Evaluate yourself to see if you took on more responsibilities than you realized was required. If you cannot or are unwilling to make the necessary adjustments, step down before your organization is negatively affected. There is no shame in admitting you are over your head. You will receive less respect from others if you have to be administratively removed from office.
- Be able to multitask. Equally important, be able to prioritize your tasks.
- Have at least a two to three year vision for your organization. Things don't just happen. You must plan for it, in advance.
- Welcome the spirit, enthusiasm and energy that younger officers and new members possess. It's one thing to bring new members and younger officers on board. It's another thing to retain them in an organization. The business, activities and functions of the organization must meet their needs as well. If not, you could lose their interest quickly.
- Be cognizant of current issues in your city, state and country that have or could have an impact on your organization. You must quickly respond to these issues and not just let it ride out. Your actions, or lack of actions, can directly affect your organization.

Stay tuned for the next issue:

**Part II**  
**The Makings of a Good Member**

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# The Career of a Female Officer

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## Justine Lucretia Harris

Interviewed by Shawn Kennedy

*“I’m a firm believer that any officer can always learn something when the time is taken to review the career of a more tenured officer. That’s just one of the objectives of the two profiles being featured in this edition of The Guardian’s Voice. Any officer, regardless of their rank, gender or ethnicity, can learn various lessons from reading both profiles. I have to thank both featured officers for allowing me to pry into the intimate details of their police careers. It’s important to note the similarities and the differences that each profile entails. Two police officers, who are*

*separated both by gender and by an 18-year appointment date.”*

Justine Harris recently retired from the Buffalo Police Department with 24-years of “colorful” tenure. She started her career in law enforcement on August 6, 1986 and retired on December 31, 2010. Justine relocated to Charlotte, NC, where she is enjoying the company of her 31-year old daughter, Javaughn, and her two grandchildren, nine-year old Justice and two-year old Jade. One of Justine’s most noticeable attributes is that she is very outspoken. That’s because she has a passion for what is right and for fair play. If a woman, specifically one of color, exercises this attribute, it’s sometimes viewed as being aggressive or a troublemaker. When a male counterpart exhibits the same attribute, it’s sometimes look upon as being assertive and willing to stand up for one’s belief. This double standard is perpetuated in many male-dominated work environments. Some women will take a stand for what’s right, even at the expense of their career. Justine Harris is one of these women.

SK: What is your educational level?

JH: I have an associate of science degree for Medical Laboratory Technician (1983) and an associate of science degree in a nursing program as a Registered Nurse (1990).

SK: How many promotional examinations did you take during your career?

JH: One for lieutenant. We do not have the rank of sergeant. We only have detective sergeant, by taking a test. After three years on the job, you are eligible to take the lieutenant’s examination. When I started in 1986, they did not have a test for detective. It was an appointed position at that time.

SK: What specialized units have you worked in?

- JH: I became a School Resource Officer. I focused on intervention, conflict resolution, mentoring and assisting students with schoolwork. That was my most rewarding position. I did this for the latter two years with the Department.
- SK: What police organizations did you belong to?
- JH: I'm the recent past President of the Afro-American Police Association of Buffalo (AAPA), the National Black Police Association (NBPA) and a delegate with the National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers (NABLEO).
- SK: What church do you belong to?
- JH: Zion Dominion Global Ministries. I am the Sergeant-of-Arms of the Women Department and I work on media sales.
- SK: What social organizations do you belong to?
- JH: I belong to the NAACP Buffalo Chapter.
- SK: Have you ever been suspended from your Department?
- JH: God yes, approximately 28 times. My minimum discipline was an Inspector's Conference and my maximum discipline was 30 days.
- SK: What led up to so many suspensions during your career?
- JH: I have always been an outspoken person. I had spoken up on behalf of many other officers. At that time, I was not a union representative or the President of AAPA. I later learned I should not have acted as a representative for officers who brought their problems to me. I had no legal authority or vote of confidence to represent anyone other than myself. During one incident, Internal Affairs was notified that white officers went on a shooting spree on Christmas of 1987. This was at a black precinct with white supervisors. They felt a particular black officer informed Internal Affairs about the incident so they put out a code of silence against him. This meant other officers would shun him unless it was police related. Breaking or not adhering to the code of silence was looked upon as being very negative. Another officer, and myself, broke the code of silence. I was 28-years old, new on the job and felt no one could tell me whom I could or could not talk to. One of the white supervisors showed a prior intimate interest in me but I did not accept his advances. Because I broke the code of silence, I started getting suspended for even minor infractions. My first suspension occurred in 1988. During a volatile domestic disturbance, where a mother threw her baby down the stairs, I had her in custody. A senior officer and I were the only two officers on the scene of a situation that was volatile. As I tried to watch my partners back, and keep the other family members at bay, the prisoner was able to escape out of the house. As the junior officer, I was suspended for one day without pay. The Department was not coming after me for speaking out directly. They would come after me for things I did, like being off of my beat by 225 feet. I received a four-day suspension without pay for that infraction, which was my second suspension. While I was in nursing school, someone poured rat poison in my locker and poured cheese on my books. A dead mouse was sent to me, via departmental mail, on

