

## Black Student Union hosts forum with UDPD

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**STAFF REPORTER**



SEASON COOPER/THE REVIEW

The purpose of the discussion aimed to clarify and erase student held misconceptions about police and their intentions.

On the first floor lounge of the George Read residence hall, students of all different backgrounds gathered for an unusual opportunity. The atmosphere was lively, yet apprehensive as they anticipated the arrival of the evening's special guests, preparing for a candid conversation with university police (UDPD).

In light of the intense conversations surrounding the issue of race and diversity at the university, the Black Student Union (BSU) hosted a forum with UDPD initiating an honest conversation about race and the role of law enforcement. The purpose of the discussion aimed to clarify and erase student held misconceptions about police and their intentions. With the overall goal being to foster and build relationships between students of color and university police. In order to fulfill that objective, students at the forum were encouraged to share their experiences, both good and bad to ignite the discussion.

Senior Eli Webster, a former resident assistant, shared his personal frustration with police officers and their intimidating presence during one encounter.

"I made a call about marijuana," Webster said. "When they [the police] came to talk to me, one officer casually rested his hand on his gun, which made me uncomfortable. Even though his intent wasn't malicious, I think he noticed how uncomfortable I was, but continued to rest his hand on his gun anyway—it was almost like he was strutting his authority."

The forum panel comprised seven university police officers including Chief of Police Patrick Ogden, Captain Vincent Shipman, Captain Jason Pires, Sergeant Hugh Ferrill, and Officer Raushaun Rich among others. The discussion was moderated by TaLisa Carter, a criminologist currently pursuing her doctorate at the university.

As the conversation continued, moderator Carter also shared questions students submitted anonymously before the event. One of them inquired about the effect the national spotlight on police has on everyday life and the perception of police in general. Sharing his thoughts, UDPD's newest hire, Captain Pires expressed his disappointment in how the media portrays an inaccurate picture of law enforcement.

"Society tends to lump all officers together and think that we all condone certain activities out there which is absolutely incorrect," Pires said. "There are some things going on in this country that we don't agree with and unfortunately there are some bad officers out there."

Echoing those sentiments, senior Anisha Boucher shared her personal experiences and perception about the police.

"Where I'm from, people have a really bad impression of police," Boucher said. "There were times I felt like the cops were just looking for kids to get in trouble, but that's just the environment that I grew up in."

Boucher said she has two cops in her family—one that is from the Los Angeles Police Department and one from the New York Police Department—she adds that despite her early experiences she eventually learned from her family members that not all cops are the same.

Sergeant Ferrill added that the only way to get rid of such misconceptions is through community outreach.

"I have a daughter that goes here, so my I am very invested in safety here," Ferrill said. "I would love for the instrument in change in law enforcement to start here. It's a two-way street—it can't be us just working towards change and it can't be just you guys, it has to be everyone."

Officer Rich said he agreed with Ferrill's solution.

"I think that it is important for African American students to reach out and find out information," Rich said. "Ask to go on a ride-along to see what's going on inside the police department, take part in the community's police academy, come out to forums like this."

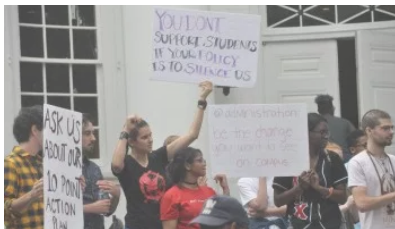
Police and students agreed the forum was the best way to begin getting the police to reach out to community again.

"Although we will not solve all issues today, this is a start," Daisa Pierce, president of BSU, said.

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