

## #61 (TERRY CHERRY)

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### Jerry Ratcliffe:

Reducing Crime features conversations with influential thinkers in the police service and leading crime and policing researchers.

Terry Cherry is a recruiting officer with the Charleston South Carolina Police Department, an NIJ LEADS Scholar, and an IACP 40 under 40 up and coming leader in policing, working with academic colleagues. She has taken a more evidence-based approach to her work and we discuss solutions to the current crisis facing police recruitment and retention.

I am Jerry Ratcliffe and this is the Reducing Crime Podcast, now in its sixth year. Quick side note, before we get into this month's episode. Earlier this summer, I was fortunate enough to be able to present the Jerry Lee Lecture at the annual Stockholm Criminology Symposium. I discussed how criminologists can better work with police on research and experiments. And if you're interested, the video is now available. Put your Googling skills to use. You should find it pretty easily. Or look for my blog post at [jratcliffe.net](http://jratcliffe.net).

Okay, to this month's guest. Terry Cherry has 11 years with the Charleston South Carolina Police Department and has served in patrol investigations and problem solving. She now works in their recruiting team, along with her colleagues in the police department and collaborators in academia. She has attracted significant interest by taking a more evidence-based approach to recruiting. Terri has been published in the academic journal *Police Practice and Research*, *Police Chief* magazine, and she featured in a recent article in *The Atlantic*. I'll provide a link to that article at [reducingcrime.com/podcast](http://reducingcrime.com/podcast).

She's a National Institute of Justice LEADS scholar. Was a 2020 IACP 40 under 40 up and coming leader, and was awarded the 2021 Ina Mae Tiny Miller Award from NAWLEE, that is the National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives. We chatted earlier this year at the annual meeting of the American Society of Evidence-Based Policing on the campus of the University of Nevada Las Vegas. We sat outside to get away from the noise of the conference, but ended up near some tree pruning and air conditioning units. So as usual with this podcast, there's a hint of background noise. Actually, I don't think you can escape noisy air conditioning units in Vegas. Who looked around at a flat unforgiving desert and thought, you know? let's build a city here.

Oh, and one last note before we finally get to the episode.

Terry discusses how important her Chief Luther Reynolds was in giving her the space to do research to try different approaches and to innovate in the recruitment role. Sadly, less than a week after we recorded this episode, Luther died from cancer at the age of just 56. I last spoke to Luther in the summer of 2021, putting the world to rights over lunch with Seth Stoughton and Jeff Alpert. Luther's commitment to advancing the field, to creating a policing world that was better than when he started and to leaving a legacy on the profession was evident. And in that he succeeded in spades. The policing profession is a little worse off for his passing.

**Terry Cherry:**

That'd be nice. Be smart and interesting so that it gets through your review process.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Well, you are the one that has to be the smart and interesting.

**Terry Cherry:**

Oh, you'll scrap it if I'm not interested.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Yeah, if the podcast rests on me being smart and interesting, we're really screwed, mate.

**Terry Cherry:**

Okay, I'll try my best.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Well, given we're post karaoke from last night, I'm just impressed the hell that you can even talk today because how many songs did you do last night?

**Terry Cherry:**

Oh, I don't know. Three, four?

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Oh, and the rest, you kicked the party off.

**Terry Cherry:**

Well, everyone used me as their binky blanket and they refused to go up unless I was helping. So I'm like, all right, I don't care. I'll go up there. I'm having a blast.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Did I hear somewhere that when you were in college you studied...

**Terry Cherry:**

Theater, film and television.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Okay, so that was your natural environment on the stage...

**Terry Cherry:**

Yeah, I had to audition to get into UCLA.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

So how on earth did you go from theater to being in the job?

**Terry Cherry:**

I wish it was something I could say, like boom, it happened, but I wanted to be famous, I thought when I was 18, and so I put in for UCLA, you had to get in the school. And then I also went to New York and auditioned.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

We should say UCLA is the University of California in Los Angeles. Did you grow up there, by the way?

**Terry Cherry:**

No, I grew up in Boone, North Carolina in the Appalachian Mountains. My mom and dad are professors from upstate.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

So you're a mountain girl and you headed over to go to college in California?

**Terry Cherry:**

In California, I did, and they took 30, I think 32 out of 3000 something applicants for the program.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

And you got it.

