

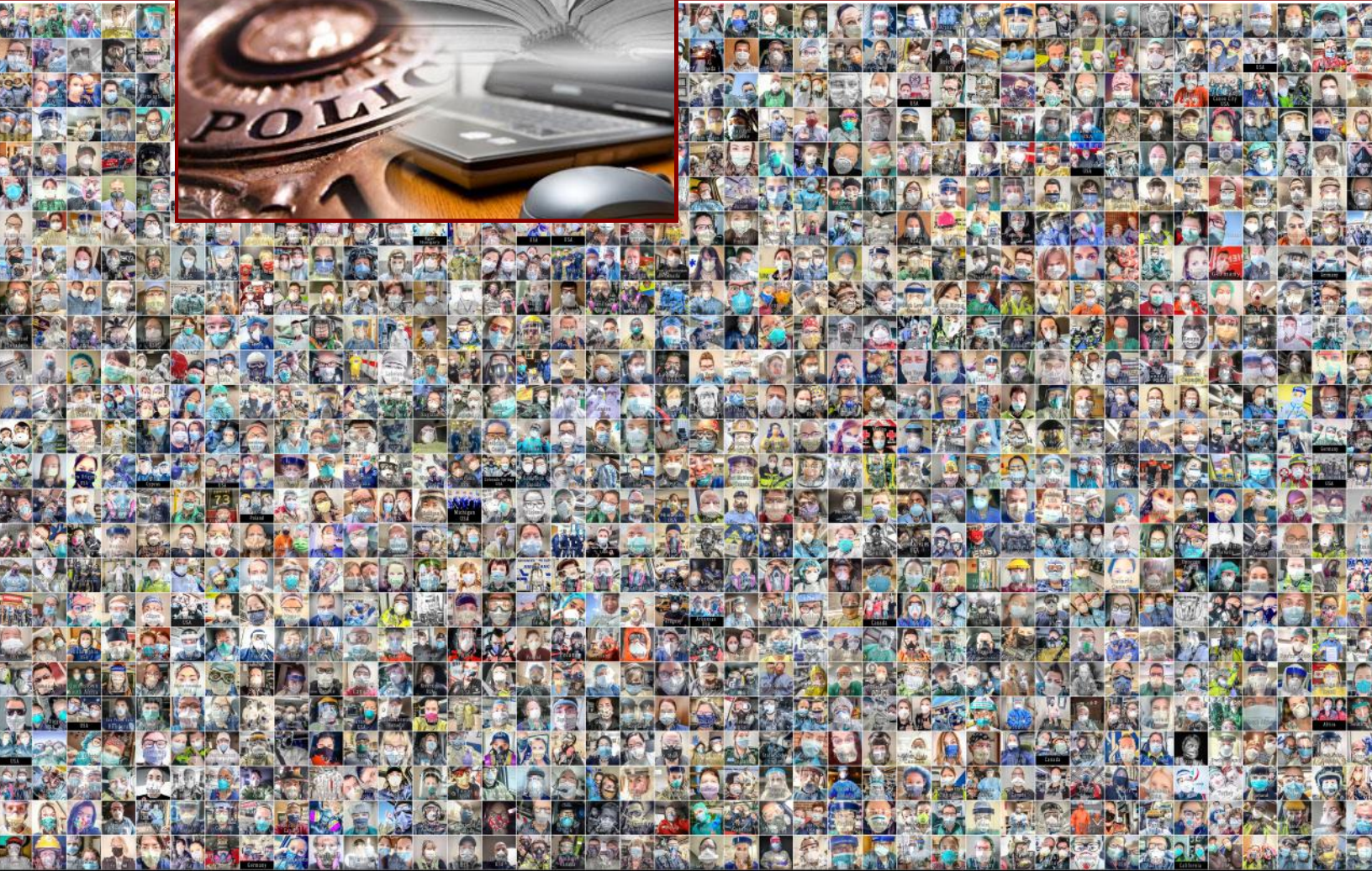
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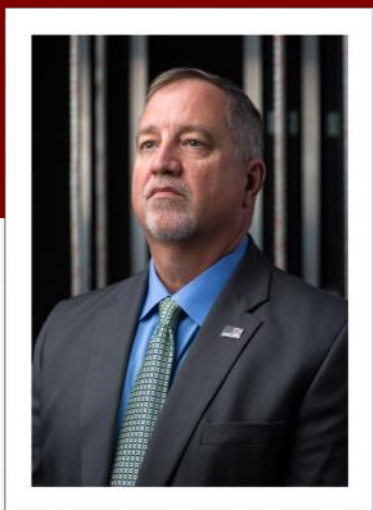
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Class Envy: A Law Enforcement Training Bill of Rights and Obligations

by Kevin Rice



enforcement training class looks like.

In the first scenario the students were well behaved, appreciative and respectful. I am sure your vision of the advanced training class looked vastly different.

