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## Police Training and How Race is Viewed

Written by Robert Woodard

Friday, April 3, 2015 12:39 pm

Our police department received its report on policing tactics in the City of Philadelphia on Tuesday, March 24. The report was done by the U.S. Department of Justice. It was requested by Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey.

The report revealed large disparities in how the police handle citizens. The majority of these individuals were of darker hue and were not arrested for any crimes. The question then becomes, "Why?"

I am happy that the police commissioner of this city had the experience and wherewithal to request such a report, because it will help us to repair some of these problems we have in the way policing is handled in our city and ultimately in our nation. Hats off to Commissioner Ramsey for his gallant approach on these issues.

I thank Mayor Michael Nutter for seeing the leadership qualities of Commissioner Ramsey. His ability to seek and find has also extended itself to our President Barack Obama. We are fortunate to have him as our commissioner here in Philadelphia.

Going back some time ago, the prejudice and bigotry in our police departments would not allow Blacks to become police officers or firemen, in this city and around our nation. These prejudiced acts became a normal way of life as we knew it in America. The first African-American police officer in Philadelphia was hired in 1881 and the first African-American firemen were Albert Means and Harold Rhone in 1886. Black firemen were not in white firehouses, because of the segregation among them.

Why were African Americans banned from being police officers and firemen in the first place? Did the answer have to do with their race? My question becomes, "Well, what race are they from?"

Our nation has been sublimely seduced to believe that there is more than one race. So, how we as a nation view the word race has some relevance. Just ask the average person walking down any street, "How do you view the word race? Is it singular or is it plural?" The answer is usually "plural." Why? It's just the way we've been taught to think in an ailing society.

At Woodard's Barbershop, I have posed this question to many diverse ethnic and cultural groups. The answer from the overwhelming majority is they believe the word is plural. After doing a statistical analysis on this question, I decided to develop the race test. It consisted of asking the question first to a professional, a professor of race relations from LaSalle University. Hearing his answer helps the average individual understand why they feel the way they do about race.

The prejudice in our police and fire departments all started because of how they viewed the word race. So, the way they were trained about race became the problem. Hence, now that Blacks are allowed to become police and firemen, they too are trained, via this antiquated practice of law enforcement training that was constructed in very prejudiced times and they were based on white supremacy.

The report done about disparities in policing by the Justice Department has 173 pages. I look forward to seeing the outcome of this study, but it has to start with the citizens, both police and community, asking themselves this question: “How do you view the word race? Is it singular or is it plural?” Join the Barbershop Talk Human Family Day Foundation and take the “RACE Test” today at [www.BarbershopTalkHFD.org](http://www.BarbershopTalkHFD.org).

At the end of the day, after all the Barbershop Talk is over, my personal spin on this subject is there is only one race, that’s human, with many cultures, and there’s only one color, melanin, with many shades.

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