**Terry Cherry:**

And I got it and I really enjoyed it. And then I went to Australia for a year at the creative arts department and then I finished out, rounded it out. I was in Italy for half a year in Sienna and finished out my college degree. And then I got into this sort of entrepreneurial company, did that for a while, and then the economy changed and I had gotten an MBA by that time and I was trying to figure out what I wanted to do, and policing had always been something I was interested.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

So you had a theater and arts background, and then you picked up an MBA because that makes complete sense.

**Terry Cherry:**

I did and I got the MBA in a quantitative subject.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Were your parents staring at you going, what the fuck is she doing?

**Terry Cherry:**

No, they're pretty used to me just flying by my seat of my pants with my own journey. At the time after that, my brother had been working for Capitol Police. He went to GW, George Washington University and had studied religion and criminal justice, which is hilarious to me and had gotten the job. And so he'd been working in policing for a while and I thought, oh, well, that seems really stable and interesting and fun and dynamic, and I get to deal with people and I could use my MBA. I always sell policing as equal to the federal government. Everyone always talks about wanting to be in the FBI and things, but I sell policing as the same, just at a local level to me. So I started applying and Charleston took me first and I'm so glad the universe was so kind to me because I'm near my parents who retired in Charleston, I'm an hour flight to my brother and I love my city and I love the people in my city. Good, bad and ugly, and I love my department.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

How long have you been there now?

**Terry Cherry:**

11 years in Charleston, 11 years in Charleston Police Department.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

So you spent some time initially on patrol, I'm assuming everybody does, right?

**Terry Cherry:**

I did, yes. I spent many years of patrol on James and John's Island. It's rural and urban, so I did a lot of collaborative work with Charleston County, which is the sheriff's department there, which was nice because then I got to see how other departments worked and then I had an idea to start a community-based program, ended up being called the Problem Solving Initiative. And at first, not everyone was on board. My lieutenant allowed it to happen. He said, you created it. Figure out what you want to do. You set the schedule, you figure out the measurements, so how to measure it, and then you can have one other officer. So one of my best friends at the time ended up saying he would do it.

And we just ran around figuring out how to build community partnerships. And then also we used information that we had with the community to build intel on gang activity, crime that was occurring, trying to find alternative to certain issues, particularly with juveniles. And we spent a lot of time with undocumented Spanish speakers and we'd have people come and learn about traffic stops and the difference between immigration or ICE and us. And it started very small. It started to grow and grow and grow.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Right.

**Terry Cherry:**

And those relationships are really important to me. I still know people. I still know the kids and I still have people from the community come and speak. And it was mostly the African-American and Latino community.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Have you ran into some resistance?

**Terry Cherry:**

I did.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Who would object to that is the part I'm kind of interested in. Did people still feeling like it's old school policing, you go out and patrol and that's it, it doesn't matter whether you turn left or right when you're driving out the yard, just answer the radio.

**Terry Cherry:**

I think it's easy to follow a system that's there, and I think people that come in and become disruptors and outliers are threatening.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

You? A disruptor say it's not so.

**Terry Cherry:**

Yes. Well, I accepted my fate early on in my career. What really happened is that I just didn't fit in the box and I tried really, really hard in patrol for a long time and I didn't understand how all the pieces work together. When you start in patrol, you go through PTO phase or FTO phase.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Field training where you go out with a notionally more experienced officer.

**Terry Cherry:**

Correct. And they tell you how to do it. Well, I wanted to understand...

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

But they also try and squeeze you to fit in, don't they?

**Terry Cherry:**

Correct. They teach you a way to be.

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**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

This is how we are, this is our culture, this is how we do things.

**Terry Cherry:**

And you'll fit into this box. And the problem with that is that I wanted to understand how all the pieces work together and no one could tell me all of the pieces. Then I became very annoying. Much like the rabbit in Zootopia. I mean, I am Officer Hops. I want to know why, I still do, 11 years later.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Yeah, I mean you're basically a little gay woman with a haircut that hasn't decided what's going on with it. A theater background and an MBA. You're kind of this whole smorgasbord of everything. It's fantastic.

**Terry Cherry:**

Yeah, I'm small. I'm gay. I have a very cool haircut. It's called an undercut, which also they didn't like very much.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Right.