Valentine's Day of 1988. A chopped-up bloody animal was sent to the officer who the code of silence was placed against. He was detailed out that night so I was the next person in line to open up the mail. Someone else opened up the mail instead.

SK: What did you receive the 30-day suspension for?

JH: While I was training a white female probationary police officer, she stopped a parked car of a person who she had previously arrested. The plate came back to an individual with a felony warrant. The subject was not the same individual as the wanted person. As the confrontation escalated, RADIO [the dispatcher] was calling me but I could not hear it because I was not arguing with my partner for going overboard. Two other police cars responded because we were not answering our radio. One car had a white and black female officer and the second car had two black male officers, all junior officers to me. The female officers tried to take over the scene without first speaking to me. I told them that they were not going to come to my scene and violate any citizen's constitutional rights. The male officers stayed in their car to make sure everything was okay. I was summoned back into the station and suspended, with pay, until I was later served with my administrative charges. The allegation was that I failed to assist and protect a probationary police officer as we stopped, detained and questioned individuals on a felony warrant. I receive 30 days during the hearing. During statements, I knew the Department would seek termination so I decided to have my own attorney (Mark G. Pearce), who later became the attorney for AAPA and on the National Board for the Laborers. My attorney requested the transcript after the Department said I blew-off the information RADIO was attempting to provide us on the felony warrant. The transcript revealed that the dispatcher could not really hear what I said. My attorney subpoenaed the tape. During the hearing, my attorney picked the hearing officer because he felt the Commissioner made statements that were prejudicial. During the hearing, the City realized the transcripts and tapes disproved their allegations. The City now wanted to change the charges to: I never went to look for the person on the warrant. The hearing officer allowed the City to amend the allegation. After the hearing officer spoke to both sides privately, it was recommended that I take the 30-day suspension. The hearing officer reviewed two separate cases of mine at the same time. This was in 2000. I was suspended in February 2002 when the final decision came in for 30-days.

SK: What was the second case about?

JH: While in the same precinct, I took car keys away from a male Hispanic officer, from the antenna of his radio. I was the senior officer and I had the discretion of which car I wanted to drive. He came behind me and physically grabbed me and took the keys out of my hand. I later wrote a harassment letter.

SK: Why didn't you simply ask him for the keys?

JH: He was in the middle of a conversation and knew I had first choice of cars. He then filed a complaint about me grabbing him. The Department brought me up on charges for that but did not bring him up on charges. So I received a 15-day suspension, without pay, for that incident, which totaled 45 days for two cases.

SK: How did all of your suspensions make you feel?

