

[00:00:00.00] [MUSIC PLAYING]

[00:00:04.82] TORAL PATEL: Welcome to the Inclusive Excellence Podcast. On today's show, we continue our series "Blackness at Cornell." In this special series, you will hear the stories of Cornell faculty and staff members, in their authentic voice, about how they define Blackness and Black identity. My name is Toral Patel.

[00:00:24.41] ANTHONY SIS: My name is Anthony Sis.

[00:00:26.03] TORAL PATEL: And you are listening to "Blackness at Cornell."

[00:00:51.97] We continue the series with Anthony Bellamy. Here is his story.

[00:00:56.66] ANTHONY BELLAMY: Hello, everyone. I'm Anthony Bellamy, Deputy Chief here in the Cornell University Police Department. I've been with Cornell for 16 years. While in the police department, I've gone through several different positions to get here where I am today.

[00:01:09.65] I started as a patrol officer, then moved in as an investigator. After investigation, I moved into a uniform sergeant position. Then a position opened up in investigations as a sergeant, so I went into investigations as a sergeant. Then went back to the road in uniform as a lieutenant. And now today, a year ago, I was promoted to deputy chief.

[00:01:30.87] So my Blackness, to me, is defined in what I see around me, and that's very few people like me around me. And so I stand out, so I take that as I'm going to stand out and I'm going to stand out in more ways than one than the color of my skin. That's how I define Blackness, and that's what led me towards law enforcement.

[00:01:50.49] Actually, I had been involved in emergency response since 17 years old, joining the local volunteer fire department as one of three Black members there. And I learned years later, after getting in the department, that one member did tell me, we didn't want you. We don't want you people here.

[00:02:09.25] And if we had a Black ball system, I would have blackballed you. And I said, that's why I'm here, to change your mind, to change what you're thinking about Black people, who we are. We're not just what you see portrayed by mainstream media.

[00:02:22.71] So that's why I started in the law enforcement. And I got to be honest, I lived in a rural area and I saw the sheriff's car and the state police vehicles going by. And I'm like, how come I can't do that? And some people would say, well, we don't have any Black people that do that. So I strive to make that decision to go in that direction and into law enforcement. And it's been good to me, but I'm not going to say there weren't any challenges on this road, on this path where I am today.

[00:02:49.54] The driving factor right now for me, being a person of color in law enforcement and the position I'm in, is that the work I've been trying to do from the inside, if you will, from being in the ranks and showing the hard work and trying to make a difference, saying, hey, Black people can do this. We can do this. We got the minds. We got the bodies. Don't just what you see in front of you, judge me for what I'm about to tell you or how I'm about to show you how I handle myself.

[00:03:17.89] It's challenging for the fact that I've been doing this for 20 plus years, and that I'm still where I am at 20 years ago. And talking with my sons about this-- I have a 14-year-old and 16-year-old-- and explaining to them how they need to act or what they should expect to see, it's difficult in a sense as being a parent on that role. Because quite frankly, once I take the uniform off and the badge is off my chest and it's in my wallet, I'm a Black man. And we've seen what's happened at times to certain Black men who were in law enforcement when they're not on duty. So I have to be mindful of that all the time.

[00:03:52.90] Here at Cornell, I feel fortunate that the University has provided a means for us, and for me, not to be isolated here in the University as being the only Black man, and being with a group, with the Men of Color Colleague Network, and sharing experiences and learning from others. And I think that's helped me grown as a Black man, as well, here at Cornell.

[00:04:15.16] Cornell has been good to me. The police department, I can't thank them enough. The officers, even though there's a few people of color there, the officers itself, the department itself is very forward thinking, very open, very cognizant of what's going on today, where the officers are coming to me and asking me questions on, is there some way how they should handle things differently? And actually being painted with the same brush is something that they're feeling.

[00:04:45.26] And I totally understand them. I said, I understand you. I've been doing this for 56 years. I've been painting with the same brush. I know. I understand. And the way I've gotten by it is to be better and be faster, stronger, smarter than the next person, so that when you decide to use that brush, I'm going to dull that brush and show you that you need to be more open. So really, the department, I can't thank Cornell police and the officers there, the individuals inside the department, who are genuine and really want to do the right thing and the best thing for the community.

[00:05:25.00] And may I say, I know this is a diversity and inclusion conversation, but those officers have been here through COVID-19. And now the national spotlight are on them, so they are doing a great job. I'm proud to be a leader of them, although there's some challenges. I think some members of the Black community do challenge me. I'm a cop.

[00:05:48.31] Once you're blue, you're always blue. And that's not true. That's not true at all. So it's tough. So there's some challenging times I think that we've had, and I still

think there's challenge times ahead of us. I think our efforts at Cornell and the police department, we'll be fine.

[00:06:07.72] Oh, I've had many challenges in my lifetime. And the way I compartmentalize that is to understand that I'm not the only one, not the only one that had challenges. And we all have history. We all have a story to tell. Each and every story's important. And I think I share mine on a personal level with the people around me, my kids and my family, and some of my co-workers, to try to change each individual to understand diversity and inclusion, one individual at a time.

[00:06:38.54] TORAL PATEL: Thank you, Anthony, for sharing your story with us today. Join us next time to hear another powerful story. For more information on how you can contribute to this series, please email us at ie-academy@cornell.edu. My name is Toral Patel.

[00:06:56.59] ANTHONY SIS: My name is Anthony Sis.

[00:06:58.15] TORAL PATEL: Thank you for listening to "Blackness at Cornell."

[00:07:01.00] [MUSIC PLAYING]