

SPEECH BY
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BUILDING RESPECT FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT:
THE LEGACY OF LLOYD SEALY

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I am deeply honored to be here today. Lloyd Sealy was a friend, a mentor, an inspiration, a teacher, a dignified man who lived by the simple motto that the world would be a better place if we all treated each other with the respect we feel we ourselves deserve. By establishing an annual Lloyd Sealy Lecture Series, you have chosen a fitting memorial for this man who believed in the virtues of education and communication. And you have done me an immeasurable honor by asking me to deliver this first lecture in the series.

Because this is the first Lloyd Sealy Memorial Lecture, I think it is appropriate and fitting that we take as our theme "Building Respect for Law Enforcement: The Legacy of Lloyd Sealy." I imagine that if Lloyd could give us guidance today he would ask that this memorial lecture series be an occasion to develop a greater understanding of our present and clearer vision of our future, by remembering certain immutable truths. For Lloyd, in both his personal life and his professional career as educator and police official, a guiding truth was the principal of respect. I hope that as we review the world of policing this afternoon, we will find that the Police Department is promoting mutual respect between police and civilians, and between the races and ethnic groups that make up our city.

When I consider the world of policing through Lloyd's eyes, I look first to the Department's youth programs. I start here because so much of Lloyd's professional career within the Department was devoted to serving the young, beginning with his five years' service in the Youth Division and culminating in his role as teacher on the faculty here at John Jay.

I think Lloyd would be proud of the new directions the Department has taken in reaching out to the youth of this city. Our most recent effort in this area is Operation SPECDA -- the acronym stands for the "School Program to Educate and Control Drug Abuse." The SPECDA Program has two components. The first is a traditional law enforcement effort. Since SPECDA's inception last September, we have made over 3000 arrests on drug offenses within two blocks of the city's schools.

The second half of SPECDA is truly innovative and exciting. The Police Department has joined forces with the Board of Education to try to educate children about the dangers of drug abuse. We have targeted two school districts -- one covering the Northwest Bronx and one covering Bedford-Stuyvesant -- for a concentrated educational effort. Teams consisting of a Police Officer and a drug counselor from the Board of Education are now conducting classes for fifth and sixth grade students educating them about the risks of drugs. We are trying to change the attitudes of these youngsters before they get caught up in the criminal justice system.

The guiding principle of the educational component of the SPECDA program is one that Lloyd Sealy would have appreciated: communication builds respect. Police Officers, working as teachers, develop respect for the children. The school children, in turn, seeing these officers in positive authority roles, develop new respect for all Police Officers. Representatives of the Police Department and the Board of Education, working together, develop mutual respect for each other's expertise and professionalism. And the message of the classes supports this lesson: The children are being taught, in essence, to have enough respect for themselves to say no to the temptation of drug abuse.

A second program that reflects the values that guided Lloyd Sealy's personal and professional life is the Community Patrol Officer Project. An important part of the legend of Lloyd Sealy relates to the period when he was commander of the 28th Precinct in Harlem. He was assigned there in 1964, when riots had broken out and local residents made allegations of police brutality. Lloyd Sealy's prescription for peace was simple: walk among the people, talk to the people, earn their respect, listen to their problems. He urged communication, not confrontation -- respect for authority, not the exercise of authority for its own sake.

The Community Patrol Officer Project reflects these principles. Last July we selected ten officers from the 72nd Precinct in the Sunset Park area of Brooklyn, gave each of them a ten to twelve block area to patrol on foot, took them out of the 911 cue and told them to enforce the law, prevent crime, and build respect for the police in those communities.

Their first assignment was to introduce themselves to the people on their beats. So they stopped in stores, rang doorbells, and said hello to people on the street. Guess what the community's reaction was: Within a day, the 72nd Precinct had received several calls complaining that there were people walking the streets impersonating police officers. This shows how far we have come from the days when everyone knew the cop on the beat!