- JH: I was taught to be the best that I can be; shoot for the stars. We have a tendency to say, "They do it." When we lower our standards and get caught, we say, "We did what they did but they did not get punished." If you are going to complain about something, just know what the game is.
- SK: Has the suspensions broken your spirit?
- JH: No, I think when the last charge came and I decided to transfer out, I went from hell to heaven. What did hurt is that I went from being under a black lieutenant to being under a white lieutenant. Things became better for me under the white lieutenant. My spirit became broken because I would not take a promotional examination again. This is because, if I became a supervisor and I disciplined a white officer for something, I didn't feel the Department would back me. I was bitter and angry of how I perceived black officers were being treated in reference to promotions and discipline. I was also disgruntled of how the Department treated blacks and/or poor citizens, how they talked to them, their lack of professionalism and their lack of enforcing professionalism or sexual harassment policies.
- SK: What sexism did you experience as a female police officer?
- JH: I had been on several calls, in the predominant white district, as the senior officer. If a citizen did not like what I had to say to them, they would go and talk to a male officer, even if he was a black officer as well. Some citizens would address the male officer as "Officer" but would address the female officer as "Miss", anything other than saying "Officer".
- SK: What are some of the major difference you see in your Department today as compared to when you first joined the force in 1986?
- JH: There are more blacks on the patrol level and in specialized units. I did not think I would ever see a black deputy commissioner, a black commissioner or a black mayor. I think there is a bigger push to be more competitive and for officers to be more effective in their jobs (computers in vehicles, in-service training, safety issues and bullet-proof vests).
- SK: How have your tenure as a police officer benefited your life?
- JH: I have the ability to network in my own city, and outside of my city, through the black police organization. It has given me better insight. Networking at conferences reassures me that I'm on the right track. You may not get the support from your own city but when you talk to officers from other cities, one-on-one, you find you are on the right track.
- SK: What message would you like to provide to today's young officers?
- JH: First, join your local black police association and become an active member. Know that you are here on the shoulders of others. Do not fall into the trap of "collars for dollars". Always be active and learn how to agree to disagree. Put more irons in the fire. Always pursue higher education. Always think with the end in mind. After you retire from the police department, position yourself for the private sector or to become the Chief of Police.

SK: If you had an opportunity to relive your police career again, what would you change?

JH: I would not speak up for other officers who could speak up for themselves. I would still support them. If I were not a union representative or the president of a black police association, I would mind my business. I would always speak up for citizens. I would learn the Manual of Procedures from my department. People always assumed I knew more because I was outspoken.

SK: What words of wisdom would you like to share with today's police organizations?

JH: Make sure you are more involved in preventive measures, as it relates to addressing the issues facing the African American community. Such as literacy, physical activities and the overall perception of the police. Just be more interactive with the community.

SK: What is your fondest memory from working in law enforcement?

JH: When people, whether they were black or white, thanked me in different ways. These are the things I felt just came natural but they felt I went above and beyond the call of duty. This brings tears to my eyes to think about it.

SK: What is your worst experience in law enforcement?

JH: Realizing that the Department will fabricate something just to get rid of you.

SK: What advice do you have for other female officers?

JH: Remember who you are. If you are married, don't hangout with police officers at bars. Focus on your family.

SK: Do you have any regrets in your career choice?

JH: Absolutely not.

SK: What are you most proud of in your career?

JH: Being able to inspire people to believe that they can be more than what their current situation dictates.

SK: What are some of the honors/awards you have received?

JH: Multiple awards, including my most treasured, President Standing Tall award from NABLEO.

SK: What three words best describe you?

JH: **Justice. Honesty. Integrity.**

**“Enjoy your well earned retirement, Justine! Keep in touch with NABLEO members.”**

## African American Law Enforcement Coalition Scholarship and Awards Gala



(From left to right) **Harold James** (retired State Representative and past President of the Guardian Civic League), **LeAnna Washington** (State Senator), **Dan Onorato** (Democratic Candidate for Governor 2010) and **Rochelle Bilal** (President of the Guardian Civic League), during the Scholarship and Awards Gala.

**O**n October 23, 2010, the **African American Law Enforcement Coalition** hosted their first **Scholarship and Awards Gala**, at the Embassy Suite Hotel. This coalition of African American police officers consists of the **Guardian Civic League**; **Minority Women In Policing** (M.W.I.P.); the **Philadelphia Chapter of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives** (N.O.B.L.E.); the **National Organization of Black Women in Law Enforcement** (N.O.B.W.L.E.); and the **Sentinels of Law Enforcement** (S.O.L.E.). It was wonderful to see so many African American police officers, government officials and community members, take the time out of their busy schedules to support this worthy cause.