**Terry Cherry:**

Or my tattoos or I used to wear a Buddhism bracelet and when I was on patrol and they didn't like that too much either, but I learned...

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

I'm sure you just confused the hell out of them didn't you?

**Terry Cherry:**

I did.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Yeah.

**Terry Cherry:**

I didn't fit in. At the time was hard. But I thought, well, why don't we try something different? And if I can't fit in your box because I'm a circle and a much bigger circle than this tiny box, try something new. The regime changed. Things changed.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

But that's also, policing is changing.

**Terry Cherry:**

Yes.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

I mean I joined the job in 1984, so I'm coming up to nearly 40 years involved in policing in some fashion. And the core of the job has changed. You're still dealing with some people who are assholes to other people.

**Terry Cherry:**

Yes.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

You're still dealing with a lot of people who do stupid stuff and have really bad days, but how we as a society deal with it and how as an organization or policing as an organization, is different as well as to change and evolve. So you are probably a pioneer in terms of bringing in a change, which now or in a few years time would just be like, oh yeah, no bother.

**Terry Cherry:**

Yes. But the early adapters are the hardest. They get hit the hardest because they're early adapting. Policing is really good at late adoption, meaning someone does it before them, they get obliterated and then people go, oh, maybe that was not such a bad idea. And then an agency will do it and other agency's like, well, this agency's doing it, so let's do it. And then they're like, well, multiple agencies are doing it. It becomes, it starts to catch on and sort of spread.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

And we always recognize the people who were the first at something, but a lot of the time just forget how fucking miserable it was for them at times.

**Terry Cherry:**

It's hard. Although I think there's a space in policing for those that can come in, have new ideas or be fixers. I think that's actually part of policing. They're just less than 1% of the total policing industry and they tend to get pushed out early on. I think that's why you don't see them a lot as you infiltrate the entire system. Oftentimes they go, you know what? I don't fit in. This isn't working. They don't like these ideas and they give up. Part of success of being innovative is sticking with it.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Yes. Great way of looking at it.

**Terry Cherry:**

And I really enjoyed patrol when I started because every different call was a problem, and I actually really ended up enjoying dealing with people with mental illness because I realized the slower you moved and the more you realize that A didn't go to B, didn't go to C, and that their sort of firings went maybe A to C to F, back to D back, and you had the ability to follow the story and be compassionate while doing it. A lot of the times you could end up with good outcomes. People with brain injuries were different because their thinking processes weren't the same.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

It doesn't follow the same kind of patterns that we expect.

**Terry Cherry:**

But I enjoyed helping to the best of my ability and I enjoy talking to people and meeting new people and people's stories are what interests me.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

So speaking of people with mental illnesses whose brains are going in all sorts of weird directions, you've become a lead scholar for the National Institute of Justice.

**Terry Cherry:**

Yes. That's a really good analogy.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

So we should tell people, the National Institute of Justice has a program that pairs academics who work in policing with people like yourselves, practitioners who work and LEADSS, do you know what LEADSS stands for?

**Terry Cherry:**

Law Enforcement Advancement of Data, I think is what it is.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Something like that. That's right. Law Enforcement Advancing Data and Science Scholars Program.

**Terry Cherry:**

Oh, I forgot the last half of it. Yeah, I [didn't] remember the last half.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

When did you join that?

**Terry Cherry:**

So I got it during COVID, sort of the cusp of the Trump administration to the Biden administration, COVID, George Floyd time.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

I mean, it's just been such a great time in policing, hasn't it?

**Terry Cherry:**

Honestly, I got it and I was really excited. It was right around the same time I got ICPs 40 under 40 and they mailed me my award and my wife and I stood in the hallway and celebrated it and put it in the office. Let me go back. So I had built a partnership with Kyle McLean from Clemson. He had been in Florida.



**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

It's Clemson University?

**Terry Cherry:**

Clemson University yes, in South Carolina, and Jeff Alpert at USC, which is University of South Carolina.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

He's a regular name that crops up on this podcast.

**Terry Cherry:**

All the time I'm sure.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Yeah.

**Terry Cherry:**

He's my buddy now.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Yeah. There's got to be warrants out for him in at least three states now. If not, there should be.

