

STUDY ON WHITE PEOPLE

The Reminiscences of

Joel

INCITE

Columbia University

2018

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Joel conducted by Whitney Dow on May 15, 2018. This interview is part of the Study on White People.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that they are reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

ATC

Session #1

Interviewee: Joel

Location: Cheyenne, WY

Interviewer: Whitney Dow

Date: May 15, 2018

Q: So, first of all, can you tell me your name, where you're from, and a little about yourself?

Joel: [01:00:04] My name is Joel. I live in Cheyenne, Wyoming and I am a police sergeant.

Q: How long have you been on the police force in Cheyenne?

Joel: [01:00:14] I've been in Cheyenne as an officer for a little over eleven years; I was in Laramie, Wyoming as a patrol officer as well for about three years.

Q: As you know, we talked to your wife a couple of days ago, when she came and said, "Oh, I'm doing this conversation on whiteness with these guys from New York and LA," what was your thought? Is that like—because I know it's a weird project, what went through your head when you said, "Oh they're coming to Wyoming to talk about whiteness?"

Joel: [01:00:37] I initially thought it was going to be—it sounded like some sort of contemporary study in social anthropology. My educational background is in forensic anthropology, and obviously a component of any good university is going to be a broadcast of different types of those focal studies, so immediately it came across as some sort of social study.

Q: So it didn't—the fact that it was like about white people didn't give you pause?

Joel: [01:01:07] No, I think there needs to be a full diaspora of the types of studies we have. If you're going to have African American studies and Chicano studies, it makes sense that you're also going to have Anglo studies.

Q: Absolutely. So, can you tell me a little bit about your background, where'd you grow up, what was the town like, the community you grew up in, your family?

Joel: [01:01:30] Absolutely. I grew up in a Catholic family in Rock Springs, Wyoming. It's considered the most diverse city in the State of Wyoming, but that's not saying much. In Rock Springs, their little city motto is something to the extent of "Home of the 150—or, 156 nationalities." Growing up, it was a mining town, my family's been there for a little over a hundred years. There wasn't a whole lot of moving around going on in Rock Springs; apparently it's just right for everyone there, at least us. When I grew up there, my parents are both Democrats and Sweetwater County, at least as I was growing up, was a relatively liberal place, which contrasts quite a bit with many other places in Wyoming. I was unaware of that until I grew older; moving to Laramie, where also it is a little bit liberal because it's got a university and education background.

Going to college there helped to reinforce some of my views in life. Moving to Cheyenne and seeing lots of other communities where things tend to be a little more conservative was definitely

eye-opening, but in some ways, I have to say, I understand where a few of them are coming from, but in a lot of other ways, we're just going to disagree. Honestly, I've got some quasi-socialist views, which is very rare in law enforcement. In Wyoming, being a Democrat or a liberal in any way, shape, or form is pretty rare, and the fact that I make arguments for single-payer healthcare and potentially a universal income and things like that, tends to create a pretty lively discussion, I guess we'll call it, with some of my coworkers and a lot of people within my community. Growing up in Rock Springs, I went to the only high school there, which was Rock Springs High School. I had really good influences from there that helped me to view the world in a very open way. Growing up I wanted to be one of those classic cosmopolite types who went and saw the whole world and wasn't anchored down anywhere. As I grew up and got married and had a family I realized that's really not going to happen, at least for some time. The hope is that my wife and I can retire in our 50s and basically have some two or three-bedroom apartment where we stay at in between travels, but we're going to see the whole world.

Q: That's great. Do you remember when you were growing up, when you first sort of became aware of your own race?

