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'Blue Lives Matter' Raises Support and Concerns

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Summary: "Everyone knows the names Michael Brown and Eric Garner, but what about police officers who are killed in the line of duty? While victims of police brutality receive intense media coverage, violence and opposition toward police officers are on the rise. Negative bias and intensified hatred for the police are becoming more prevalent among Americans. According to the FBI, the number of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty increased 89 percent from 2013 to 2014. As a result, advocates for police have established a new movement called 'Blue Lives Matter.'" (*Chicago Tribune*) Read more about the "Blue Lives Matter" movement.

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'Blue Lives Matter' Raises Support and Concerns

By Cailey Gleeson

Chicago Tribune
(TNS)

CHICAGO — Everyone knows the names Michael Brown and Eric Garner, but what about police officers who are killed in the line of duty? While victims of police brutality receive

intense media coverage, violence and opposition toward police officers are on the rise.



Police Shooting Protest

Negative bias and intensified hatred for the police are becoming more prevalent among Americans. According to the FBI, the number of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty increased 89 percent from 2013 to 2014. As a result, advocates for police have established a new movement called "Blue Lives Matter."

"One moment we can be helping someone cross the street, and seconds later we are fighting for our life or preventing the loss of a life, while all along staying within the law," said Ray Casiano, a 16-year veteran of the Chicago Police Department and vice president of the Fraternal Order of Police. "There are times where an officer cannot tell their loved ones how their day was at work, because of that evil segment of our society we have to deal with that no one should have to know exists."

Casiano explained that it's hard for officers to adjust to the horrors they face daily. Much of the media coverage of police brutality creates a bias against all law enforcement. Due to this coverage and the spread of incomplete information on social media, many teens don't understand the scope of these cases and automatically assume the worst of the officers in question.

"The media focuses on the shock value of the story for ratings and forgets about other parts of society, like police officers, that have suffered," Trinity junior Olivia Poholik said. "Also, many teenagers are misinformed by social media. They should take the time to educate themselves on issues."

The name of the movement has also stirred up controversy among those who support Black Lives Matter. Walter Payton junior Isabel Constantino said she finds the name insulting.

"Considering the degree of brutality (in) which certain black lives were ended and the scope of unarmed blacks that have been killed by the police, this anger is completely justified," Constantino said. "To create an opposing hashtag to attempt to negate that anger is an insult to the families whose loved ones were lost."

Though some find the name choice questionable, others insist that it shouldn't detract from the movement's message. Chicago Academy sophomore Alyssa Moss said Blue Lives Matters is an opportunity to bridge the gap between people and police in our country.

"Police officers go out every day to help us live in the safest way possible," Moss said. "Now, with this (movement), is our moment to show how much we care and provide them with safety they deserve as well."

On the other hand, some feel that police already have all of the support they need and this organization is unnecessary. Trinity senior Taylor Donoval is an advocate for Black Lives Matter and while she finds the name Blue Lives Matter offensive, she said she also shows support for blue lives.

"I would love to see it operate under a different name," Donoval said. "I just wish murder wasn't necessary to make people start a conversation about the issues in this country. Maybe these crimes will bring light to bigger problems in America. But honestly, police don't need any more support from organizations. It isn't a genocide."

Even though the reaction to Blue Lives Matter is mixed among teens, the movement creates discussion about real problems in the U.S. that are often portrayed with bias, and it presents a humanized side of police that some may have forgotten.

"We are not outsiders," Casiano said. "We are part of many communities, maybe even your neighbor. Imagine what it would be like without the police, because we sure know what it is like with the few we have patrolling the streets. When police officers are being targeted and murdered we should all be outraged. It's not because one life is worth more

than the other, but because officers are that 'thin blue line,' the first line of defense for the citizens against evil."

About the Writer:

Cailey Gleeson attends Trinity High School and is a correspondent for The Mash.

The Mash is the Chicago Tribune's newspaper and website written for teens, by teens. The paper is distributed for free each Thursday at Chicago-area high schools and is written largely by high school students.

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