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Administrative Profile

Leadership with an Enduring Impact: The Legacy of Chief Burtell Jefferson of the Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, D.C.

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On January 13, 1978, after nearly 30 years of public service, Burtell Jefferson became the first African American to serve as chief of the Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, D.C. This profile describes his personal and professional journey and describes—from the perspective of a cadre of active and retired police chiefs and chief executive officers—the impact of Jefferson's career on the Metropolitan Police Department and policing in America more broadly. Jefferson's story, an exemplary illustration of public sector leadership, has profound implications for contemporary efforts to ensure the equality of employment opportunity. Jefferson's career provides a model of effective leadership that is applicable across organizations and sectors. He not only led his organization well but also encouraged and developed generations of future leaders.

Leadership has many meanings and evokes many images. Fundamentally, it involves the ability to inspire others to work toward the accomplishment of an organization's mission. In this sense, it is an essential ingredient of effective management. Leadership typically requires a willingness to address the most difficult and challenging tasks that confront an organization. The best leaders are constantly learning and developing new skills and abilities. They demand much from those around them, but no less than they demand of themselves. They communicate effectively, they promote trust within their work groups, and they have an understanding or vision of where they want to take their organizations. Moreover, effective leaders—through coaching, mentoring, teaching, serving as role models, and conceiving and implementing innovative programs—develop and encourage others. In essence, they grow other successful leaders (Blunt 2004).

These are the characteristics of Burtell Morris Jefferson, one of the founders of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE), who in 1978 became the first African American chief of the Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, D.C.[1] He served honorably in that position until his retirement in 1981. Jefferson left an impressive legacy, not only in the policing procedures and practices he put into place but also in the progress he made in facing and overcoming discriminatory practices that for decades had kept black officers from progressing in their careers. He mentored and encouraged the development of an unprecedented number of young African American officers, as well as officers of other races, who later assumed leadership positions in law enforcement agencies across the country. Those officers, in turn, have promoted the growth of subsequent generations of leaders. In a sense, Jefferson's story is their story: Their success was made possible by his own.

Jefferson's career illustrates how many small decisions made over the course of a number of years can have a profound impact on officer growth and development, police practices and procedures, and organizational change and development. He stands as a testament to the long-term impact of equal employment opportunity and affirmative action. His appointment shows clearly how such a policy can produce dramatic change. Jefferson's actions as chief show how a commitment to fairness, openness, and equality of opportunity can make a significant difference.

The Journey

Burtell Jefferson was born in Washington, D.C., on March 14, 1925. Educated in the segregated schools of the District of Columbia, he graduated from Armstrong High School in 1943. After graduation, he entered the segregated U.S. Army, where he served three years. His military service included tours of duty in the Philippines and New Guinea during World War II. After an honorable discharge, Jefferson, with assistance provided under the GI Bill, enrolled in Howard University's School of Engineering. Soon, however, he opted to leave the school in order to find employment that would provide more than the subsistence level of income offered by the GI Bill.

In 1948, the realities of segregation and discrimination meant that career options for black men were extremely limited. Jefferson recalls that difficult period: "At the time, the only fields of financial stability available to me were teaching, the United States Postal Service, and the fire and police departments. I believed that police work would be most challenging."[2] Jefferson sat for and passed the Metropolitan D.C. Police Department's entrance exam, was found physically fit for duty, and successfully passed a face-to-face interview with members of the department's interviewing board. As a recruit in the Metropolitan D.C. Police Academy, he completed 16 weeks of training. Classes covered the D.C. Code, the U.S. Code, traffic regulations, the law of arrest, firearms training, physical fitness, and all departmental regulations. On September 16, 1948, he was appointed to serve as a patrolman in the overwhelmingly black Ninth Precinct of the Metropolitan D.C. Police Department.

Employment as a sworn officer by no means meant that Jefferson was free from the ravages of racism. Indeed, his professional journey was largely shaped by deeply entrenched discriminatory practices. Jefferson notes that at that time, black officers could account for no more than 10 percent of the positions in the department, although African Americans made up 35 percent of the population of the district, according to the 1950 Census. Speaking of the difficulties confronting black officers, Jefferson recalls,

> African Americans were assigned to specific duties, precincts, and assignments. . . . When I began working in the department, the opportunity for growth [for blacks] was very limited. . . . Promotional exams were used for advancement and for assignments to specific positions. Eligibility was based on a "suitability for promotion" rating, given *before* each exam, which was provided by your supervising officer—typically a white officer. African Americans were given low suitability ratings, which prevented them from scoring high on the overall exam. This practice caused many [black] officers to refuse to take the examination for promotion because the low "suitability for promotion" rating ensured that they would not have a high ranking on the overall list for promotion.