I saw a recent LinkedIn post from a law enforcement instructor advising that she was missing her job as a result of the coronavirus. Attempting humor, the instructor posted the following about the typical law enforcement training class:

- First row of seats (sometimes 2nd) are empty.
- If they could stand in the back they would.
- Sitting with arms crossed and a “not amused” look on their face - even when they are enjoying the class.
- Won’t volunteer/participate...Bueller?

A friend and colleague of mine, one of the most accomplished and professional police trainers in the country, replied to that post by adding the following: “Sizing you up, Google searching you and fact checking everything you say for potential BS.”

Too many times, I have also witnessed career law enforcement professionals who showed up late to class, were initially disengaged, or disrupted instruction by texting or talking in class. Others show up unprepared or dressed inappropriately or exceeded the allotted break times. Many displayed an air of arrogance and ambivalence in class.

Close your eyes and envision a typical class at a basic police academy and then envision what the average in-service or advanced law

In short, many cops are plain rude when attending training. Instructors, trying to build rapport and create a relaxing environment, often let this type of behavior slide.

Shame on us as a profession if we don’t talk about this issue. As an organization of law enforcement trainers shouldn’t we acknowledge the 5000 pound elephant in the room and look to change and improve this situation? After all, our goal at the end of the day is to make better cops and in turn make a better America.

So, why do many cops act so obnoxiously while attending training courses, and what can we do to improve that issue?

I might have an answer.

I truly believe that cops act this way unconsciously. Almost all police officers are Type-A personalities. Their jobs involve them arriving at scenes of human carnage and immediately taking control. In a classroom setting though, these officers are no longer in charge and they are uncomfortable in that role, so they act flippantly. I also personally believe that many officers are intimidated in training and don’t want to be embarrassed, so they display a devil may care attitude. Some of this crass behavior is done, I believe, to subtly intimidate the instructor and for the officer to regain their alpha dog status.

I think we can agree that this behavior by students is a detriment to the educational process. It takes time and energy away from the instructor. It is unfair to the other students and at the end of the day it perpetuates a very bad characterization of the police profession. A profession that needs as much positive public relations as it can get.

If we all agree that this behavior exists in our profession, what can we do, as law enforcement trainers and educators to improve the situation? The first thing we need to do is acknowledge it and own it. I am also a firm believer in the old adage “That which gets rewarded gets repeated”. In classrooms, many cops are behaving poorly

and the behavior is being ignored. No wonder the problem never goes away.

I offer a very simple solution as a potential starting point. In addition to training LE instructors to better engage the average cop audience, I hereby propose that police agencies and we trainers incorporate a Law Enforcement Training Bill of Rights and Obligations to both students and instructors before each class. I call it a Bill of Rights but it could be called a contract or an agreement. Each instructor and student would be required to sign the contract and agree to its standards.

In short, I envision a written set of expectations and obligations for both the presenters and the attendees. By setting the bar of what is expected of a student and of an instructor, we could offer a road map on behavioral goals and keeping with the analogy, a set of guardrails to maintain professionalism. By instituting this Bill of Rights, we will ultimately empower instructors and create a better learning environment for the students. The goal of this contract ultimately adds to professionalism of this career. After all, don't we all want to see policing perceived as a profession and not just a job? If so, we need to be professionals always, including when we come together and attend training.

Here are what prototypical Bills of Rights could look like:

Student Bill of Rights and Obligations:

- I have the right to attend training to improve myself and my career
- I have the right to provide positive and negative feedback to the instructor and their supervisor
- I have the right to be taught by instructors that are professional, prepared and experienced
- I have the right and obligation to abide by class rules as set by my agency and the instructor
- I have the right to ten minute breaks every hour of class and a one hour lunch break daily
- I have the right to a learning environment free from discrimination or intimidation
- I have the right to demand that instructors be subject

matter experts

- I have the right to be taught by instructors that are not intent on selling a product.
- I have the right and obligation to participate in the class
- I have the right and obligation to report unprofessional behavior on the part of an instructor or student

Instructor Bill of Rights and Obligations:

- I have the right and obligation to present information in a professional setting
- I have the right to set common sense rules for my classroom
- I have the right to provide positive and negative feedback to students and their supervisors
- I have the right to a class environment free from distractions
- I have the right to be treated as a professional
- I have the right to be respected in the classroom
- I have the right and obligation to create a positive learning environment
- I have the right to expect participation by all students
- I have the right to academic freedom
- I have the right and obligation to treat my students with respect.

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About the Author

Kevin Rice is a 30 year veteran in law enforcement, starting as an officer with the Orlando Police Department followed by a 23 year career with the U.S. Secret Service. He was an FTO and spent three years as an instructor at FLETC. He has taught criminal justice at four colleges and is currently a director of Safety and Security at a private university in Maine. Kevin can be reached via email at trustandconfidencekr@gmail.com



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