Joel: [01:04:06] My own race, I'm really not sure. A lot of Rock Springs is white, and I just assumed it was a very white community; when I was two or three years old, this is kind of embarrassing to say, but by—you know, I'd seen African Americans and people of Hispanic descent throughout my life, but apparently it didn't click till I was around three or four years old, or somewhere in there, in between two and four. And, the first time I saw people of African American heritage and really focused on the fact that they are indeed different than me, I had to

ask my mom if they, perhaps, tasted like chocolate. So, apparently that was not the right thing to say, because she said, “No, no, no, that’s ridiculous, they’re just people like you and me.” And then, when I got home, my dad also has an anthropology background, and even me being as young as I was he was able to explain that racial differences as far as the color basically comes down to melanin. And, he just said, basically, they grew—their heritage, their ancestry is in Africa, and there’s a lot more sun, a lot more heat, and because of where they lived for generations in their family, that’s their skin color and that’s how their body expresses things, and it’s generally speaking, at least from a forensic or a physical anthropology view, is a way that your body adapts to survive.

And, then I guess after that is when I became aware of whiteness, because my father explained that we also have specific heritage, that we are pale and white, and have the hair that we have for other specific reasons that were best for northern climates.

Q: And, how often, now, do you think about your own race?

Joel: [01:05:55] I think about my own race at least on a daily basis, particularly when I’m reading the news. In law enforcement it almost is a setback at times, especially when I’m dealing with minorities, because sometimes they make an assumption that because I’m in law enforcement and because I’m white, I either cheated my way to get there, that I have some inherent bias against them, or that I’m planning or scheming against them. Luckily, I consider myself a relatively articulate person and I am not one who is going to get angry when people question me in that way; in reading the history of how African Americans and Hispanics ended

up being in most of America, it wasn't exactly like they were going on a vacation and decided to stay. There's a very negative reality to how most minorities came to be in America, at least from a color spectrum or a race spectrum. I see it as a challenge, but I think it's a challenge that I can tackle and I have yet to leave a contact who sees me one way and then doesn't view me in another at the end of the contact.

Q: Have you gotten any specific advantages from being white that you can point to?

Joel: [01:07:17] Being in Wyoming, where a majority of people are white it's kind of hard for me to specifically state that my whiteness helped me any more than any other person, mostly because Wyoming is something like eighty-six percent white. However, looking at our general histories in America and the overalls of America, I have to accept the reality that because I'm a man, I—whether I was aware of that or not at any specific time—probably had some sort of hand up in a situation. Also, because I'm white that stands to be the same. I do consider myself spoiled in that regard; I was able to take that for granted, and didn't realize how much I took that for granted as I was growing up. The longer I'm in law enforcement and the more aware I am of the world around me, the more I realize that being of Anglo-Saxon descent, being a man, and being in a region of America that is somewhat rural, and because it's rural by default mostly white, means that I definitely get preference points in some form or another. If you were to put someone like me in many parts of the East Coast or more of the urban areas I might be more aware of that favoritism, but because the overall racial diversity of Wyoming is so small, I rarely, before I became a law enforcement officer anyway, was aware that there was any favoritism, but like I said now, I definitely sense that there is, and that I was ignorant to.

Q: And, if you had to name—can you identify any disadvantages you have from being white?

Joel: [01:09:09] Mostly, like I said, it's in law enforcement when people think I have an inherent bias against them, because I am white, because I'm a law enforcement officer I'm automatically considered "the man," that I have some sort of agenda, to arrest and bust people who are minorities and to treat them worse than others. The reality is that I got into law enforcement to help people who are in bad situations. Currently, my job is focused on what's called person crimes, and person crimes is crimes of violence, basically; sexual assault, child abuse, child pornography, homicides, aggravated assaults, things of that nature. When I go into those, I don't go into that thinking I'm going to frame someone, I go into that thinking there are child victims out there who need help, there are women out there who are in bad situations and because their minds have been exposed to the cycle of violence so much, sometimes they don't know that there's help out there. I know that there are young men of all races out there who are suffering child abuse, who are suffering from labor abuses, things like that, and I want to help them out of that situation, I want to help to lift them up to reach what potential they have instead of having someone push them down. And, I see that as an opportunity in my job.

Q: Tell me about how race and law enforcement are separate. You know, obviously, there's a national conversation going on around technology and social media, that we are seeing, we're able to see things whether or not they're representational of situations that are—that are representational of that exact situation. We see things on the internet, through social media, law

enforcement's way it engages people of color. Seeing that, is the national discussion in the media about race and law enforcement accurate now, or is it not accurate now, in your opinion?

Joel: On the whole, no. Unfortunately, I will say there—

Q: Can you put my question in your answer?

Joel: [01:11:21] Okay, yes. So, regarding law enforcement and the current interpretations of that with minorities and other persons throughout America, the way that is interpreted or being shown within the media and other formats, I think, it seems to be focusing too much at times on the police brutality thing. The problem is, when things are going well and your officers are doing what they're supposed to do, that's not news, that's everyday life. The problem is when you get a person who either never should have been in law enforcement or who finds themselves in a situation where they either have biases that they weren't aware of or those biases that they did have become expressed in a negative way, that reflects on the entire law enforcement community.

The truth is every single day men and women of every race are contacted and it is a complete nonissue. The problem comes in the fact that you do have some people who are bad actors and as they say, the squeaky wheel gets the grease, so they get all the attention and all the noise, and it really does look bad on us. More than the situation with the media and how frustrated I get with them sometimes, I'm more frustrated at the person who created that situation for us. By and large, almost every law enforcement officer I've ever met got into law enforcement to help his

community. It kind of is ironic at times when you look at situations in law enforcement; it's a job that has a very huge number of men and women who worked in the military, and they are thanked every day for their sacrifices, for being away from home, for defending the interests of our nation and stuff like that, and the moment they get into law enforcement, there's a change of that tune, and suddenly they're "the man" and we're a bunch of doughnut-eating pigs, and stuff like that, and that can be frustrating. With that in mind, I also, if you read current studies on inherent bias in policing and police brutality, the facts show that police brutality is going down; however, aside from major news networks showing some of the civil rights violations in the '60s going into the '70s and even the '80s, there was really no way to share that. With social media now, that is more at the forefront than ever before. I'm hoping that as time goes by people throughout America realize that most police officers - man, woman, black, white, Hispanic or otherwise - is there to help you, but I also want to make sure that in law enforcement we are aware that we have bad actors that we need to consistently take care of, and I hope we can find that balance.

Q: Well, it's funny, it seems like the two most type of viral police videos, the one where like the shooting video, and the other is like a police officer doing the whip and nae nae, or like shooting hoops with the kids, so I think that there's that, you know, it's like the internet is either things that confirm belief or crash into belief, so it sort of—but I take your point. But, have you—it's funny, because you're—you know, it's interesting talking to you, as you say, not only are you, like, you know, a liberal Democrat in Wyoming, you're a liberal Democrat who's a police officer. Those are two things that are not—that we usually don't see going together. And, you know, is that—so, is any—you know, clichés are clichés for a reason, or you know stereotypes

are stereotypes for a reason. Is there, in your history in law enforcement, have any of those things have you heard some of the things—how can I say this without leading it—have you seen some of those stereotypes play out with some police officers that you serve with? Or is this—because, it sounds to me like you're on a little bit of an island, and I—what are you an island from, I guess is what I'm—

Joel: [01:15:46] Mostly I'm an island from the conservative thought processes that definitely go on in Wyoming, and definitely in law enforcement. They have conservative views for a reason, by and large a lot of liberal views do not jive with the idea of structured law enforcement, a lot of liberal people view some form of law enforcement as a big brother program, like it's coming straight out of *1984* or something like that whereas conservatives argue for the law and order. The funny thing with that is a lot of the conservative people that we deal with day in and day out are some of our biggest headaches, because there's this duality in their mindset where "it's all well and good when we're enforcing the law for all of these people, but as soon as I'm the bad actor, it's no good and you're stepping on my rights and don't tread on me."