This reality of limited opportunity for African American officers was reinforced by the organizational structure and culture that pervaded the Metropolitan D.C. Police Department at that time. In that regard, Jefferson points out that

> . . . in the entire agency, there were six African American detective sergeants, six motorcycle officers, one uniformed lieutenant, and no African Americans were assigned to ride in scout cars.[3] When an African American sergeant retired, he was replaced by another African American. None were assigned to "downtown" precincts or to an "all white precinct." Out of 13 precincts, four were considered "all white" based on the makeup of the citizens residing there.

Despite the many obstacles that were erected to discourage black officers, Jefferson pushed forward in his career. From 1948 until 1951, he worked as a patrolman in the overwhelmingly black Ninth Precinct. In 1951 and 1952, he worked as a special investigator assigned to the U.S. Attorney's Office. From 1952 until 1960, he was assigned to the Morals Division, which was charged with the investigation of gambling, narcotics, and prostitution exclusively in minority neighborhoods and communities. It was during this time, in 1958, that he rose to the position of detective on a probationary basis.

In 1960, his probationary status as a detective ended. He was promoted to precinct detective and assigned to the Robbery Squad. While serving as a precinct detective, Jefferson and a black colleague, Detective Sergeant Tilmon O'Bryant, developed the idea of holding a covert "study class" for black officers, modeled after the departmentally sanctioned and socially accepted study class that was available to aspiring white officers. As Jefferson remembers,

> The first session was held at my home. The practice grew and continued over approximately 10 years. We obtained and assembled information and material not normally available to [black] officers seeking promotion. The first study group consisted of 13 [black] officers. Ten of them were promoted on the next examination.

Although the examination questions were based on materials and assignment experiences not typically available to black officers—many questions were about administrative matters—Jefferson was able to successfully tutor many young officers. This strategy helped immeasurably in assisting blacks in overcoming the artificial and discriminatory barriers that had been erected to stifle their professional growth and development.

In 1963, Jefferson was promoted to detective sergeant and supervisor of the Robbery Squad. Five years later, in 1968, he was promoted to lieutenant and platoon commander of the Fifth District. A year later, Jefferson was named community relations coordinator for the Fifth District. This assignment allowed him to establish what are now referred to as "community-oriented policing practices," which enabled officers within the district to routinely interact and collaborate in a

positive way with community residents, local business leaders, and community-based organizations. According to Jefferson,

> The assignment required that I work closely with the Model Cities Commission, Roving Leaders, Youth Opportunities Services, and other community-based organizations. In response, I established a neighborhood community center and several community-oriented programs to improve relations between citizens and the police department, like the Neighborhood Scout Car Program. This program required the officers in those cars to meet and become familiar with business owners and citizens in their assigned areas. This promoted trust and openness among police and citizens.

This prescient and far-sighted practice reflected Jefferson's understanding and appreciation for community and organizational dynamics.

After two years of serving in this capacity, Jefferson was promoted in 1971 to captain and watch commander of the Fifth District. Soon after, Jefferson earned the distinction of becoming the first African American in the history of the Metropolitan D.C. Police Department to be assigned to command a major squad, the Robbery Squad. As captain and commander of the Robbery Squad, he reorganized the unit into six divisions, each responsible for investigating a specific category of robbery depending on the location, type of premises, or circumstances involved. This innovation led to a significant increase in the number of arrests and closed a number of criminal cases. His efforts were recognized and rewarded with a promotion to inspector and commander of the Third District. This was his second promotion in 1971, and with it, Jefferson joined his study class co-architect, Tilmon O'Bryant, in becoming the second of only two African American inspectors in the Metropolitan D.C. Police Department.

As a result of his leadership and his impact on reducing the crime rate in the Third District (a decline of 13 percent), President Richard M. Nixon awarded Jefferson a Presidential Citation in 1972. This national acclaim was followed by a promotion to deputy chief in 1974. As part of that promotion, he was designated chief of detectives in charge of one of the four divisions of the D.C. Police Department—the Criminal Investigation Division—and became the first African American in the history of the department to head a division. In 1976, Jefferson was promoted to assistant chief of field operations. This position was the number two position in the department, and it was the first time that an African American had been appointed to that rank. While serving in that capacity, the department experienced an unprecedented 22-month decline in crime, and Washington, D.C., was cited as one of the safest major cities in the United States.

On September 16, 1977, Jefferson was appointed acting chief of police for the Metropolitan D.C. Police Department. On January 13, 1978, after nearly four months as acting chief and nearly 30 years of serving the District of Columbia, Jefferson became the 23rd chief of police of the department and its first African American chief.

The Essence of Leadership: A Positive Impact on Organizations and Careers

Early in his tenure as a supervisor, Jefferson's primary challenge was to find effective strategies to promote change within the Metropolitan D.C. Police Department. His objective was to transform the department by dismantling discriminatory policies and practices and enhancing the equality of opportunity. Central to this challenge was the need to overcome resistance to equality of opportunity among white officers in leadership positions in the organization. Jefferson drew on his own deep resolve, dedication, and sheer determination to push this objective forward despite his segregated surroundings. As Jefferson describes the situation,

> When I first came to the department, they had certain patrol beats that blacks were assigned and certain areas where they did not allow blacks to patrol. . . . No blacks could drive in the scout cars. . . . They put cars out of service [white supervisors took the cars off the streets] rather than have blacks drive them. . . . They didn't try to justify this; it was a long-standing practice, and this kind of thing sent a message to me and probably all other black officers.

Not only was it a challenge to constantly motivate himself in such circumstances, but as he ascended the ranks, Jefferson worked hard to motivate other marginalized officers to stay productive in the face of their second-class status within the department and their extremely limited opportunities for professional growth. The personal reflections of former Metropolitan D.C. police officers and executives who served with Jefferson—Marty Tapscott, Clay Goldston, and Isaac Fulwood—illustrate the kinds of challenges that black officers faced. Tapscott, a former assistant chief of the Metropolitan D.C. Police Department, retired from the department to become chief of police for the Flint (Michigan) and Richmond (Virginia) Police Departments. He recalls,

> I came on at the end of '59. . . . D.C. was my first job. . . . When I took my physical, I didn't know hay fever was a point of rejection. . . . I had hay fever as a youngster, and I told them . . . so they looked at my throat. I had never had a

> throat problem in my life, but all of sudden I had inflamed tonsils. . . . They said, "Well, you got to take them out to be considered for employment." So I took them out, and they hired me. You know I wasn't even aware at the time of the fact that this was a way of controlling the numbers [of blacks]. As a matter of fact, if I knew the police department was so racist in the way they handled black officers, I probably never would have considered working there. I didn't know that when I was employed I couldn't work with white officers. You couldn't ride in a car. You couldn't work in the station. The only job available to you was walking the beat as a patrol officer and primarily in the black neighborhoods. . . . It was pretty hard to work in that type of environment.[4]

Goldston, a former assistant chief of the Metropolitan D.C. Police Department who went on to become director of public safety for Catholic University, describes a particularly insidious practice that helped keep many black officers from being considered for promotion. Goldston reports,

> My first day on the job was February 10, 1958. . . . A lot of times we, the black officers, worked the streets, predominantly in the black community, on liquor and gambling. When we would make an arrest the white officer who helped process the case would be listed as the arresting officer and the black officer would be listed as the complainant. That was an obstacle, because when they would start tallying up your arrests you would never show up as the arresting officer. If you complained they would say, "Go down and look on the book, I don't see your name anywhere as the arresting officer." . . . I can remember in roll call Burtell Jefferson, he was a precinct detective at that time, and I remember him bringing it up. And I think probably by him bringing it up . . . things started to change.[5]

Fulwood, a former chief of the Metropolitan D.C. Police Department and current commissioner of the U.S. Parole Commission, provides further insight into the frustrations of many black officers and the sense of hopelessness that they felt. According to Fulwood,

> Back in '64 was when I went to the department. . . . The organizational culture was one to make everybody conform. . . . You have to stick together. You know it is only the people in blue. . . . But it was a culture [for black officers] of, "You are here, but you are not a part of it." . . . It was a culture of, "You are not good enough to ride in the car. You are not important so we are not going to give you the kind of experiences that we give everybody else." . . . It was obvious from how they treated us that they had no respect for us and tried to take away our dignity. A lot of guys just stood there and didn't say anything. I said, "We need to say something about this kind of behavior. This is not acceptable." They said, "Hey, you are fighting an uphill battle with no where to go."[6]

The difficulty of overcoming the entrenched pattern of racist and discriminatory practices can hardly be overstated. Such practices extended well beyond the confines of the police headquarters and precinct houses. They directly affected African Americans and other marginalized populations served by the Metropolitan D.C. Police Department. The damage caused by this discriminatory behavior cut deep and left a lasting scar on the psyche of African American officers and citizens. Clarence Edwards, a native Washingtonian, former police chief of the Montgomery County (Maryland) Police Department, and past national president of the NOBLE, found his own opinions directly shaped by personal experience. Edwards remembers,

