

# David Mekeel: Police, residents share views on recent shootings across nation

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By **Dave Mowery**

Last week, I was assigned to cover a meeting being held by the Reading Branch of the NAACP at Albright College. It was billed as a town hall meeting to discuss recent police shootings - both by and of police - across the nation.

About 60 residents showed up. So did a half-dozen police chiefs.

And the two groups talked. Really talked, sharing their concerns, their fears, and asking questions.

A few times comments became a bit emotionally charged when residents were sharing their experiences, but that's to be expected with such a serious topic.

The two-hour session left me feeling pretty good. I felt like everyone learned a little something, like lines of communication were opened.

It seemed like a good first step to improving relationships between the community and law enforcement, and making sure Berks County doesn't find itself in the same situation as communities across the U.S. where these tragic moments have happened.

It was proactive, and that's important.

It seems like these types of discussions too often happen after the fact, when blood is boiling and tensions are at their highest.

I was happy that the community got to tell the police that they care about them, and police got to share a similar message. And that residents got to tell the chiefs why they might feel the authorities aren't always on their side, don't always treat them fairly.

And that the chiefs acknowledged problems sometimes do exist, and expressed a desire to keep working to fix them.

Nobody is perfect.

I've come across a lot of police officers in my work as a journalist. A lot are great, some aren't. The same can be said of the citizens they interact with on a daily basis.

That's always going to be true. And in the dangerous, high-pressure world of law enforcement, there are going to be incidents.

There are going to be mistakes.

But based on what I heard last week, I'm confident that both sides, the police and the community, want the same thing. They want to do everything they can to avoid those mistakes, or at the very least ensure they're not fatal.

And that's a good start. That's a good conversation to be having.

Congratulations to everyone who was a part of it. You're on the right track.

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