For my police officers, their views lean conservative in part because some liberal pundits or sometimes even liberal politicians make things out that the entire law enforcement employment group or the entire series of agencies throughout America have this pandemic issue, that's not the truth. We do have issues like any other group or organization that is made up of humans, and that puts them on the defensive. Additionally, there's some interplay with that because a lot of the police officers I know in Wyoming have families who work in the energy sector or what is generally considered the conservative job types, which is blue-collar jobs. When you have

people who feel like their jobs are being attacked by liberals due to environmentalism or things like that it tends to drive them even further to the right, not only with their views with law enforcement and law and order, but in their views of you're trying to ruin my families lives and take away their livelihoods. Not to diverge too much from the topic, but when Hillary Clinton said something to the extent of "We're here to kill coal" - that is going to very much rub a lot of Wyomingites the wrong way, including law enforcement officers who have families in those industries. I think the reality is that she didn't actually mean we're going to kill coal; had she made it a little more articulate she could have said, "The reality is coal is an unsustainable future for us, and we're not here to kill coal because if we kill coal we're here to kill your jobs, we don't want to kill your jobs, we don't want to kill your livelihoods and your employment and your ability to support your families, but we need to be realistic and transition away from coal, and while we transition away from coal we're going to make an effort to provide you guys with a livelihood and a sustainability for yourselves that is on par with your current quality of life" Had she said something about transitioning instead of saying I'm going to kill coal, it could have gone a lot better. If some of our politicians used less aggressive rhetoric about how crooked police are and instead are focused on those specific situations, I think we could get more balance throughout the entire sense of understanding left, right, center, otherwise.

Q: Well, you weren't working on her campaign that [unclear] you. Nobody seemed to be telling her anything to say. Just to come back to the subject—is that I would say, I look at the balancing that the more conservative Republicans tend to not to be as friendly to racial issues as more liberal—take out all the other stuff with law and order, that there's a feeling in, you know, when

you look at the data, that overwhelmingly white people voted for Donald Trump. If you took all that—

Joel: Yes, that is the truth. We can't deny that.

Q: We can't deny that, it's not—I don't really buy into this whole it's the forgotten working man, whites at every level voted for Donald Trump.

Joel: [01:20:22] So, this is going to be an unpopular thing to say for a lot of people, but when Barack Obama... I guess, should I rephrase the question to you?

Q: No, I love this beginning of it. It doesn't matter. "Unpopular to a say to a lot of people" is always a good way to start -

Q2: - You don't have to rephrase the question ---

Q: As long as the ideas is contextualized –

Joel: Okay, so, with that in mind, when Barack Obama was elected president, I was one of the many who was fooled into thinking we were finally, potentially, moving into not literally a post-racial America, because I think that's close-minded, but into a more accepting America, where your skin color and racial identity is not a dictation of who you are as a person and what you are capable of. What I did not expect, over the next eight years, is to see such a backlash against that.

I know a lot of conservatives have argued that they were just tired of his policies and tired of his agendas, but I don't think I've ever seen such a quick whip in the other direction, and unfortunately—

Q: Hold that thought one second while the plane goes over, we can just wind it back to “they don't like his policies.”

Joel: [01:21:38] Okay, so when they say they don't like his policies or his agenda, I disagreed with that, because I didn't expect to see such a quick whip in the other direction. Policies like this existed or views like this have existed throughout modern times, in any republic or democracy or first-world country. The fact that we had this backlash that swung so far into the terrain of seeing Richard Spencer as some sort of positive representation of who white America is really put a sour taste in my mouth. I think we need to reevaluate that as Americans, I think we need to be aware that as much as we would like to say we are a post-racial America, or that we can accept people for face value, we're not there. Wyoming, as well as any other state that happens to have white people in it, has issues with what was covert racism and is certainly more overt racism. The problem is a lot of our individuals who have those feelings or those views argue against that, they say they're not, but if you take it apart and you look at it piece by piece, it's clear that in spite of their denials they have biases based on race or ethnicity.

Another issue that I really take umbrage with on my part is a lot of our anti-Muslim rhetoric, when they talk about how we need to make sure the Muslims don't come here, make sure they're not here to bomb our country, they're ruining us, blah, blah, blah. And then you ask them, “Well,

what group of people is bombed more than any other in these radical situations? It's other Muslims." Because, it's not necessarily the Muslim religion that is creating this, it's these radical sects that create it. Look at Catholicism, we don't say don't let the Catholics in, because we were in Northern Ireland bombing for independence and, honestly, using terrorist tactics, you didn't turn against every Catholic because of that. I know there's a lot of anti-Catholic sentiment in parts of America, but that doesn't pigeonhole all of us, the fact that Muslims are being pigeonholed is very concerning. I myself am a huge fan of Yusuf Islam, musically, that's Cat Stevens, and in listening to his music and listening to the things he has to say, he truly does come across as a peaceful man. He truly does, I think, represent a lot of what the Muslim religion and any religion should represent.

Q: I love the shout out to Cat Stevens. [crosstalk]. We've had a lot of people sit in this chair over the last five days, and they've said "Barack Obama caused racism, he made the country—created more racism." But, where is that coming from? We've heard over and over again—

Joel: [01:24:50] I think it's fear of change, much like it was in the 1960s we're having to take a hard look at who we are as a people. We are becoming more racially diverse whether we like it or not, we are having to face the realities of racial issues, because they are more prevalent than ever, at least to the human eye, because of social media. We can't sweep it under the rug and just mumble in our homes anymore. We're getting people who are very outspoken; Milo Yiannopoulos is another one who has an entire group of followers who are saying, yeah, you're completely right. I have no problem with someone being proud of their heritage, and their heritage by coincidence happens to be white, I have a problem with Anglo-Saxonic elitism. We

cannot say we're better than anyone else just because we happen to be born with white skin and just because we happened to conquer so many lands over centuries' time and oppress them and made a point for ourselves to come out on top. I'm pretty sure the Hispanic cultures are not particularly proud of [Hernán] Cortés. I'm pretty sure a lot of people are not particularly proud of Columbus, and yet we've taken that and made full advantage of it over time. And, the fact that that sense of power or sense of elitist rhetoric is being challenged now, is, like I said creating that backlash, that whiplash the other way, where people before said they weren't racist, now they're clearly showing preference to people of their own race.

Q: Let's move back into something just a little more complicated, and it's - we've heard a lot from people all to this idea that Black Lives Matter has caused police to be killed and they advocate the death of police officers. And, I want to [unclear] to Blue Lives Matter, but I'm going to start with Black Lives Matter, though. What's your take on Black Lives Matter and where they come from, the rhetoric, whether they hurt, help, what's your view of it?

Joel: [01:27:01] I think Black Lives Matter came out of what was, initially, a challenging idea, that there is ongoing police brutality, and unfortunately what we see is that a lot of these acts of brutality take place against minorities, particularly in this case, blacks, whether we like it or not, at some form a higher rate than it does with whites. I don't necessarily think the officers who do that are inherently racist, but studies have shown that for whatever reason, whether you're in law enforcement or not, you are going to take a different view or a different tack, potentially, with someone who's a minority. When it comes to your everyday worker, when they have that, they might have an inherent anxiety about someone that doesn't ever get expressed, because they're

not put into a tense, uncertain, or rapidly evolving situation. Your plumber is not going to have to worry about that necessarily, because when he goes to anybody's house, whether they be Asian, Caucasian, African American, or otherwise, they expect the same overall experience. So, those inherent biases do not become as specifically expressed.

When you're in a law enforcement situation and there is real risk and your life may be at danger and things are going south quickly, your inherent biases, which I would like to express exist in everybody, may play into it in a way that you didn't expect, and it may make an officer more anxious, it may make an officer more likely to use force where in a certain situation with someone of another race, they may not have. I don't think they are specifically racist, I think that there are biases that they had not contended with mentally. I also think some men and women get into law enforcement thinking they're going to help their communities and don't expect that sometimes there's going to be violence, sometimes they are going to be targeted, and instead of being able to compose themselves and work through that situation while also controlling their actions through the adrenaline rush and through the fear, they react in a way through their use of force that maybe didn't need to escalate that way. I've dealt with very tense situations with white people, black people, Asian people, and in my opinion, because of my training and because of the strains my departments have gone through to make sure that we are aware that there's inherent bias, aware that there's ethnocentrism, and aware that we can work through those things to have a positive outcome with anybody, then I'm a better officer for it and the officers I work with are better for it. If you look at my employer's annual report on race, you'll actually find that our arrests, our sentencing, and our response to criminal activity is roughly in line with what our overall percentages of race are. That includes use of force incidents.

Q: But does that even [unclear] correct for typically people of lower economic echelons have more contact with police officers, you have to correct—

Joel: [01:30:25] They do, and unfortunately, regardless of what some people want to argue or not, people who are minorities tend to have overall lower socioeconomic income or stability levels. When you have people who are suffering socioeconomically, you're going to have higher incidents of thievery and petty crimes. Those petty crimes over time can put you in touch with people who don't commit such petty crimes, and that can lead to persons who commit more violent crimes, persons who have more gang activity, more drug dealing activity, that leads into human trafficking activity, and then we deal with that. That's where my argument, to some extent, for a universal, basic income may pay off, I think it may lower our response issues because people won't feel that act of desperation and then start seeing law enforcement as "the man" because we're trying to take them down for doing what they feel they have to do just to get by.

In regards to Black Lives Matter, as you said earlier, like I said, I believe it started out with the best of intentions; however, as I think we're all aware, life in America with social media, standard media, and otherwise, exists on the fringes. That's where you get your most ardent viewers and your people with the most outspoken opinions. I think Black Lives Matter started out as, you know, we need to be aware that there is inherent bias, we need to be aware that police are getting into physical altercations with minorities more than they are with the white majority, and that needs to be tackled. Unfortunately, people on the fringes, I think, have taken that to a

whole new level of all officers are bad, all officers mean to do you harm, and you shouldn't trust any officer. I also think, to an extent, the narrative gets clouded sometimes. Something that frustrates me is the consistent statement, you hear people say sometimes when I'm walking down the street, there's only about two weeks a year that I'm actually in uniform anymore, because I'm in investigations, but during that two weeks inevitably I'll hear several people say something behind my back, like "Hands up, don't shoot." "Hands up, don't shoot," was a statement that never actually happened, it's very frustrating when I understand where they're coming from, but if you're going to say something, use the factual statements of an incident. What happened in Missouri in that situation was very unfortunate, but there were many other situations and incidents that had happened throughout America that are a much stronger example of what really is wrong.

Q: But, wouldn't you say that the precipitating incident, I would argue that the precipitating incident in that—in Ferguson was not whether or not he said "Hands up, don't shoot," whether or not he was coming towards the officer and trying to grab his gun out of the car, whether or not he was running away, shot in the back, whether or not he was shot in the front, I would argue that the precipitating incident was borne out in the Justice Department's report on the police department and the State and how they were actually—

Joel: [01:33:46] Oh, I don't deny that the police department and that agency as a whole had their issues, and think this basically was a trigger moment that made that readily available and apparent. The incident in and of itself, while in everything I've read shows that it was a justified shoot, I think it did show that there were some inherent problems or problems that had not been

properly handled. Had that department in Ferguson had their ducks in a row properly they may have been able to, through the proper PIO [police intelligence operation] and the proper response, may have been able to make that a situation where they had created bonds and trust. Instead it automatically came to loggerheads and it was an us-versus-them mentality instead of saying, listen, this issue aside, we know there are problems, we would like to call you guys in, come to an understanding, we want to get rid of our biases in what we think of you, and at the same time we want you guys to have a better understanding of what we do, because as big as the problems were in Ferguson, Missouri, I like to think that there are still good officers there who make the right decision day in and day out.

However, when you have a general culture of misunderstanding between your community and your police officers, it's going to create torrents of continued misunderstanding, it's going to create further separating of the minds and it's not going to result in any sense of unity, and what I will say, with Ferguson, is when that boiled over and we found that there were some ongoing issues, it made all sorts of other urban communities and cities look inside on themselves and see if that was a reflection of their community as well. And, unfortunately, that has been the case. If you look at Baltimore, Maryland, there's been ongoing issues there as well, and as hard as they've tried to correct that, it's hard to do so when your own police commissioner is charged for tax evasion.

Q: What's the connection between Black Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter?

Joel: [01:36:12] So, when we talk about Black Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter I think we're getting too bipolar. I think we are oil versus water on that situation. I think we all need to look at the situation realistically and more balanced, instead of with our emotive response. We need to look at each other on a more human level. Black lives do matter. We can't deny that police brutality does exist, okay. At the same time, I would like the people in the Black Lives Matter communities to understand that not all officers are against you. The majority of us actually want to make your lives better. We want to respond when you're having that bad moment and make that moment better. Sometimes the person who created that moment needs to go to jail, sometimes they don't, but at the end of the day we want to help you; we do need to be aware that there's police brutality, too. With that in mind, the negative rhetoric on both sides has escalated violence against police. You know, killings of police officers in a violent manner has grown. If you look at the assaultive homicides on officers, that has increased and the link to that is the ongoing, negative, and biased rhetoric against law enforcement on the whole, instead of saying we have an issue and we need to work as a community to fix this, we're getting statements like "Fuck the police," and "Never trust the man," and "No matter who that cop is, you don't do what he says, you don't listen, because he's just trying to shove you down," that's not the truth. When I make contacts with anyone my priority is preservation of life and safety of the persons on scene and after that, preservation of life and safety of myself. While I did volunteer to get into this job knowing the risks, that doesn't mean that I should just swallow that pill knowing that I'm going to die, and that I should just jump in front of it and embrace death.

It also doesn't mean if I'm making contact with someone who's a minority of any type that I should automatically go into some protective mode, nor should they. But, the only way I'm

going to be able to break through that, as an individual, is to allow for the idea that they might have some views against what I do and—but I need to take that in, let it register, and think of a way to respond positively to try to neutralize their views. If they are contacted by me and they immediately reacted verbally aggressively and I react verbally aggressively, guess what? All we're doing is creating conflict. If they react aggressively and I take the time to say, "listen man, I know you're angry, I know you're angry, I just want to assure you I'm here to help you, I understand there's a problem, instead of dealing with whatever issues we may have with each other, let's deal with what brought me here and try to work through that." And if we can try to work as a community and understand that our anger is feeding that discontent and hatred and try to leave that anger behind and try to come to an understanding with each other, it'll improve it. With Blue Lives Matter, I very strongly agree with the idea that the safety of our law enforcement matters, but I don't think that should come with the sacrifice of the idea that we need to have a real and serious dealing with ongoing police brutality we have, we need to properly deal with our bad actors.

Q: It's interesting, I feel like could talk to you for two hours about all kinds of things on this, because I'm really interested in the way we separate communities out and sort of say, okay, this is a sub segment, and when everybody talks about police officers as being, like, they're our neighbors, they live in our neighborhoods, their kids go to our—it's not like, you're not something different from us as civilians, you're part of our community. And, how did it get to this point where it's like us and them in that situation? How can you bring that—does a Blue Lives Matter or does it like, setting yourself apart from the community, how do both sides move forward to like create that trust?

Joel: [01:40:47] I think community policing and open communication can help create an understanding between persons who side with Black Lives Matter, people who understand some of the views of Blue Lives Matter, and people in between. If we're able to openly communicate and try to reduce our emotional response and try to come to a logical agreement, I think that's going to improve everything. I think also that community policing would really improve things. If you make a point to be active in your community beyond your job, you're going to show people that once that vest comes off, you're a regular person just like them. You know, you speak of the officers who every now and then end up being caught on someone's cell phone camera playing basketball with some kids, or dancing in a group, that kind of comes with its own issues as well, because you have people who say listen, this is someone who is really reaching out to the community, this is someone who is really trying to relate to these kids or these individuals, and then you have the other side of that where they say why is he not doing his job? His job is not to dance with these kids or play basketball or to have community meetings, his job is to make arrests. So, you're never going to win, and that's also frustrating. My view is though, if we're truly going to be seen as part of the community we need to keep pushing for those things regardless of the naysayers.

