

Letter from the National President of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives

“Policing is one of America’s most noble professions. The actions of any police officer, in an instant, can impact an individual for life and even a community for generations. Given this realization, every police officer must be centered on what is important. Service, justice, fundamental fairness—these are the foundational principles in which every police action must be grounded.”

— Dr. Stephen R. Covey

Over the year 2015, there have been several instances where a life was lost during seemingly routine police encounters—encounters that called into question the character of policing. As a result of these events, a palpable divide was created between law enforcement and the communities that we serve. And for some who reside in our more diverse communities, this divide was arguably expanded. All of these encounters, whether they occurred in a large urban city or in a small suburban town, had one thing in common—they all caused our country and government officials to reexamine and rethink the way that police engage with our communities.

The National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE) is proud to have played a central role in our nation’s efforts to improve the level of respect between police and citizens, by serving as a key member of President Barack Obama’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing and by working closely with the United States Department of Justice and its Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. NOBLE has sought to be a part of the discourse bringing a fresh look to how police can professionally engage with the communities they serve and how communities can respectfully engage with the police that serve them.

This commitment continues with our contribution to this important, timely work by the Vera Institute of Justice. As the policing profession goes through a much needed “organizational introspection,” this guidebook series, *Police Perspectives: Building Trust in a Diverse Nation*, will provide industry professionals with a critical addition to the ever-expanding portfolio of promising practices they can referenced in their efforts to “get it right” when engaging with and building trust within our nation’s diverse communities.

I’ve worked in the law enforcement and public safety professions for more than 30 years, and have often had the opportunity to work with the leadership and research staff from the Vera Institute of Justice. It is no surprise to me that they had the foresight to develop and compile this important work before the events of 2015, events that many believe will serve as seminal moments in the policing profession.

As an organization that prides itself on being the “Conscience of Law Enforcement,” NOBLE would like to acknowledge the men and women of law enforcement who contributed to the development of this guidebook series, many of whom are members of our organization. Their tireless efforts, combined with the wisdom and foresight of the Vera Institute of Justice, have created a one-of-a-kind training vehicle that provides promise for the hope of police officials reconnecting with and establishing strong ties within our nation’s many diverse communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory A. Thomas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gregory" being the most prominent.

Gregory A. Thomas
National President
National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives