The Criminal Justice Conversations Podcast with David Onek

Episode #31: Connie Rice, Co-Director, The Advancement Project

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DAVID ONEK: Welcome to the Criminal Justice Conversations Podcast, a coproduction of Berkeley Law School and the Berkeley School of Journalism. I'm your host, David Onek. Criminal Justice Conversations, recorded in the Berkeley School of Journalism studios, features in depth interviews with a wide range of criminal justice leaders: law enforcement officials, policymakers, advocates, service providers, academics and others. The program gets behind the sound bites that far too often dominate the public dialog about criminal justice to have detailed, nuanced conversations about criminal justice policy.

Today's guest is Connie Rice, co-founder and co-director of The Advancement Project, an innovative, action oriented civil rights law, policy and communications organization. She previously served as co-director of the NAACP Legal Defense in Education Fund's Los Angeles office. Rice is the author of the memoir,

Power Concedes Nothing, One Woman's Quest for Social Justice in America, from the Court Room to the Kill Zones, which was published earlier this year. She is also the author of A Call to Action, a Case for a Comprehensive Solution to LA's Gang Violence Epidemic. Rice is a graduate of Harvard College and NYU Law School, and she joins us from a Pasadena Studio this morning, Connie Rice, welcome to the program.

CONNIE RICE: Thank you, good to be with you.

ONEK: Now for years you were a very successful civil rights attorney who fought most of your battles in the courtroom. In your book, you describe how you then started to get drawn into what was happening at the street level in LA and you tell a story about your encounter with a young boy you call Pigmy that was particularly eye opening for you. Can you tell us about that encounter and the effect it had on your work outside the courtroom?

RICE: Well, David, this was one of the more disturbing encounters I had. I had just joined the Legal Defense Fund in LA and the riots had just happened and I decided well, you know, we need to get out into the street to figure out what's going

on, because I'd been in the courtroom for too long and long story short I went down to Jordan Downs Housing Project in Watts, LA, South LA, and I met up with some gang intervention guys. Fred Williams was showing me around and the women of Jordan Downs asked me to help with the gang truce and so I started getting engaged and what I noticed is that for the gang intervention men, mainly ex-gangsters or current gangsters who were trying to tamp down the violence or trying to keep younger kids from joining the gang, they were trying to do something right and I was trying to help them. So, what happened was I ended up going, they ended up trusting me enough to take me to a few of the meetings and in one of the encounters it was with a rival faction who didn't like the way the gang truce was being carried out and as we met with them in this sort of home spun restaurant, in a walk up in Watts, the gang members were sitting there, but behind them was a little tiny boy. And Fred Williams and I went into the restaurant to meet with these guys and they pushed the little boy out to greet me and he didn't really want to talk. And the gang members were, they just kind of sent chills up my spine, these were hard core gangster, there was nothing about them that said that they were willing to do anything good. But, long story short, they ended up putting him out there and they said yeah, tell the lady what you do. And

they forced him to tell me that his nickname was little assassin, little assassin. And that what he did for the gang was he killed. I thought it was a hoax and so I started questioning him. He didn't really want to talk to me, but I kind of knelt down and I asked him well, you know, these guys are very proud of what you do, tell me what you mean by you kill. And he said people. And then I started questioning him and he described how he chooses his ammunition, what kind of gun he chooses, how he stakes out the target after he's been shown the picture, and it was very clear to me that this was not a hoax. And I just, my spine went cold, because I was talking to a child soldier in the United States.

ONEK: And so, what did you do with that? What did you do with that feeling in your gut as you left that room, as you went back to NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund and thought about how you could address the problems you were trying to solve?

RICE: Well, what I was learning, I was learning about the conditions in our kill zones or our gang zones, or the little tiny hot spots where crime really goes down and where it's actually dangerous to deliver mail, it's dangerous to walk to school, I don't think people understand that there are these

tiny hot spots, I'm not talking about the whole body or the whole ghetto, or even an entire neighborhood like Watts, which isn't an entire ghetto anymore, it actually has working class enclaves and so forth, so I'm not talking about entire neighborhoods. I'm talking about square block areas that can spike in danger to reach third world levels of violence, or civil war levels of violence. And in these gang zones, in these kill zones, that I call them, because there is the constitution is dead and nobody has any rights and the only amendment that seems to be in operation is the second amendment because everybody seems to have a gun. But, the gangs can control who comes into a park, the gangs can control whether kids can get to school, so it's a gang control area in a lot of cases. But, in these hot spots, in these hot spots, nobody is safe, not the police, not the kids, and I had to learn this. I didn't know this, sitting in my downtown office. I had to learn this by going into these neighborhoods and spending time there and so after court, almost every afternoon I would drive back down to Watts, meet up with the gang intervention guys in the Cross Colors Foundation and with the Grape Street Crips Gang intervention guys. And I would meet people and I would tutor the kids and I would try to get them into after school activities and so it was a way of learning the street. Not just

the safe stuff, where you go to a boys and girls club or YMCA where there's an Oasis for kids in these zones, but I wanted also to engage with the kids who weren't in a safe spot who were still a part of the gang. I needed to learn the culture of gangs, the thinking of gang members, at least African American gang members, because these are black gangs that I was first dealing with in the first 10 years I was doing this kind of work. And it was to sort of, I know the policy, I know the laws, I can deal with court, but that very rarely matches the reality on the ground. At that's what I was learning, David, I was trying to teach myself through these relationships I was developing with kids in gangs, men in gangs, some of the women in gangs, to learn that side of LA that most people think that law enforcement should be the only ones to deal with. So, in learning that, after I met Pigmy was his name, there was a common name for the tiny little boy soldiers, but I was livid. I was so angry, I was seeing red. And when I left that walkup I went immediately to housing authority office and got on a pay phone, this is how long ago it was, they had pay phones. And I immediately called one of the contacts I had in LAPD, and at the time I was suing LAPD, I was at war with LAPD. We had something like seven major class action lawsuits against LAPD at the time. And that's what I was in court doing, I was battling LAPD along

with Johnny Cochran and ACLU of Southern California, Ramona Ribston, Paul Hoffman, just a battery of incredible lawyers, the entire police misconduct bar with Humanis and Carol Watson, just incredible lawyers who, we were an army determined to hold LAPD accountable for its massive abuse of the black community and poor communities as well as its overtly racist mistreatment of African Americans. And that's what we were in court doing every day, is battling them. What I discovered was that the good cops in LAPD were too afraid to assert control over the police agency. And so they would do things like go to a payphone and whisper in the payphone, Miss Rice, you need to get so and so out of the county because graveyard's moving. What they meant was that the late night gang cops in particular were going to plant some evidence on somebody or they were getting ready to do something illegal and I needed to protect somebody. They would give me a warning, it was pretty extraordinary. I called them the blue angels. And most of them were cops of color, African American officers, Latino officers and definitely women officers. Almost all the women officers were angels. But, there were a few white men who were against the culture of brutality and arrogance and mistreatment of the black community. And those cops would go to the payphones, too. Those white officers would go to the payphone and they would call me to warn

me. And there was one at Southeast who was my best angel because he really put his, he didn't care about being secret, he was trying to openly fight the bad culture in LAPD and I would call him whenever things got really bad, and so I met him at our meeting place downtown LA and I was pacing up and down and we met in this Chinese restaurant and I was pacing up and down and I was all upset, because I had just met a child who was manipulated and twisted into an assassin. And I was quite sure it wasn't a hoax. And I was determined to rescue him. Now the men I was with at the time, in that meeting, thought it was too dangerous to challenge the gang bangers who were kind of displaying this kid in a narcissistic and sick way. And so they didn't want me to challenge the gangsters who were armed and we weren't. I was really regretting not snatching this little boy and getting him into some kind of protective custody. So, I have this encounter with the cop, who was a pretty high ranking, he was a command officer, and I call him Captain Hannity in the book, that's not his real name, because he asked me not to reveal his real name when I wrote the book. But, Hannity sits me down, gives me a glass of water and says take a deep breath and he cussed me out, because he said I didn't know what I was doing, and what the hell was I doing running around with these gangsters and what did I expect, that what, it was news to me,