**Terry Cherry:**

Yeah. He's great though. He and Kyle are fantastic because I think they really mentor practitioners and academics, whoever's interested in that subject matter.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Kyle McLean is one of a small group of up and coming scholars who actually care about advancing policing.

**Terry Cherry:**

Yes.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

And don't bring any judgment to it.

**Terry Cherry:**

Yes.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Which is really helpful.

## Terry Cherry:

Yes. What's interesting that I've gotten from this experience is that I now have practitioner mentors, but I now have academic mentors too. People that truly care about my career, my success, my decisions, what's best for me. Jeremy Wilson from Michigan State's another, and it's nice to have those relationships outside of policing as well.

## Jerry Ratcliffe:

As a police officer. You're now also publishing academically, which is a fantastic way for stuff to disappear and never be seen again, right?

## Terry Cherry:

Correct.

## Jerry Ratcliffe:

We've got this really good idea. What should we do about it? Let's write a really long multi-page journal article that's incredibly tedious to read and see if we can get any police officers to read it.

## Terry Cherry:

The difference though is, you can't build a segue between practitioners and academics if you don't have the mediator and it has to be a person doing both, I think.

## Jerry Ratcliffe:

Well, academia comes with some scientific rigor to actually tell you whether it really is making a difference or not, as opposed to I have thoughts and an opinion, and it also brings some credibility to it, some external credibility. The downside is that the two fields are so far apart that it needs people like you from policing to move towards the academic side and good scholars, not enough of them do this to move towards and understand the policing world.

## Terry Cherry:

I agree. In the past, long, long ago, Renaissance, let's say you have people that were artists, Donatello, Michelangelo just come to mind who were artists and scientists and academics, and they would take their knowledge and their ability and they would translate it into something of practice. Same way now currently in medicine, my wife is in medicine and they study cancer and then they try to find treatments and then they implement those treatments. It makes sense. Because that's the point of gathering information through scientific rigor is to take those scientific findings and apply them, common sense to me.

## Jerry Ratcliffe:

Tell me about the scientific approach that you've been using in terms of thinking about recruitment, because this is very timing to be talking with you. We're in a national crisis around recruitment and retention. So how have you been, I mean, you've got a quantitative background, you've got an MBA, you're working in recruitment. How have you been applying that to understanding your position?

## Terry Cherry:

Wrote a strategic plan first, treating recruitment like a business, constantly competing, understanding the landscape and the competition, not only public, but private sector. Then systematizing the recruitment, hiring, onboarding, and then sort of the backend of the exiting of the entire process.

## Jerry Ratcliffe:

So you've been sort of disaggregating the process to say, okay, let's treat each of these parts of it and look to see where...

## Terry Cherry:

We can make improvements. We have a database that captures information about the people that apply where they're from. They do this in private sector to do target marketing, for example. So we know where our applicants come from. We know their race, we know their gender. We have a survey system when they onboard to find out why they pick us over another department, what it was about us that attracted them, meaning Charleston Police Department. Then they end up transferring to training and then Sergeant Gibson, who's also a lead scholar that I work with, he's implemented a stay survey, best way to put it. And then we capture exit interview data and then created a survey to try to capture no-show and unresponsive data to see if I get those people to respond so that we can do a thematic analysis to try to understand why it is that they apply and put an application, but then it doesn't translate to actual testing.

## Jerry Ratcliffe:

So you're trying to really understand the whole process from the moment when somebody walks up to you at a recruiting station, at a table, and then if they give you their details at that point, how can you smooth the path to getting them in, getting them through and getting them to stay?

## Terry Cherry:

Correct. I'm going to correct you just a little bit because they have to apply in order for the data aspect to start. Attracting people has unfortunately a lot more to do with charisma and personality.

## Jerry Ratcliffe:

If only you had any of that.

## Terry Cherry:

It has to do with customer service. It does. You can probably measure that, but it's just a lot more qualitative. It's harder to explain than it is to say if you move expeditiously in a hiring process, you're going to be more competitive. Or we can do target marketing. I mean, those things are very easily quantifiable and measurable, but charisma, kindness, love, understanding people. It's very challenging to capture that and then franchise it.

## Jerry Ratcliffe:

So people can go through a process that can be incredibly efficient but very impersonal.

**Terry Cherry:**

Yes.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

But they stay because they've built a connection, say with you or something like that. And so that puts extra work on you outside of your normal hours to follow them through the process and keep them on board and keep them in tune.

**Terry Cherry:**

But that's recruiting. So the way they've been doing recruiting is, I always use this analogy, but if I go and I say, I want to catch four tuna, and the tuna are good police officers, I want to catch four and I throw out a net, Charleston has a lot of fishing, so this is why I always think of this.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Okay, yeah, I know nothing about fishing. I don't mind eating fish, but I have no idea how to catch the bastards.

**Terry Cherry:**

So oftentimes you'll throw out a net to catch minnows to use the minnows to catch fish. But agencies, they will throw out a casting net and they'll catch thousands of minnows and they'll pull out the huge net of the minnows and they'll stand on a stage for the news and say, look how successful we are. And those minnows, in my analogy, represent applicants. Well, that means nothing, you know nothing about them. You just have caught some minnows. While over here you have somebody who is diligently trying to fish in this spot where they know that they are using the correct bait, having studied the wave patterns, have studied the weather, the day, everything, have really thought about it. And they've caught not four, but only two, but they caught two tuna. Two tuna is going to be worth more than a thousand minnows. I mean, we could go off on a tangent and talk about the fact we haven't even defined or measured what effective policing is. No one can tell me.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

I think if we do this right, we are recruiting police officers who are going to be around in 10 or 20 years time. I have no idea what policing is going to look like in 20 years time. And I don't trust anybody who says they know.

**Terry Cherry:**

It won't look like this.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

No.

**Terry Cherry:**

Policing is just like everything else. It's impermanent and organic and it's ever-flowing and ever-changing and it should be, nothing should be permanent.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

You've got 11 years in and you've been recruiting for the last five years. So you were recruiting before George Floyd and post George Floyd.

**Terry Cherry:**

I was.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Did things change?

**Terry Cherry:**

No.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Really?

**Terry Cherry:**

No. What changed is that agencies became so focused on the negative that they forgot about caring. They all shut down during COVID, stopped recruiting. I didn't. They stopped testing. I didn't. I had to get very creative on how to do it. They started throwing their hands up in the air saying, well, everyone hates us. No one wants to be a police officer, I give up. And when you do that, it's unattractive and it doesn't inspire people. Recruiting and retaining is about inspiring people to do something for someone other than themselves. And to see the value in that. The way you get people to do it is you meet them, you talk to them, you get to know about their families, you care about them. They're human beings. They're not personnel numbers. It's not how the world works.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

After being married for 20 years, I got divorced and one of the things I learned getting back in the dating market is don't talk about your ex-wife.

**Terry Cherry:**

Yeah.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Let's focus on the positive and moving forward and not dwell on all the things that are going wrong.

**Terry Cherry:**

That's a good example.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Probably the worst analogy ever, apologies to my ex-wife.

**Terry Cherry:**

But pain hurts. And that's why we talk about it is because we are human beings. Even chiefs are human beings. Command staff are human beings. Some people would say otherwise but it's true. Everybody has stories and has pains and has things that have happened to them. I think those stories travel with you and you can't get rid of them.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

No. And I think people in policing, especially if you've seen 10, 15, 20 years where the job was easier and then George Floyd comes along and it has this international impact to change policing in other countries as well.

**Terry Cherry:**

But that wasn't even the, that's what I don't understand. This has been going on forever. There was Rodney King, there was Walter Scott. I haven't policed in an age where there wasn't Ferguson.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Pretty much been your whole career.

**Terry Cherry:**

That's my life. And the people that you're recruiting, they don't know a world without body cameras. They don't know a world without reform. They don't know a world without citizen input. Those things aren't necessarily adverse to policing. It was easier because you got to willy-nilly run around and do what you wanted.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Yeah, you don't remember before, but when body-worn cameras came in, a lot of people hated the idea of body-worn cameras. And it reminded me of conversations going way back to reading about policing when the Miranda warning came in the 1960s, but we adapted, it became normal and everybody's fine with it. And people are, I think are really body-worn cameras. So I think there's a reticence fear of change. So yeah, the post George Floyd world has been different. But it's interesting that if you take the right approach to recruitment, you haven't had as many impacts as other places where recruitment is really a struggle right now.

**Terry Cherry:**

Yes. But if you have an archaic system that refuses to change and refuses to, we talk about organizational justice, you don't listen, then they're going to go.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

So do you think the change is more because society shifted and the candidates have changed. The 20 something year olds and not like the 20 something year olds of 20, 30 years ago?

**Terry Cherry:**

Yeah, but I mean, no 20 year old is like any other 20 year old from previous ages. I mean, that's the nature of the progression of life. You just have to be comfortable adapting. The solution is adapt.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

So police departments can't just now set up a table at a university career fair, grab a few names, get a few applicants, and just keep rolling on as business as usual, they've got to change.

**Terry Cherry:**

So every department is its own entity. We should probably say that first. I use the example that Blockbuster refused to adapt. Blockbuster was a company for those that don't know that would rent movies. And it had an opportunity to go to streaming and it said no because it thought it was too big to fail. And streaming came along. Netflix came along. Netflix has now gotten very big and thought it was too big to fail. But Netflix is its own streaming platform just as is Apple TV is its own streaming platform as is HBO or Hulu. And they fit under an umbrella of streaming platform entertainment, but they're not the same company. And that's how we treat policing and we act like all policing is the same. And I caveat that because if a career fair works for one agency, it might, I don't know because there's 18,000 police departments or something like that.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Well, a lot of them are struggling. So I mean, you found a formula that seems to work and you have some evidence to support that. What advice would you give them?

**Terry Cherry:**

Go out and recruit like you're recruiting top talent for your professional football team. I mean, wine them, dine them, answer questions. Talk about racial injustice, talk about policing. Don't be afraid to have true conversations. Care about them. Care about what happens to them. And when they don't pass, don't throw them away like they're garbage because they're people. And yes, they may not end up being good for your department. They might be good for another department. They may not be good for policing, but you don't have to destroy people in order to feel better or powerful.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

You've seen departments do this?

**Terry Cherry:**

Oh, all the time.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Really?

**Terry Cherry:**

That's policing. You go, you apply, you take the test, you fail. They send you a letter, or they say you failed. You're not good enough to be here. And that makes people feel terrible. And then they say, oh, well, I guess I'll never be a police officer. No one wants me. You're talking about people that put in applications. They don't know how police agencies work. I have 11 years of dealing with the politics of police agencies. They don't know that if they apply to one, potentially

they send that polygraph to another. They don't know that they can apply to this department over here that might take them over this department over here because they have different standards they don't know.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

I've had undergraduate students being failed by police departments on the polygraph, not because they failed the polygraph, but because they didn't pass it. And it was just undetermined and it's such, so vague. You've got somebody who actually really wants to do the job and they were a fantastic candidate. It was heartbreaking for them.

**Terry Cherry:**

I would say to that person that I would be asking for feedback, that should be given and apply somewhere else because just because the Netflix of policing doesn't want you, doesn't mean that the HBO won't. Giving up because someone rejects you is not the way forward. But I also think it's on police departments to try providing good customer service. Police officers have opportunities to learn from private sector. During COVID, I took Disney's leadership training. Normally it's thousands of dollars and you have to go to Disney, but they offered it online. I asked my department if they would pay for it, and they agreed.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Good for them. That's innovative. Yeah.

**Terry Cherry:**

My department is special. A, it has three lead scholars, but B, they have been relatively comfortable trying new things. And although it's hard because change is hard, they have been open to it. And I think that that's really important for agencies to have.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Are you finding that the recruits nowadays post George Floyd are expecting something different from things like the academy training and some of those processes as well?

**Terry Cherry:**

Every academy's different. So this, I scream in your face and tell you you're worthless with my just opinion that I don't think that that's very productive, hurting people. Teaching them that everyone's their enemy and then asking them to go be community engaged seems kind of counterintuitive but...

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

I was at a police academy, the other, yeah, as I anticipated, let's let them get up and then I'll say what I was going to say. Yeah, I was at a police academy the other day and I couldn't believe it. All these recruits came past with completely shaving heads. All the men had their head shaved. I have no idea why they were doing that. You just know that there's somebody with a military background thinks that's important, but policing isn't the military. And at that point I'm going, considering how intrusive that is to people's physical being, I would like to see any evidence that has any effect because that's some shit you can knock on the head immediately.



**Terry Cherry:**

I would argue that if you want diversity in policing, race, gender, et cetera, if you keep trying to turn those people into a square like we talked about earlier, you're just going to fail. I'm not going to fit in your box because I am not a tall, white, straight Christian man. I'm just not. I'll never be that. And that is the foundation of policing. And if you keep trying to shove minorities into those boxes, you will not get any.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Right. And then you'll wonder why you, yeah. So has minority and diversity recruitment become harder?

**Terry Cherry:**

It depends on who the recruiter is and the process. I mean, there's no generalizing this. It depends on how you're doing it. If you're just slapping a picture of a woman on a poster, it's not the answer. This is very complex cultural issues.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

That's such obvious tokenism to everybody.

**Terry Cherry:**

Yeah, it is. And it feels really terrible being the people who are slapped on the posters.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Really? Yeah.

**Terry Cherry:**

It's frustrating. Do you actually care about who I am or do you care about what box I check?

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Which is funny if you think about it, because for so much of your career it was a struggle to fit into the box and now they're taking advantage of the fact that you don't fit into the box.

**Terry Cherry:**

Yes. But I do minority recruiting by the exact same way I do all recruiting. I go up and talk to people that seem nice and interested, and I talk to classes about the things I've said, social injustice, the state of recruitment, why we're here. I spend very little time talking about money, promotions. I'll kind of spew it at the end, the last four or five minutes. But most presentations for about an hour. I talk about if not us, then who? And if policing isn't here, what happens? And then what happens is the private sector takes over, which is exactly what's happening.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

And there are many, many losers when the private sector takes over.

**Terry Cherry:**

A hundred percent. Oh man, come on fellas.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

They seem to shake a couple of trees and now they're coming back down again. I've not...

**Terry Cherry:**

They're hungry and they're taking a break.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Yeah.

**Terry Cherry:**

They want a sandwich.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

We've done like 10 seconds of work tired and we are done.

**Terry Cherry:**

So I spoke somewhere with very powerful people and they laughed at me when I said that policing could be replaced and it won't be what the reformers want with the social workers and this re-imagining of policing. In that aspect, it will be that the rich will be safe and the poor, as we know the history, a lot of the poor in our communities are Latino or African-American or whatever it may be, are going to suffer and continue to die. And our tax dollars won't be able to pay for policing because no one will do the job. But the rich will have their security dogs and their security details and their private patrols.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

And they won't want to pay for public policing because they already feel that they're paying enough.

**Terry Cherry:**

Yeah.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Do you feel people are still looking at it like a 30-year career?

**Terry Cherry:**

No. No. I mean some. There's just a lot of freedom with the internet and videos and growth of industries. There'll probably be 20 more industries 20 years from now. I mean, who knows, right? We keep innovating and growing. I always say the benefit has to outweigh the sacrifice. And when the sacrifice grossly outweighs the benefit, which it is currently, why would you do it? If I ask you why I should work for your department and you cannot give me an impassioned reason other than money, you are going to fail because there has to be an inspirational aspect to it, or you have no one. And protecting democracy is one of the things that I care about. I love this country. I travel all the time outside of it, and I love it. I'm so proud of it. It's not perfect, but I'm very proud of what we do and I want to protect it. And that's the way that I can serve and do that.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Always a work in progress.

**Terry Cherry:**

Always a work, everything's always a work in progress.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

It's a work in progress. One of the things that I really liked that you and your chief have worked towards is to try, and I thought this was really innovative, trying new ways of putting together different videos and seeing the impact of videos. Tell me a little bit about that?

**Terry Cherry:**

So Kyle and I got together and Charleston didn't have a recruiting video.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

And I've seen some god-awful recruiting videos. Why do they always have people up-sailing at a helicopter? I've been around policing for nearly 40 years, and I've never once up-sailed out of a helicopter.

**Terry Cherry:**

Because someone somewhere said, I want something cool in this video. And they put it, they had no evidence, they had nothing.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

I feel like I've been robbed of an experience there.

**Terry Cherry:**

Me too. I would like to jump out of the helicopters too with my gear on.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Kyle McClain.

**Terry Cherry:**

So Kyle, Jeff Alpert and I did a study with, the subjects were college students within Clemson and USC. And we took the findings and actually created an evidence-based recruitment video. So we took the information and...