The ten officers working in the 72nd Precinct have shown remarkable ingenuity in responding to the needs of the community. Residents complained that their children were skipping out of school, so one officer borrowed the precinct van to conduct her own truancy patrol. Residents were fearful that their children would be abducted or lost, so another officer organized the local merchants to designate their stores as "Safe Havens" and taught the children to recognize the yellow "Safe Haven" triangles in the store windows. Parents were concerned that their children would be either victims of or perpetrators of Halloween vandalism, so the Community Patrol Officers organized a Halloween party at the precinct and over 2000 children attended.

By actions such as these, the Community Patrol Officer project has overcome that initial skepticism. Now, having won back the trust of the community, the Community Patrol officers have begun work on the second phase of the project: developing the community's crime fighting capabilities. Officers are now working with the community to organize block watcher groups, tenant patrols, and crime prevention networks. Ultimately, as we all recognize, crime cannot be reduced by police alone. Just as the best medicine is preventive medicine, the best strategy for crime control is crime prevention.

I like to think Lloyd would approve of the Community Patrol Officer project. It is built on a concept of policing that he and I share -- the idea that the everyday encounters between citizen and cop build trust and respect. Although we never can -- and never should -- replace the patrol car, we must recognize that by keeping cops in those metal motorized cocoons we deprive both the cop and the citizen of the everyday human interaction that breeds understanding and respect. This point would not be lost on Lloyd Sealy, the man who walked tall among the angry mobs, recognizing

that his vulnerability was his strength.

A third effort underway in the Police Department today is based on the principle of mutual respect. Since I became Police Commissioner a little over a year ago, the Department has embarked on a new campaign to improve relations between the police and the community, particularly the minority community. For the past two decades, since the riots that rocked our inner cities, this nation's police departments have been trying, with varying degrees of success, to restore good relations with the minority communities. New York City was fortunate to have been spared major civil unrest like that seen in other American cities. This good fortune was due, in no small measure, to the work of people like Lloyd Sealy.

We have recently come through another difficult period in the relationship between the police and the minority community. About eighteen months ago, a subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee, chaired by congressman John Conyers, held hearings in Harlem on allegations of police brutality and systemic racism within the Police Department. In a report issued last fall, the Conyers subcommittee found neither the condoned brutality nor the systemic racism that had been alleged, but the hearings and the allegations nevertheless left a wound that has not yet healed.

We have redoubled our efforts to build bridges to the minority community. We have invited our critics to come talk with us. Rev. Calvin Butts, Vernon Mason, Herbert Daughtry, Richard Emery, William Kunstler have all addressed members of the Department, from roll call sessions to upper echelon executive discussions. We have strengthened the Civilian Complaint Review Board and have aggressively encouraged citizens to bring their complaints to the Board. We have actively recruited applicants for the police entrance exam in the black and hispanic communities. The results have been impressive. On the last exam we gave, more minority members passed than ever before and scored higher in every category than ever before. The quality of minority recruits entering the Department is also high. In the class that graduated last December,

26% of the black recruits had college degrees, as did 14% of the hispanics and 22% of the whites. It is my sincere hope that his emphasis on quality will pay off and, with the help of the tutorial program being provided by John Jay, we will see more minority officers in the ranks of Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain and above.

A Police Department cannot respect minority citizens unless it respects its minority officers. A Police Department cannot recruit minority applicants unless it enforces the laws in a manner demonstrating its respect for the minority community. The Kerner Commissioner warned two decades ago that our country was in danger of drifting toward two Americas, one black and one white. Police departments, because they have too often inherited the tragic legacy of racial bitterness and division, have a special obligation to ensure that the Kerner Commission's prediction does not come true.

Today it is appropriate, in this first lecture in memory of Lloyd Sealy and during Black History Month, that we remind ourselves of the importance of our mission to build respect for police and respect within police. The task will not be an easy one; we must be prepared for opposition and misunderstanding of our intentions. But, as Frederick Douglass said more than a century ago:

Those who profess to favor freedom yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning; they want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.

We can get through our troubled times without sacrificing our principles if we remember a single principle: that respect breeds respect. There can be no finer memorial to our friend and teacher Lloyd Sealy.