that gang members would take little children and turn them into killers so that they wouldn't have to do the time. As one of the gangsters said, he kills, we walk. I was furious. And so I was, when I'm angry I get a little imperious and I was ordering Captain Hannity to do an immediate investigation, and to find Pigmy and to rescue him and find out what had happened to him and the captain agreed, but he called me two weeks later and he said that he couldn't find any trace of him. So, I don't, I just have no idea what happened to him, and I'll tell you David, I was just sick, I was really sick, I thought that maybe they had take him out of the picture because they could see that I was upset. And they thought that I might try to rescue him, and I may well have endangered him.

ONEK: Now part of that story, Connie, was also the relationship you had with this Captain. And so while you were building relationships with gang members, which was very foreign to you, you also were shifting from simply suing the police to beginning to develop relationships with them, relationships that would really pay off for you later when you began to partner with them more thoroughly and that really started to come about when Bill Bratton became chief and you forged a very close alliance with him to reform the department. Bratton was a guest on this show

and he attributed much of his success as chief to community policing and partnerships with the community. Here's what he had to say on this program.

BILL BRATTON: Well, I'm a community policing enthusiast and practitioner. Community policing in its simplest form is about the concept of partnerships. Police and the rest of the criminal justice system working together instead of at odds with each other. Partnership with the community, in many American Cities, communities were not involved with their police forces, police didn't let them into the tent, if you will. In Los Angeles it was even worse than that. I don't know if there was ever a trust between the African American community and the Los Angeles police department and the anger and the hatred boiled over into the worst riots that American cities have ever seen. The community policing philosophy really requires that police chiefs, police organizations reach out and found that that's worked for me in every one of the police departments I've worked in.

ONEK: So, listening to Chief Bratton, can you describe what LAPD was like when you first began your work, and how it evolved under Bratton's leadership?

RICE: Yes. LAPD is truly fascinating and when I first arrived in LA we were at war with LAPD, because I had never seen outside of Mississippi, I had never seen law enforcement so thoroughly alienate and infuriate and emasculate and entire community. LAPD's mission was to contain and suppress the African American community. And to make sure the violence and the bad conditions didn't spill over into good communities, which meant nonblack communities. And when I arrived, it was startling how arrogantly and cruelly LAPD seemed to relish tormenting African American, everybody African American. It didn't matter whether you were a judge or a senator or an athlete, or a gang banger or somebody suspected of actual crime. There was no fourth amendment, if you were black you were stopped at any time, you were proned out with every stop, traffic stop. It was a theory of policing that wasn't just hostile occupation, it was we need to show who's boss, and Joe Dobenick calls it the Blue Grip. LAPD called it the Blue Grip. And it was a massive show of force, it created a police state and it was meant to terrorize the population into submission. It was ugly, it was really quite ugly and so that's why we, and they didn't talk to anybody, they didn't accept civilian rule, and LAPD had a style of policing that's called paramilitary policing. It is

containment suppression policing, and that's a legitimate form of policing, but it alienates the community because, as Chief Bratton said, you weren't even allowed to talk to anybody in the community. You were seen as a traitor if you were an officer who talked to the community, which is why the police officers would find a payphone and whisper into the payphone when they called me, because they were afraid that other cops would hear them. So, it was a hostile occupation force at the time. With highly racialized style. For example, the white command officer who was placed over, had control over south LA and black parts of LA, he was informally known, during the Davis and Parker days, those are two chiefs that preceded Chief Gates, as the nigger inspector, just openly. And even into the 60's black officers were not allowed to pair or ride in squad cars with white officers because they didn't want white officers taking any commands from a black officer. So, they were racist against their own cops, they were racist against the community, it was ugly. That was the LAPD that came out of the Parker Davis era and I have to say that it was an improvement over the LAPD before the Parker era, believe it or not. Before the Parker era, a bunch of southern sheriff types who were completely corrupt, monetarily corrupt, abuse of force corrupt, they were like handmaidens to organized crime. So, they became, they

transformed themselves into a crisp, paramilitary, brutal, mean policing force that did pre-emptive policing in the black community, it was aggressive and it was ugly.

ONEK: So, Chief Bratton walks in with this history, what does he begin to do? How does he first reach out to you and others in the community to try to rebuild that trust that was so lacking in Los Angeles?

RICE: Well, Chief Bratton came in at an extraordinary time. It had been seven years after, well '92 were the riots, so the Rampart Scandal, we had the Rodney King beating, the riots, we had two chiefs who couldn't manage to take the reins of LAPD and make it rein in. We had the Christopher Commission, which meant that the elected elite and the liberal elite no longer supported LAPD, so with the King riots, 20 years ago this month, we began to see the beginning of the end of the old imperial LAPD that refused to accept civilian control. It was the beginning of the end when Chief Gates left. We had Willy Williams and Chief Parks, but the problem there was that they never had control of that department and Chief Parks, who did have control, ended up decimating the department and didn't get reappointed. At the end of Chief Parks' reign, you had one bookend being the

King beating, the other book end, seven years later, was the Rampart gangster cop scandal where we discovered that crash gang units in LAPD had rogue elements that were planting evidence on people, had sent innocent people to jail, they lied regularly in court, they planted evidence, they stole drugs out of the evidence lockers, they were just a lawless entity within LAPD and they almost torpedoed the criminal justice system in LA. This was a massive scandal and a massive crisis that almost stopped the criminal justice system in LA. And as a result of that, the federal court stepped in, my law partner at LDF, Bill Lan Lee, who had joined the Clinton administration as the head of civil rights and DOJ, Department of Justice in Washington. He flew out, and his last act was to put LAPD under federal court control through a Consent Decree. So, LAPD was now under federal court control and Chief Bratton came in as a partner to the court to make that Consent Decree stick. And the purpose of the Consent Decree was to force the Christopher commission changes that LAPD had refused to do. When the Christopher commission came out in '92, they burned a hundred of those reports up at the police academy, so they were hardly receptive to it. They basically said, oh no, not on your mother's life are we going to do this. So, Bratton --

ONEK: And Chief Parks totally resisted it as well, from the top down.

RICE: Absolutely. They did not want the Consent Decree, they did not want the Christopher Commission. LAPD basically said we're not changing. Bratton came in as a very strong outside chief. The only kind of outsiders who could have taken over LAPD ever, had to be extraordinary in every way. And luckily Bratton was extraordinary. He had enough ego, he enough of his own arrogance [LAUGHTER], and he had the right vision. He was the biggest transformer. He transformed the department's resistance to the Consent Decree, the department's resistance to embracing community policing, and what he did is he forced compliance with the Consent Decree, which in and of itself changed behavior, because it held LAPD accountable for the things it refused to be accountable for in the past. Like taking complaints, like monitoring its use of force, like understanding that you have to treat the community with respect. That it isn't OK to have arrogance, it isn't OK to reject civilian control. It taught them to obey the police commission. So, that was a very important tool, but Bratton used it as a floor, because Bratton came in with a vision that said he wanted to do Broken Windows, the theory of crime control that says you

don’t let little things go by because it seeds a culture and environment in an ecosystem where bigger crimes can flourish. So, he wanted to show that Broken Windows can reduce crime, make a community safer and build trust with the African American and Latino communities. That was one of his goals. Completing the Consent Decree was another of his goals, and he wanted to establish policing, as he said, that was free of bias, corruption and brutality. He wanted all of that taken out of LAPD’s DNA. So, he came in at a crucial point in LAPD’s history. The department was reeling, it was now under federal control. And he came in with the right vision. And he showed LAPD what working with civilian control looks like and what working with community leaders and the community and gang intervention looks like.

ONEK: And what was it like for you? What did your friends, your old school friends, say to you, who had been suing the police department left and right, who suddenly had their own parking space at LAPD and were riding around town giving presentations with the Chief of Police of LAPD? What was the feedback you got?

RICE: Well, it’s still negative. It was negative then and it’s

still negative. And my theory of change here is that we have plenty of good lawyers suing and the lawsuits will always be necessary, even with great police forces, you have to have litigation as one of the checks. We had enough really good policemen's conduct lawyers and they didn't need me, what we needed were people on the inside of the department who could build enough trust with cops so that cops would speak honestly to them. And cops who will trust you enough to tell you why they're afraid to change. Once you start talking at that level with police officers, then you can try the inside strategy, because you can work on changing the conditions that prevent the good cops from being able to police in the way that is healthier for the community and more positive. And that treats the community as a partner and treats the community not as a target for you to do violence in, but the community becomes a place that you want to invest in and that you want to keep safe. You don't look at the community as your object of criminality and the place where you get to do stick time. The place where you get to do a righteous shoot and look aggressive so that SWAT will tap you and put you into the specialized unit track, which of course gets you more money and more prestige. That was the way LAPD saw poor black communities, was just a place where you got to shoot people and you got to beat them. And you got to

look aggressive so that you could get tapped for specialized units. That was the old culture. Bratton said we're turning that and flipping it completely 180 degrees around. We're going to show the African American community that we're here to keep them safe with their help. So, it was a sea change. Now the question was, could he do it? And the reaction to me going on the inside, once I saw what his vision was, and once I saw his rage, there was a particular weekend where I think there were something like 17 murders in a 30 hour period. And it was all young black men dying, and some innocent civilians dying as well. And Bratton called a press conference that Monday, and it was an amazing thing to watch, because here's this Scottish American police officer, getting up at a press conference, his first, and he cussed LA out. He said this is unacceptable, you people accept this level of killing like we're in Beirut, or we're in Afghanistan, he says, this is not a third world country, this is unacceptable and none of these people should be dead. I am furious, we're going to stop this now. And I thought, halleluiah, somebody getting angry over black men dying in the street, at each other hands, and then innocent neighbors getting shot, including children and grandmothers, in drive by's and somebody's standing up and saying enough. And I thought OK I'm going to help this guy. He's talked about racial healing,

I'd watched him for about six weeks, and I didn't know who he was, and I analyzed Broken Windows and I determined that it was Giuliani who had taken it too far and who had turned Harlem into a police state and that NYPD had taken it way too far and had done it in a racist way. And I said let me give Bratton a chance, I wasn't condemning him like everybody else was. And I was just watching, I was looking at his actions, and then when he fired two Metropolitan Division officers, Metropolitan Division is a very elite division, it is the most elite division of LAPD, they are untouchable. Nobody touches metro, OK? It's still true somewhat to this day. But, Bratton came in and he fired two Metropolitan Division veterans, which was like firing the prince of a kingdom, and he fired them for lying. He fired them for lying. And once I saw those two actions, that press conference and those two firings, I said OK he's the real deal, and I decided to go on the inside. Now I explained to the gang intervention guys that they were going to see me talking differently about the killings the police do. They were going to see me signaling to police that I was trustable for them to become a partner to help them change. And that I was going to move to the inside. I had explained to the gang intervention guys that I was going to be working with the police in the same way that I worked with gang intervention. They were going to

hear me saying different things about police and translating what police are thinking, and I had to kind of get my street partners ready for this changed role, and Bo Taylor, who was one of the best gang intervention experts in the country before he died four years ago, Bo was my closest working partner in gang intervention at the time. And he looked at me and he said Connie I trust you to do what's necessary. He said I'll try and explain it to the guys. So, I moved to the inside, and I was, the people, it was before blogs, but people were saying on websites that Connie's gone to the dark side and then later on they started blogging Connie's a traitor and all this kind of stuff. I don't pay any attention to it. There's too much work to do and some of us have to be on the inside. I'll tell you the secret to Bratton's success in turning LAPD around, and he did turn the ship of state of LAPD in a completely different direction. He achieved that, it took him seven years, but he changed the mindset of the Command and Parker Center in the headquarters of LAPD. He changed the leadership's orientation and thinking. Now he did not transform the DNA of LAPD, I don't think anybody could do that in eight years. But, he began this systemic change that we're continuing to this day, and you ask anybody, almost anybody will tell you that this is not Darrell Gates' LAPD today, and it's not Chief Parker's LAPD, it's a

different LAPD.

ONEK: You know, speaking of changing the mindset and your work with unlikely allies, you talk in the book about Bo's Amer-I-Can life skills program in LA's jails and that you went in to witness some of the graduation ceremonies, and talked about two people who's mindset was completely changed by this. One, law and order guard and another a former white supremacist. Could you tell us the transformation that each of them went through after being exposed to what two folks in jail trying to turn their lives around?

RICE: Yes, and this is the Amer-I-Can Life skills program that we're talking about here, and Bo Taylor was one of the chief instructors of that program, it's a program that Jim Brown, the famed football great and Lacrosse great put together with a bunch of Harvard psychiatrists and they, it's a marvelous rehabilitation tool for people who want to get out of a life of being a predator, out of a life of being a drug addict, I call it gangsters anonymous for shorthand. But, what it does is it forces people to face what they've become, especially men, and it makes them change how they think about themselves and everybody around them. And it gives them the life skills that

you and I may have gotten in kindergarten, but that these folks didn't have. Self-control, the ability to step back when you're angry and count to 10 and calm down and think rationally through a problem, the ability to recognize pathological and sociopathic behavior in yourself and how do you go from being a predator to a peace maker. That's what this course does. And they have a shortened version of it that was allowed into the Pitches Detention Center, which is the biggest county prison farm in LA county, a lot of folks there, getting ready to go up to state prison to do their time. And of course California's prisons are a travesty. They are, as Justice Kennedy or one of the Supreme Court justices wrote in the great case done by the advocates who challenged the lack of medical care, that case went to the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court affirmed that California had to reduce its overcrowding because the overcrowding was preventing the delivery of medical services, which you have to be able to deliver in a prison system. But, California was allowing people to die, like every week, for lack of medical care in its prisons. And California had taken rehabilitation out of its name. In this local prison, in LA Country, rehabilitation had not been forsaken because Sheriff [Baca?] and Jim Brown insisted on putting this life skills course in there. So, Bo Taylor would go up to the prison and at first he was

locked out. He and his instructors were not allowed in because the prison guards did not want ex gangsters coming into the prison to teach anything. And they were really angry with Sheriff Baca and Jim Brown for bringing this program in. So, after we got them in there, Sheriff Baca came up and so did Jim Brown and we forced the course into the prison and it was a three week course. The men in the course, it was all maximum security and super maximum security prisoners, they were allowed to eventually live in a dorm together so they could reinforce the lessons and they kind of lived the course work 24/7. They were allowed to teach, they taught each other, they talked in groups, a lot of round table talks and learning going through this curriculum book that Jim Brown and Bo Taylor used. So, they would have graduations at the end of these three weeks, and at first I thought what in the world can a three week course do? These are guys, most of whom read at a very rudimentary level, most of whom left school, never liked school, but they ended up signing up for this course and going through it and at the graduations they were the most moving ceremonies I've ever seen, because they would, each graduate would give up and give a short one minute speech about what he'd learned. And the guards were, for the first year, they were still very resistant, and there was one commander, his name is Lieutenant Moke, I think it was