> I had grown up in Washington, D.C. and during that time there were very few black police officers. I think they had three slots in the whole city for detective sergeants that would be of color. The only way you could get promoted to that rank was if one of them retired or died. Other than that, if you were in criminal investigations you basically were going to be locked in as a detective with no place to go in terms of promotion. Initially, I didn't choose to become a city police officer because I was well aware of the fact that there was little hope for you to do anything other than walk a foot beat . . . I really never thought I would ever become a police officer, as a matter of fact. I had a bad experience with a white D.C. police officer during my childhood. My brother and I were walking to Sunday School. We attended a church near our home, but you had to go through a predominately white neighborhood to get there. On this Sunday morning, an officer happened to see my brother and me as we were walking to church and he asked us what we were doing in this neighborhood. We told him that we were heading to church. He said we weren't moving fast enough and proceeded to kick me in my behind. That left a pretty nasty taste in my mouth about police officers and the Metro D.C. Police Department.[7]

Goldston and Fulwood, who both speak to the impact of discriminatory practices on the morale of African American officers, provide further understanding of this perception. According to Goldston,

> I never thought that I would reach any high rank because like I said, you just didn't see it. You know with the atmosphere at the time you felt that it was impossible. . . . For a long time, blacks weren't supervisors on the street. When a black would get promoted they would use plainclothes and the reason you would stay in plainclothes was because you wouldn't have the amount of authority that someone in uniform would have. . . . A sergeant on the street had the stripes. He was uniformed and he ran the streets. He had a lot of authority, and so blacks for the most part didn't get uniform assignments until the mid- to late 60s.

Similarly, Fulwood recalls,

> The thing that racism has, and the capacity it had at that time, is the ability to take away your hope. It could take away your desire to achieve—to be successful. So you would give in to the system and the system would kick you in the head. That is what it did for a number of guys. There were some people in the precinct who were college educated. You know, black guys who were well educated. Very bright, but they lost their desire.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, in spite of these limitations and his lack of formal authority because of race and rank, Jefferson pushed hard to make improvements. He envisioned a time when opportunity would be extended to black officers, and he constantly pushed blacks to prepare themselves for that time. Jefferson was able to lead effectively because of his own high standards, his generosity and encouragement of others, and his positive outlook. This approach is reflected in the following statement made by Goldston:

> You knew your chances for advancement were very slim. . . . So you tried to associate yourself with people who were looking to move up in the police department and one of my control officers was Burtell Jefferson. . . . I was sort of under his guidance. I was in his first study class. He kept encouraging us that things would get better and told us that what we should do was be in a position when things did get better that we would be able to take advantage of that opportunity.

These sentiments are echoed by Fulwood:

> The first time I ran into him [Burtell Jefferson] in a meeting he said to me, "Things are not going to always be like this. You guys have got to study. If you don't study, you can't use race as a crutch. You've got to first study and be prepared. Once you get preparation, then you can say race is an issue if you don't get promoted." You know, he was right. You first have to be prepared. He used to talk about that all of the time. He said "You can't get motivated by allowing this man to steal your hope. You know you got to always be hopeful that we can get this thing turned around."

By the 1970s, opportunities were indeed beginning to open up for blacks in the D.C. Police Department. This is evident in the comments of Robert Stewart, Leonard Cooke, and Rodney Monroe, all officers whose career in law enforcement began in the department from the late 1960s to the late 1970s. Stewart, former chief of police of the Ormond Beach (Florida) Police Department, former interim chief of the Rutgers University–Newark Public Safety Department, and current interim chief of the Camden (New Jersey) Police Department, recalls,

> I started out in Metro in 1969. . . . If I remember correctly, I think Burtell was an inspector. At that time I don't think he was my commanding officer, but ultimately he became the commander of the 3rd District where I worked. . . . I try to give credit where credit is due. Jerry Wilson probably helped support the reform movement in the D.C. Police Department. But Jefferson really led the charge in terms of getting black guys in particular to think about getting prepared for promotions and advocating equal opportunities for assignments to minorities. . . . People began to see that the funnel in the D.C. Police Department at the executive levels was wider now and that there were going to be more opportunities than we had in the past. The number of [black] groups studying for promotions increased exponentially.[8]

Cooke, former chief of the Portsmouth (Virginia) and Eugene (Oregon) Police Departments, past national president of NOBLE, and current director of the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, recollects,

> My appointment date was in January of 1970. In 1972 or 1973 we received our first black sergeant assigned to our precinct. . . . When we got him, we felt kind of liberated because at least we felt we would get a fair shake. Now, that sergeant still held us accountable as well, but that sent a message to us that we were going to get a fair shake and there wasn't going to be that much disparity going on like it had been. . . . I am not sure if that would have taken place without the previous efforts of Burtell Jefferson and Tilmon O'Bryant.[9]

