

If All Police Were Like This Sheriff, No One Would Be Calling to 'Defund Police'

I'm concerned about the anti-police sentiment in part of our culture. To watch the news media cover the "defund the police" mob, you would think most Americans were against the police. But I believe the exact opposite is true.

Recently, I became aware that Dennis Prager of PragerU started a program called #BackTheBlue, which is a national initiative to rally support for the police from organizational influencers, media outlets and individuals during the week of July 20-24. My newsletter and the podcast I did today with Sheriff Grady Judd of Polk County, Florida, is my way to "Back the Blue."

I invited Sheriff Judd to an interview because he is widely known in the state of Florida as a "no-nonsense" law enforcement officer, and he has a tremendous record of bringing the crime rate down in Polk County, which includes the area between Orlando and Tampa.

You will enjoy listening to my podcast. Sheriff Judd is very articulate, and he told me how the crime rate in most cities around the country is approximately 15 to 20 crimes per 100 individuals per year. Contrast that to Polk County, where the crime rate is 1.4 crimes per 100 individuals per year. That is one-tenth the amount in many cities. To me, that is incredible.

I have a particular interest in Polk County because I began my journalism career there at *The Ledger*. I graduated from Lakeland High School, and I lived there during the days of desegregation. I remember Polk County as kind of a provincial area with a fairly high crime rate. When I worked for *The*

Ledger, I did a lot of stories on Polk County back in the day.

I asked Sheriff Judd why his county's crime rate is so low. As you can hear on the podcast, Polk County uses computerization to identify high-crime areas so law enforcement can focus attention there. They also act immediately when a crime happens to find the perpetrator and of course to help the victim, and they have good relationships with the community. It's very important for the community to work with law enforcement, not only to solve crimes but also to prevent them from happening in the first place.

Sheriff Judd also told me about certain certifications law enforcement has earned in Polk County over the years. We talked a little bit about Minnesota, where the tragic death of George Floyd happened on Memorial Day. Of course, none of us and no law enforcement approve of what happened when the officer put his knee on George Floyd's neck and killed him. Nor do we approve of the fact that the other three officers did nothing to stop him.

It is interesting that in the entire state of Minnesota, none of the law enforcement agencies have any of the official certifications, which include training about "best practices." I hope someone in Minnesota will take note of what Sheriff Judd said and change the environment there. There is apparent hostility between the community and the police department, but defunding the police is not the answer.

On the podcast, I told how I did my small part to show support for the local law enforcement where I live in Seminole County, Florida. I took 14 dozen doughnuts to the sheriff's office in Sanford, as well as to the police department in Lake Mary, along with a card signed by many on my staff that we want to "defend" rather than "defund" the police. We wanted to thank them and show them appreciation for keeping our community safe.

Is there something you can do to show your support for law enforcement officers where you live? It is well known that many of them love doughnuts. Maybe you can do what I did. Or perhaps you could write a note or even just give a comment to a law enforcement officer you may see in public. I have had a habit for the last several years of always approaching a law enforcement officer I see in a restaurant and giving a brief thanks for their service to our community. I say very little more, but they always seem to appreciate that simple gesture.

Please listen to my podcast with Sheriff Judd. I believe you will enjoy it and share it with others. I plan to send it to some friends I have in Minnesota and see if they can challenge their own law enforcement agencies to get with the times. In my podcast, Sheriff Judd said those agencies are 30 years behind in getting certifications and other kinds of training that would have undoubtedly prevented this horrific tragedy—the death of George Floyd—from happening.

Sheriff Judd also has a reputation as a Christian. He told me privately that he lets his faith influence how he lives his life and how he does his job. As Christians, we need to remember to pray for our law enforcement officers who put their lives on the line every day—even being willing to take a bullet for a total stranger.

Let's thank God for them, and let's pray for their protection. Let's also pray that God will intervene and stop the way these anarchists are attacking the police and using the situation to create unrest in our country. {eo}

Stephen Strang is founder of *Charisma*. He believes God, Trump and the 2020 Election (*Charisma House*), available wherever Christian books are sold, is his most important book. Listen to his podcast by the same name on the *Charisma Podcast Network*.