John Moke, but I'm not quite sure about his first name, I can't remember it's been so long ago. But, Lieutenant Moke was really angry that this course was in there, and the guards were trying to sabotage it every which way you could think of, but after a while, I noticed that lieutenant Moke was starting to attend the graduations. And at this particular graduation, it was really moving because this Latino student, and graduate, got up to the podium and had written out in Spanish a speech on torn up paper bags, because he didn't have any note paper, and his hands were shaking, he was terrified of speaking before a group, and he finally put the paper down and in English he said, in broken English, I just want to thank Deputy, I can't remember his name, he thanked a Deputy for giving him a hot water bottle and an extra blanket when he had pneumonia, but there was no room in the infirmary for him to be taken care of. And he thanked that deputy and he said you saved my life and you were kind to me and you didn't have to be kind to me. And the whole room, I mean this is an inmate thanking a deputy, which is just verboten, you can't do that. Inmates can't be seen being kind to guards, guards will get beaten up if they're shown showing any kindness to inmates. That's just the culture of both guards and inmates. And so for him to stand up there and to use his graduation speech to say I've never graduated from anything and I want to

use this chance to thank Deputy so and so for taking care of me when I was sick, you showed me kindness when it was dangerous for you to do so. And the whole room stood up and gave both of them a standing ovation. And the guards who were standing on the edge of the room also stood up and clapped for the first time at a graduation. And found Lieutenant Moke in the back of the room and I just kind of sidled up to, I sat down next to him and I said Lieutenant, what changed? Who changed here? And he said, both cultures changed. He said if that inmate had thanked a guard six months ago, he'd have been beaten up in the showers or in a stairwell somewhere. And if that deputy had shown any kindness to an inmate, I hate to say it, but the guards would have beaten him up too. He said this course is changing this prison. So, when Lieutenant Moke left, he asked to address his last Amer-I-Can graduation and he stood up and he said I think all of you know that I don't like prisoners. And I'm here to tell you, I'm paraphrasing now, because I can't remember, it's in the book, his exact quotes, but he basically said, I used to hate prisoners because a prisoner put a shiv in my eye and blinded me. That's why my eye waters all the time. And why you see me dabbing my eye. I'm not crying, it's just that it ruined the tear ducts. And so after I got attacked by prisoners, I hated them. I didn't think of them as human, I knew I had

responsibility for them, but I hated them. And I didn't care what happened to them. And then he stopped, and he said, I was wrong, I was wrong. The whole room erupted. He was confessing his own transformation. This course didn't just change the prisoners, and give them a positive mindset and skills to deal with pressures and confrontations and life's troubles, it also changed the guards. And Lieutenant Moke ended up thanking Bo Taylor for treating his guards with dignity and being a consummate professional and for making this course the success that it was, and he said, I know this course works because the graduates of this course, when they get back into the general population, they stop fights. They act like ambassadors for peace, and I know who they are, I can tell the Amer-I-Can graduates from all the other prisoners. And then he turned and he said, he thanked Bo, and he said, and as for you Miss Rice, I used to hate you because you sued my department, and I didn't want any civil rights lawyers in here, but I just need to tell you, you always do the right thing for the right reasons, I thank you for what you've done and as far as I'm concerned you're my hero. And that was, the crowd, I mean the standing ovation including stomping feet, whoops and hollers, the prisoners, the men, the graduates, were so, they had never seen a guard confess that he had been wrong and that he now regarded

them as human beings and respected them. And so, my question for the system of our crime-o-genic prison system, meaning that it actually creates more crime, far from rehabilitating and correcting, our corrections system is crime-o-genic, it creates and generates more crime. Why our crime-o-genic, eight billion dollar a year criminal justice system couldn't have this course for everybody was beyond me, because it did set these men on the road to rehabilitation. And unfortunately there is absolutely nothing to follow it up. So, --

ONEK: And unfortunately Connie, we are out of time here, but that I think is a terrific note to end on, which really sums up the ways that you have helped people change, on both sides of the equation, so that we can all move forward. And so I want to thank you very much for your work and for joining us today.

RICE: You're welcome.

ONEK: Please tune in next time when we'll be joined by Orange County Superior Court Judge Wendy Lindley.

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