

Good Guy.... I Thought ...

By Christopher Moore

The Police. Protectors. Helpful. Servers. Fair. Defenders. Heroes. Brave. The Good Guys. I grew up in the 1980s. The era of the television police drama, "Challenge of the Super Friends and Officer Friendly.

My parents always told me to find an officer if I was in trouble and only criminals needed to be concerned with the police.

George Napper was Atlanta's first African American police chief and as far I understood, there was never anything to fear from the police especially for me a well-educated, church going, neatly dress, college student. I was one of the good guys.

Unfortunately, I would soon and instantaneously, learn that all of this wasn't exactly true at Daytona's college Spring Break in Florida. After a long day on the beach, my friends and I returned to find a parking ticket on the windshield of our car.

Two Daytona police officers were issuing tickets. I grabbed the ticket and ran towards the older white officer. I knew he would help. "Officer, Officer," I yelled. "The state patrolman told

us it would be okay to park here." Being the good citizens we were, of course we had asked.

He laughed. "They don't know anything," he replied with a smile. I laughed. He laughed. We all laughed. "Sir. Officer, We're broke college students. How can we take care of this?" I leaned in and I placed my arm around his shoulders

The younger white officer, who had been writing more car tickets turned and ran directly to towards me with his hand on his baton. It was happening so quickly, I had no time to react. In an instant we were practically nose to nose as his hand remained glued to his waist. I never expected that response. I froze. This was it. My mind was racing. I was powerless. As images of the police force using their batons on minorities during the Civil Rights movement swirled in my head, I felt my body going into shock. I was just confused. How could this be happening? How could this be happening to me? Well-educated, church going, neatly dress, college student.

I am a good guy. I thought.

None of this mattered to this younger officer. My past, my family, my hard work. None of this seemed to matter. He wasn't asking questions.

He stood there, lips pursed, with piercing eyes, and his hand on his baton. My future blurred. Fear. Would I have a police record? Would I be injured? Would my life end here?

Then all of a sudden, I heard, "Woah. Woah. Woah. They're just kids! They're just kids!" the older white officer said in our defense, raising his hand and motioning the younger white officer to stand down. The younger officer backed away. He turned and we watched him just walk down the street, as if none of it happened. Without a word, the older officer patted me on the shoulder, looked in my eyes, and just walked away.

All of the joy and fun I had just experienced during the day during was snatched away. Worse than that, the loss, the joy, the loss of security, the sense of fairness from the law enforcement - it was snatched away. It was taken away.

Over the years, I have I thought about that day often. Each time I see a police car in my rearview mirror or see an officer in the street, I wonder who they are. How do they behave.

Now .. The belief and confidence I once had has been replaced
with a deep longing

HOPE that the police officer is

Protector. Helpful. A server. Just . A Defender. A Heroes.

Brave. A Good One.

HOPE. That's what is left.

HOPE. Perhaps that's enough to change all of us.