Although this successful event was the collaborative effort of five African American police associations, two individuals worked tirelessly behind the scene, to make this gala a wonderful event. I take my hat off to **Rochelle Bilal**, President of the Guardian Civic League; and **Crystal Williams**, Chairperson for the Gala Committee and the Guardian Civic League Vice President of Community Affairs. It's very easy to enjoy the fruits of their labor but one doesn't know the many tasks and obstacles that actually go on behind the scene of an affair of this magnitude.

Everyone looked great as they showed off their formal attire. **Joyce Evans**, from Fox 29, assisted at the dais. Nationally award-winning journalist and syndicated columnist, **Roland S. Martin**, was the guest speaker for the evening. There were multiple awards given out that evening. Some of those awards include: the Guardian Civic League Member Scholarship went to **Linda M. Pace** and **Cheryl Yvette Walker**; the Guardian Civic League Youth Scholarship went to **Britne Janelle**, **Juanita T.C. Harvey**, **Jayne' C. Wilson**, **Carlos Thomas** and **Caz' Slaughter**; the Linda Brickhouse Award went to **Billy P. Mahoney**; the Alphonso Deal Award went to **Crystal Williams**; and the Police Officer Community Service Award went to **Kathryn McNeil-Battle**.

Although everyone was dressed in their finest, that did not stop everyone from hitting the dance floor and getting their groove on. I'm looking forward to the second Scholarship and Awards Gala!

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This isn't the soul train line; it's the electric slide. You go girls!



### Scholarship and Awards Gala Picture Page



## In Memory Of



**Virginia Griffin-Curtis-Cunningham**, Chairperson of the Midwest Coalition of African American Police Officers and an employee of the Wayne County Sheriff Department (Detroit, MI), passed away in December 2010, from complications during her surgery. Let us keep Virginia, her family and friends in our prayers.

### Chicago Police Department

**Sergeant Alan Haymaker** (February 22, 2010): Killed in an automobile accident  
**Officer Thomas Wortham IV** (May 20, 2010): Killed by gunfire  
**Officer Thor Soderberg** (July 7, 2010): Killed by gunfire  
**Officer Michael Bailey** (July 18, 2010): Killed by gunfire  
**Officer David Blake** (November 22, 2010): Killed by gunfire  
**Evidence Technician Michael Fisk** (November 26, 2010): Killed by gunfire

### Summer Board Meeting

July 30, 2011  
 Providence, RI

(Updates will follow.)

### N.A.B.L.E.O.

P.O. Box 1182  
 Newark, New Jersey 07102  
[www.NABLEO.org](http://www.NABLEO.org)

Visit our web site to learn more about our organization. Don't forget to visit our Photo Gallery.

**Be extra cautious out on the streets and watch each other's backs.**

### The Blizzards of 2010 and 2011

As I watched CNN broadcast the blizzards that hit and paralyzed the northeast region, during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, I was amazed at the amount of snow that had accumulated. Philadelphia, New York and New Jersey were hit with 20 plus inches of snow. All flights had been canceled, at one point, at LaGuardia, JFK and Newark Liberty. I watched the cars sliding on the icy hills in Philly and the parked cars embedded in tall snow banks. The northeast region was repeatedly hit with several blizzards. Just as I was convinced that Mother Nature had spared the Windy City, the unthinkable occurred. Chicago was hit with a record blizzard, 21 inches of snow. Evening commuters were trapped on Lake Shore Drive for over eight hours. Most individuals either voluntarily abandoned their vehicles or were later ordered to do so. The "Drive" was shut down. Chicago's 2011 blizzard reminded me of the 23-inch blizzard we had back in 1967. At five-years old, I only remember playing in the snow and not having to go to school. I will think twice, next time, before throwing salt on the northeast again.