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

What did you get from the students?

**Terry Cherry:**

Basically that they wanted to make social change. I mean, that was, make social impact.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

You learned what the students were really interested in. And then you made a recruit...

**Terry Cherry:**

Yes.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Well, you made a couple of videos, didn't you?

**Terry Cherry:**

We made one major one. And what was really nice is that my Chief Luther Reynolds allowed me to wait. It took over a year or more. And although he wanted it out, he understood the importance of using evidence to drive the video.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Fantastic as a chief.

**Terry Cherry:**

And allowed me the space to do it my way, which I really appreciated.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

So if I understand it correctly, what you and the guys did was you built two videos, one that was more traditional. What did that video look like?

**Terry Cherry:**

So we used tactical imagery that included swat, bomb, canine, the traditional.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

All the Gucci sexy stuff.

**Terry Cherry:**

All the sexy stuff. And then we had...

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Which is what so many police recruitment videos are, right?

**Terry Cherry:**

Yes.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

But then you built something else?

**Terry Cherry:**

And then we built a community engagement snippet of pictures of officers engaged in community activities, speaking to the community in various capacities. And then we also use different words with each video to see if words with the images had impact as well.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Fantastic. And then the target audience was university students.

**Terry Cherry:**

So that age group, traditionally...

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Are potential candidates.

**Terry Cherry:**

Are potential candidates to be police officers. And then also there's a debate about if academia is important to policing, but our department currently is 88%, at least has a bachelor's degree.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

That's fantastic.

**Terry Cherry:**

And I value higher education and I had access to these universities, and so I go into those universities to recruit. So I wanted to see how we could build something impactful, because a recruitment video isn't just a recruitment video. It's a tool, it's a brand, it's an idea.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

It's a way to message to the community.

**Terry Cherry:**

Yes. And it can be used in multiple facets to be worth the money that you invest in it.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

They trialed these with their university students, and students saw different videos, big picture. What did they find?

**Terry Cherry:**

The big messaging was is social impact. That was what the students were interested in.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

They were much more drawn to the social impact videos than the kicking down doors and jumping out of helicopters.

**Terry Cherry:**

Yes. But there's still a portion that's interested in that.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Right.

**Terry Cherry:**

There's still the people that want to see SWAT things, they're still the people that are interested in those traditional specialized units. So you don't want to get rid of it completely. I'm not saying just go show people riding bicycles because that's not a true representation of what's expected, but they want to focus on what, when they enter policing, what they're going to do to change it or to be a part of it, to do something good for others, social impact. Because that's this generation now, they want to feel like their lives are being spent making a difference so that their legacy is something.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Well, that also taps back into what you were saying earlier about finding people who want to do the job, not just because of the compensation.

**Terry Cherry:**

And I mean, compensation is important, but...

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Mortgage got to be paid.

**Terry Cherry:**

You have to be paid for the work. To transition it into a white-collar profession, you have to pay for the work. To assume people who are highly educated and problem solvers and smart and capable will just do this for nothing. It's very foolish.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Yeah. So I mean, it sounds like getting involved with LEADSS, it sounds like working with academics, you can find the right academics has really kind of worked out well.

**Terry Cherry:**

I don't see any other way to do it. I mean, it fits my personality. It fits who I am, fits what I'm passionate about, and it's the future of policing. Evidence-based policing is the future of policing because how do you know where you're going if you don't know where you've been and you don't know what's currently occurring? People's opinions aren't going to drive policing forward. It's going to just be a repeat in the cog of a machine. There has to be research, there has to be information, guiding decisions in order to make positive change.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Well, I feel happier with folks like you in the job so...

**Terry Cherry:**

Well, thank you.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

Thanks for spending some time with me. Cheers.

**Terry Cherry:**

I really appreciate it.

**Jerry Ratcliffe:**

That was episode 61 of Reducing Crime recorded in Las Vegas in May, 2023. Need transcripts, I got you. Go to [reducingcrime.com/podcast](https://reducingcrime.com/podcast). And while you're at it, subscribe to this podcast at Spotify, SoundCloud, Apple, or wherever. It's free, easy, and would make me happy. Ping me for multiple choice questions for every episode and follow me on Twitter at Jerry\_Ratcliffe or not, it's not like I get paid for this.

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