Q: Are you happy that you're white?

Joel: [01:42:24] There's some duality there. I think that I am able to take more things for granted because I'm white. At the same time, I'm sure a lot of people feel this. There's also a sense of white guilt because before really being challenged on this in college, in a couple social

anthropology classes, I took my whiteness for granted. I took a lot of things for granted, particularly living in Wyoming, which is almost all rural, and living in Rock Springs I saw very little blatant racism, everyone seemed to be well integrated. I knew lots of people who English was their second language, I knew lots of people who went back to their homelands on a regular basis, and that was something that I thought enriched Wyoming, at least in Rock Springs. I've had exposure to foods in Rock Springs that I haven't had anywhere else in America because of that, and I thought that was huge, so I minimized race in Rock Springs, that's just part of who a person was and it wasn't anything good, bad, or otherwise. Coming out of that and being, especially in law enforcement, exposed to nationally some of the issues we have. I guess I have a lot fewer challenges being white, but at the same time I—it's kind of like that survivor guilt in an avalanche, why did they die and I lived? And this, it's how much was actually given to me that I took for granted that I wasn't grateful for, and how are they struggling in ways that I don't know, and then you kind of get that guilt.

Q: Is there anything that we didn't touch on that you really when you agreed to come out and talk to us that you thought you really wanted to say in the context of your conversation with us?

Joel: [01:44:21] Speaking of whiteness and race, I'm sure many people have said this before, but I think we need to embrace other cultures, embrace other races, you can't just look at someone based on their skin color, you can't just look at a white person and think they're some generic mayonnaise-eating pasty person, you can't look at an African American person and just assume that they're going to use Ebonics and that they're a criminal. You have to take a person for who they are on an individual basis, and if we made a point to just sit down one on one with people

that we don't know much about and actually got to know them as a person, we would find that most people on this earth are good people and that we all have great things to share and to lend to the world around us, and the people around us, that can create good things. And, if we quit looking at things in a group nature, all cops, all minorities, all whites, all blacks, and just said, "I'm here with this person," and we met with that person and sat down and had that talk, it would make huge changes in the way we view the world around us and the people in our communities.

Q: Thank so much, I really appreciate you coming down. I wish we could talk—and we talked about like militarization of the police, we talked about community policing, I sent a link to your wife, and article that was in the *New Yorker* that was about a CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] agent who came back to Atlanta and he quit his job at the CIA and felt like he could use his skill set as a beat cop much better than he was using it, you know, overseas, and it's a really interesting article about how police function in communities and how he processes—the thought process of using all those intelligence things to actually be a community police officer—I texted your wife.

Joel: [01:46:11] Yeah, that's phenomenal, I'll make a point to read that and, yeah, I don't know what he learned in the CIA but I assume he, being that a lot of their stuff is undercover and it's working one-on-one with someone.

Q: Well, he basically said I'm doing all this intelligence to stop terrorism and that the chance of being killed by a terrorist is infinitesimal. Where, the chance of getting injured by crime by

someone in your community, and why am I using this skill sets, actually I could create so much more—so many more safe people by using that skill set than I ever would by using it.

Joel: [01:46:46] Yeah, that's great, I think that's definitely an article I'm going to need to read when I get home.

Q: There's a great scene where there's a call to school and they're walking around and everybody has their guns out, and he has his flashlight out, and like, Well I really don't want to get shot by the other cops in here, everybody's so scared and he's like, I'm trying to figure out what's going on and I want to see before I shoot. It was good. So what we're going to do now is we're going to take a couple of pictures. I just need you to look at me, just relax your face.

[END OF INTERVIEW]