These perspectives are shared by Monroe, former assistant chief of the Metropolitan D.C. Police Department, former chief of the Macon (Georgia) Police Department, and current chief of the Richmond (Virginia) Police Department. Monroe reminisces,

> I started my career with Metro in March of 1979. Burtell was the chief at that time. I was in D.C. when Chief Jefferson was appointed. That told me that that was the police department I wanted to be a part of. You know, you had the Capital Police, U.S. Park Police, Prince George's County Police, Montgomery County Police, but at that time, D.C. was the only one that had a black chief. . . . I just admired the leadership within the department. It felt good to look and see someone like you. You felt like you had an opportunity to do things, an opportunity to be involved in things, an opportunity to get promoted. It was just a good feeling. . . . Burtell Jefferson, Ike Fulwood, Marty Tapscott, Rodwell Catoe, Maurice Turner—these guys were true pioneers. . . . They made sure that people like myself, Richard Pennington [future New Orleans superintendent and Atlanta police chief] and others wouldn't be denied opportunities. . . . I heard the stories about them not being able to ride in cars with other people. How they were disrespected. Those were some tough times for them.[10]

As Jefferson rose to more senior levels and ultimately to the chief's position, the challenge of providing equal opportunities for African American and other marginalized officers became more pressing for him. By leveraging his rank and the formal authority and platform that accompanied it, he began broadcasting his vision to a broader audience. This is reflected in his 1977 essay "Policies for Increasing the Number of Black Police Executives," which is included in Herrington J. Bryce's volume *Black Crime: A Police View.* In that essay, Jefferson notes,

> The modern police department places increasing emphasis on professionalism and efficiency. These goals can be reached only through advanced technical training of a select group of officers with the best managerial aptitudes and leadership abilities. . . . The opportunity for assignment and training for favored staff functions has been systematically denied blacks. Lack of knowledge and experience in these critical functional areas have been effective bars to promotion. Discriminatory assignment and promotion practices largely account for the dearth of black executives in staff level and command positions. (1977, 131)

To remedy this problem, Jefferson argued that police leaders would have to lead the way. He encouraged chief executives of law enforcement agencies to take proactive and creative steps in designing personnel policies to combat the stifling impact of racism and discrimination, which pervaded local law enforcement agencies and were often reflected in their practices and policies. He concluded, "This problem will continue unless our chief executives make an honest and determined effort to develop effective affirmative action and career development programs" (Jefferson 1977, 132).

In particular, Jefferson advocated the adoption of a management intern program for all police departments. Such an arrangement would provide deserving officers, irrespective of race or gender, the opportunity to be taught, coached, and mentored and ultimately the chance to gain the experience and training necessary to effectively function at all levels within a department. Jefferson consistently stressed hard work and high performance. He encouraged an optimistic outlook and focused on extending opportunities.

Jefferson's professional journey reflects the changing landscape and realities of American society in general, as well as the changing institutional arrangements that influenced American law enforcement agencies such as the Metropolitan D.C. Police Department from the 1940s to the 1970s. From the more segregated and hostile realities of the early years of his career—which led to the establishment of study classes, a clandestine strategy to survive in a hostile and challenging work environment—to the relatively inclusive arrangements that surfaced during his later years as chief, Jefferson was able to take what his professional life presented him and make the most of it, not only for himself but also for others. Among other activities, he participated in the department-sanctioned Law Enforcement Education Program at American University from 1969 to 1972 and the FBI Academy's National Executive Institute in 1976. At every stage, he touched the lives of other officers in positive ways. He worked tirelessly to ensure that opportunities within the Metropolitan D.C. Police Department would be available to all who were qualified, regardless of race, ethnicity, or sex. Minority and female officers too numerous to count progressed in their careers because of Jefferson's efforts to overcome and eliminate discriminatory barriers. Table 1 lists a few of the officers (black and white) who benefited directly from Jefferson's work in forging a path of equal opportunity.

