

THE BLUE WALL OF SILENCE AND OUR INABILITY TO PENETRATE IT

A RESPONSE TO APRIL FOLEY'S JUMP+ PUBLICATION



BY JOEY COLBY



This Response Is Not An Attack On Law Enforcement

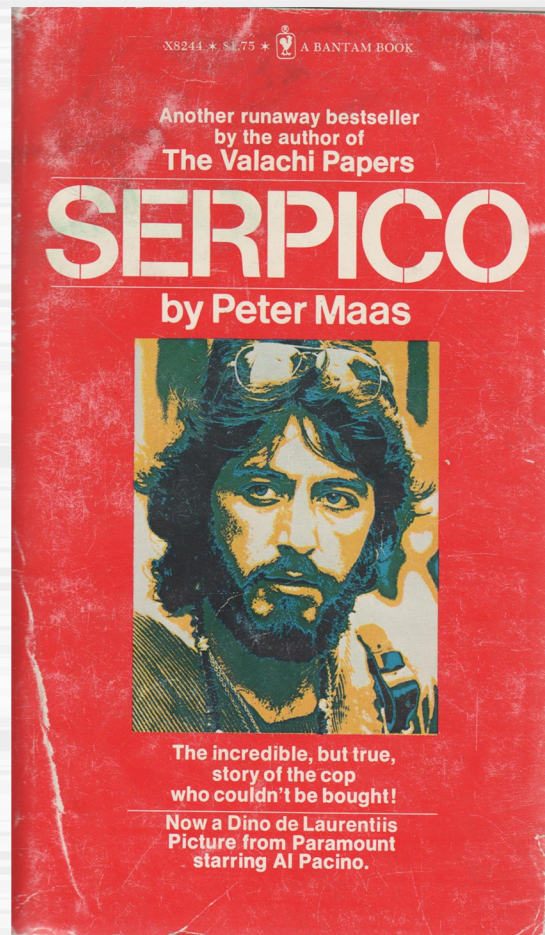
The tone that I have used in this response is harsh and firm. I want to state that the institutional problems with law enforcement and police agencies do not fall on the shoulders of individual officers. Foley's survey found that the majority of people do not want to defund the police. I do not want to defund the police. My personal opinion is that I want to see legislative reform and a standard that is federally mandated for law enforcement. The majority of police officers are good and diligent people who want to do good for the communities they serve. The tone I use is reflective of my attitude towards the institutional problems with law enforcement. It is not a reflection of my attitude towards individual police officers.

The blue wall of silence is one the terms used to denote the code of silence that is held by police officers and law enforcement agencies. This code of silence is used by officers to protect one another from disciplinary actions as a result of misconduct. This code of silence encourages officers to perjure themselves in order to protect fellow officers from disciplinary actions as a result of misconduct or another officer's.



April Foley created a powerful website that was built around showing how people of color are being brutalized and murdered by the police. On May 25th, 2020 police officers in Minneapolis murdered George Floyd after they arrested him on the suspicion for using a counterfeit \$20 bill. Officer Derek Chauvin was filmed by a bystander as he knelt on the neck of Floyd for nine minutes. This barbarous act lead to a reignition of the civil rights movement in the United States.

There have been brave officers who have broken the blue wall of silence. These officers challenged the system and did the right thing. One of the best examples of an officer breaking this wall is with New York Detective Frank Serpico. The book *Serpico* by Peter Maas is the biography of Serpico. Serpico in the late 1960's worked as a plain clothes officer. He reported and exposed wide spread corruption in the New York Police Department. These actions led to him being shot during a drug arrest in 1971. Serpico was shot in the face, he was left deaf in one ear and fragments of the bullets remain lodged in his head.



Frank Serpico

The blue wall of silence has been used to shield and protect officers from being punished for wrongdoing. When Serpico exposed the NYPD he nearly paid with his life. Police are depicted in popular culture as being corrupt and willing to violate the laws. Films such as *Cop Land*, *Street Kings*, *Bad Lieutenant*, *16 Blocks*, and *Training Day* each illuminated corruption with public law enforcement. While these films greatly dramatized corruption and criminality, they painted a deeply romanticized picture. The blue wall of silence and police corruption lead to a rightful public distrust of law enforcement. When police engage in perjurious and illicit acts to project the criminal activities of other officers, everyone suffers.

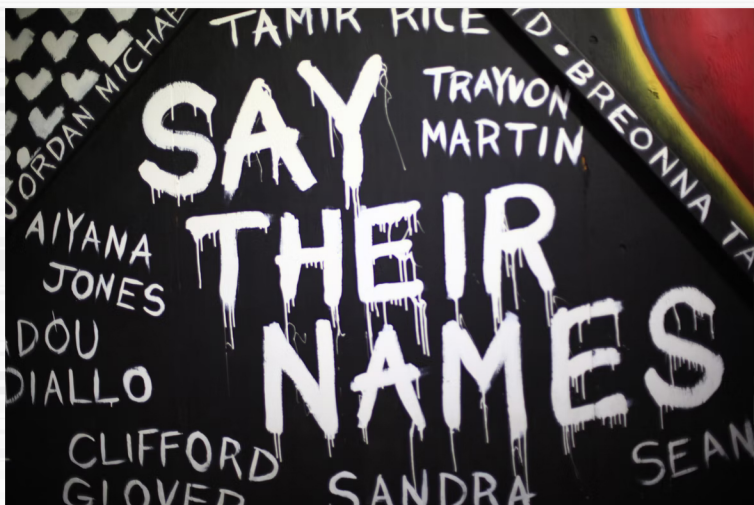
My ideas on how to break the Blue Wall of Silence



I do not want to defund the police. The majority of people who Foley surveyed also do not want to defund the police. What I want to do is I want to RE-fund the police. I want to change police funding to include better training, better mental healthcare, higher academy standards, and integration of the community into the police force. Police chiefs should be elected positions. All law enforcement agencies should have a community liason that is elected. For everyone 1,000 people serviced by the police agency, there should be one community liason.

We need to reform law enforcement through legislative action. There needs to be federal standards created to help protect police officers and the communities that they serve. These reforms will help break down the blue wall of silence through bringing education and higher standards to the police. Police are people too!

My Feelings About The Racial Injustice of Police Brutality



April Foley's digital publication on the JUMP+ spoke to my heart and soul. I am married to a woman of color, I identify within the LGBTQ+ community, and I have a Bachelor's Degree in Women's & Gender Studies. Foley's work helped me have a deeper understanding of my privilege.

I am a white, relatively able-bodied male. I am neurotypical and I am financially successful. I have never had any sort of fear in interacting with the police or any sort of law enforcement agency. I recognize that to never have had this fear is a privilege. Foley's work showed me in the strongest of detail that there is an ardent need for law enforcement reform.

Citations

Peter Maas's 1973 book "Serpico" published by Viking Press was the primary source material for my page on Serpico. I also used it as the image on that page.

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