Jefferson's Legacy of Leadership

What has been the impact of Jefferson's efforts? What is his legacy of leadership within the law enforcement community? When asked these questions, Jefferson simply replied,

> I hoped to make our department one of the best in the nation. I hoped to provide growth opportunities previously denied to African Americans and other minorities to make them ready to replace me as chief or capable of becoming chiefs in other departments. During my tenure, the organizational culture was one of complete integration, promotional opportunities, and

Table 1 Law Enforcement Executives Who Benefited from Burtell Jefferson's Leadership

Name	Agency Affiliation(s)
Carl Alexander	Chief, Danville (Illinois) Police Department, 1999–present Chief of Police, Veterans Administration Hospital, Danville, Illinois, 1991–99
David Bostrom	Director of Public Safety, Wilmington, Delaware, 1997–2000*
Al Broadbent	Vice President for Security, Amtrak Corporation, 2004–present Assistant Chief, Metropolitan D.C. Police Department, 1998–2004
Rodwell Catoe	Professor of Justice and Administration, Northern Virginia Community College, 1994–present Assistant Chief, Metropolitan D.C. Police Department, 1991–94*
Lenny Cooke	Director, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, 2002–present National President, NOBLE, 2000–01 Chief, Eugene (Oregon) Police Department, 1998–2002 Chief, Portsmouth (Virginia) Police Department, 1992–98
Kim C. Dine	Chief, Frederick (Maryland) Police Department, 2002–present* Assistant Chief, Metropolitan D.C. Police Department, 2000–02*
James Forney	Director of Public Safety Director, Catholic University, 2003
Isaac Fulwood	Chief, Metropolitan D.C. Police Department, 1989–92 Commissioner, U.S. Parole Commission, 2004–present
Clay Goldston	Deputy Chief, Metropolitan D.C. Police Department, 1981–84* Director of Public Safety, Catholic University, 1984–95
William Harrison	Chief, Capitol Heights (Maryland) Police Department, 1991–2002
Melvin High	Chief, Prince Georges County (Maryland) Police Department, 2003–present Chief, Norfolk (Virginia) Police Department, 1993–2003 Assistant Chief, Metropolitan D.C. Police Department, 1991–93* Special Assistant to the President, NOBLE, 2005–present
William McManus	Chief, San Antonio (Texas) Police Department, April 2006–present Chief, Minneapolis (Minnesota) Police Department, 2004–06 Chief, Dayton (Ohio) Police Department, 2002–04 Assistant Chief, Metropolitan D.C. Police Department, 1998–2001
Rodney Monroe	Chief, Richmond (Virginia) Police Department, 2005–present Chief, Macon (Georgia) Police Department, 2002–05 Assistant Chief, Metropolitan D.C. Police Department, 1998–2001
Ronald Monroe	Chief, U.S. Government Printing Office Police Department, 2005* Assistant Chief, Metropolitan D.C. Police Department, 1999*
Richard Pennington	Chief, Atlanta (Georgia) Police Department, 2002–present National President, NOBLE, 2005–present Superintendent, New Orleans Police Department, 1994–2002
Sonya T. Proctor	Chief of Police and Security, Amtrak Police Department, 2004–present Acting Town Administrator and Chief, Bladensburg (Maryland) Police Department, 2003–04 Deputy Director, Maryland Crime Control and Prevention Office, 2000–03 Interim Chief, Metropolitan D.C. Police Department, 1997–98 Assistant Chief, Metropolitan D.C. Police Department, February 1997
Charles Samarra	Police Chief, Alexandria (Virginia) Police Department, 1990–2006 Assistant Chief, Metropolitan D.C. Police Department, 1988–1990*
Reginald Smith	Police Chief, Howard University Campus Police Department**
Robert Stewart	Interim Chief, Camden (New Jersey) Police Department, February 2006–present Interim Chief, Rutgers University–Newark Public Safety Department, May–September 2005 Chief, Ormond Beach (Florida) Police Department, 1992–97
Ross Swope	Chief, U.S. Supreme Court Police Department, 2002–present
Marty Tapscott	Chief, Richmond (Virginia) Police Department, 1989–96 Chief, Flint (Michigan) Police Department, 1986–87 National President, NOBLE, 1985–86 Assistant Chief, Metropolitan D.C. Police Department, 1979–86
Lawrence Thomas	Interim Police Chief, Howard University Campus Police Department**
William Tucker	Assistant Chief, Prince Georges County (Maryland) Police Department, 2003–05 Chief of Public Safety, Georgetown University, 1988–2003 Chief of Public Safety, University of Pittsburgh, 1980–88
Maurice Turner	Chief, Metropolitan D.C. Police Department, 1981–89 Assistant Chief, Metropolitan D.C. Police Department, 1979–81*
Robert White	Chief, Metropolitan Louisville (Kentucky) Police Department, 2003–present Chief, Greensboro (North Carolina) Police Department, 1998–2002 Assistant Chief, Metropolitan D.C. Police Department, 1997–98 Chief of Police, District of Columbia Housing Authority, 1995–97*
Jimmy Wilson	Chief, Virginia State University Police Department, 2002–present National President, NOBLE, 2002–03 Chief, Suffolk (Virginia) Police Department, 1997–2002

*Denotes approximate tenure.

**Denotes tenure unknown; efforts to track the exact or approximate dates were unsuccessful.

> professionalism. Many female officers felt they had been overlooked for opportunities. Therefore, I created a task force to examine and address their unique concerns. I hope to be remembered for working to remover barriers that hampered minority officers, thereby making the playing field level for all and allowing every officer to rise to his or her maximum ability.

Questions about Jefferson's legacy are perhaps best answered, however, by those who knew him, worked with him, and followed the path he helped to clear. Comments from his contemporaries and his successors bring to light a richer understanding of the impact that Jefferson had, not only on the careers of numerous minority officers but on policing in general. For example, Fulwood notes,

> In 1964 when I came to Metro, race was major. It was major throughout my career. The environment of the Metropolitan Police Department was very conscious of race, and one that dampened your spirits. But when Burtell Jefferson started to get elevated and became chief of detectives, one of the things he said to the people was that there were blacks who weren't getting certain assignments. So, he brought some of the cameras in [brought more attention to the problem] and asked, what is the justification? They couldn't justify it. . . . To me, Jefferson has got to be the all time affirmative action person. I mean he broke it wide open. . . . He was able to change the landscape so that the playing field would be level. . . . He understood that change had to be made. He understood how that change had to be in an institution that he came up in. He saw the problems, and yet he was not a part of the institution, but was in the institution. Sometimes, that is something that we don't get. . . . His impact went nationwide, it had to go nationwide. He was a member of IACP [International Association of Chiefs of Police]. He was a member of the major organizations of city chiefs. . . . The mayor used to take him to the Big City Mayor's meeting. He spoke about his vision of law enforcement, wrote about it, put it in place. . . . I stood upon Jefferson's shoulders. He blessed me with opportunities that were previously denied to us.

Fulwood's perspective is shared by Cooke, who recalls,

> During my first six- or seven-year stretch [1970–77] . . . the highest ranking [black] officers were Burtell Jefferson and Tilmon O'Bryant. They were downtown and you really didn't see those [black] managers out in the precincts as much. After a while, you started seeing that [command-level diversity at the precinct level] happen. I said to myself, that doesn't happen by flicking your fingers. That is management. That is vision. That is leadership. There is no question about Burtell's lasting impact on Metro D.C. . . . I take my hat off to him because I know that he had a challenge there. To start promoting this whole issue of diversity within Metro D.C. at that time was really tough.

Yet another observer, Monroe, notes,

> When you think about Metro D.C. over the years, everything revolves back to Chief Jefferson. He was the first black chief. He brought about that needed change. . . . I started in 1979, and that was inside of one year of him being there. . . . I mean everywhere you looked, you saw blacks reflected in leadership throughout the department. . . . To young guys such as myself, that was very comforting. From what I understand, that wasn't always the case. . . . I didn't see all of the struggles that those individuals who had gone on before had gone through, but you know some of the older ones reminded you of it.

Comments by former Metro D.C. officers and subsequent chiefs of other agencies—Robert Stewart, William Harrison, Sonya T. Proctor, and Carl Alexander—also speak to Jefferson's impact on local law enforcement in Washington, D.C., as well as nationally. According to Stewart,

> Jefferson's legacy to me is the number of African Americans who came out of that department who have gone on to hold law enforcement CEO positions elsewhere. . . . Not only did we come out of D.C. but we all got at least one if not two promotions in D.C., very largely because of his efforts. Whether that was direct or indirect, he created an environment where it was possible for us to seek these positions and attain these positions. He was the first chief that I know of in America who really had the opportunity to allow for the growth of African American promotions from within. There were other black chiefs, but many of them were in environments where they just could not, for political reasons, allow many minority promotions. Jefferson took advantage of the changing politics in Washington to create that kind of growth. In some of the larger departments, blacks trickled into the executive ranks. Very often by trickling in you don't have a peer group to depend on and matriculate with. . . . We had an explosion of people who moved into the executive ranks, which meant you had your own support group. . . . Metro D.C. has turned out to be very fertile ground and I think Jefferson had a lot to do with cultivating it. . . .

> In a way, you can see how his work in changing the department for the better has benefited other agencies across the country.

Stewart's view is shared by Harrison:

> I retired from the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Police Department in 1991. I then served as Chief of the Capital Heights, Maryland Police Department from 1991 through 2002. . . . I am not sure if others spoke to you about how he impacted undercover operations. . . . To my knowledge, he was the first chief [in D.C.] to put in a structure for undercover officers. He set up a system where they rotated out every two years. This system helped to minimize the potential for corruption.[11]

Like Harrison and Stewart, Proctor and Alexander provide their assessments of the direct impact of Jefferson's legacy of leadership on policing in the district and beyond. According to Proctor,

> D.C. has had a tremendous influence on policing across the country. People [former Metro D.C. officers who are appointed chiefs of other agencies] bring to their new agencies what they have been exposed to in their old agencies. I think you will find that a lot of the policies that are in place in a lot of these new places [police agencies] can be traced back to our nation's capital.[12]

Similarly, Alexander says,

> I started out in Metro D.C. in 1969 and retired in 1990. We [African Americans and other previously marginalized officers] had one of the best all-around experiences. Burtell put into place a system. We were mentored. Our assignments were changed frequently so we could get the full exposure to law enforcement. These things helped prepare us for the challenges associated with being a chief. I think those agencies that hired us benefited from our experiences and Burtell's leadership. I see that as one of the legacies of Burtell Jefferson.[13]

Conclusion

Frances Hesselbein raises the question, "How do we develop the leaders our organizations require for an uncertain future?" (1998, 7–9). Burtell Jefferson's leadership offers an example of one approach. Jefferson was able to build support for change and grow other leaders through his coaching, mentoring, and commitment to high quality and performance. His personal and professional actions reflected the prescience and innovativeness that Doig and Hargrove (1990) consider essential for effective leadership. He could see opportunities and possibilities that were on the horizon. Moreover, he was willing and able to share his vision with others and encouraged them to position themselves for that new day. This ensured a generation of future leaders who were well-prepared to accept new opportunities.

Table 1 provides only a partial list of the black and white officers who benefited from Jefferson's efforts to provide equal opportunity for advancement, regardless of race or gender. Jefferson struggled to cultivate and transform the Metropolitan Police Department's internal environment, structures, policies, and practices. He created an environment that made possible the training, development, and nurturing of minority law enforcement executives who went on to lead their own departments across the country. The direct and indirect beneficiaries of Jefferson's efforts, such as current Atlanta police chief Richard Pennington and former Metropolitan D.C. police chief and current U.S. parole commissioner Isaac Fulwood, have mentored other new chiefs, such as Ronal Serpas of the Metropolitan Nashville (Tennessee) Police Department and Rodney Monroe of the Richmond (Virginia) Police Department, respectively. These outcomes may not have been possible without Jefferson's early efforts. The many decisions he made throughout his career and, ultimately, his appointment as chief of the Washington, D.C. Police Department set in motion a cascade of efforts and decisions that have indeed had an enduring impact on policing in the United States.

Speaking in South Africa in 1966, Senator Robert F. Kennedy said,

> It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

Such has been the impact of Chief Burtell Jefferson of the Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, D.C.—an exemplary public servant who overcame adversity and injustice through personal and professional excellence, patient determination, and integrity. He envisioned and built support for change. Jefferson was able to convey his virtues and values to bring out the best in others and to leave a positive legacy for law enforcement and other leaders to follow. He generated

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numerous ripples—indeed, waves—of hope that converged into a powerful current whose effects are still being felt today.

Notes

1. The Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, D.C. is commonly referred to as the Metro D.C. Police Department, and the Metropolitan D.C. Police Department, or simply Metro P.D. by the person's interviewed for this project. Consequently, these references are used interchangeably.
2. This and all subsequent quotes from Jefferson are drawn from a personal interview conducted on October 10, 2005.
3. A "scout car" is a police cruiser.
4. Interview with Marty Tapscott, May 25, 2005.
5. Interview with Clay Goldston, May 25, 2005; subsequent quotes from Mr. Goldston are also from this interview.
6. Interview with Isaac Fulwood, September 28, 2005; subsequent quotes from Mr. Fulwood are also from this interview.
7. Interview with Clarence Edwards, August 30, 2005.
8. Interview with Robert Stewart, August 23, 2005; subsequent quotes from Mr. Stewart are also from this interview.
9. Interview with Leonard Cooke, April 6, 2006; subsequent quotes from Mr. Cooke are also from this interview.
10. Interview with Rodney Monroe, March 9, 2006; subsequent quotes from Mr. Monroe are also from this interview.
11. Interview with William Harrison, former chief of the Capital Heights (Maryland) Police Department, June 6, 2006.
12. Interview with Sonya T. Proctor, former interim chief of the Metropolitan D.C. Police Department; former chief of the Bladensburg (Maryland) Police Department; former deputy director of Maryland's Crime Control and Prevention Office; and current chief of police and security for the Amtrak Police Department, June 7, 2006.
13. Interview with Carl Alexander, former chief of police for the Veterans Administration Hospital in Danville, Illinois, and current chief of the Danville Police Department, June 8, 2006.

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