Detroit Police History

Detroit, MI

Chief Anthony Holt

Wayne State Police

Interviewed by

Miriam Borenstein

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Brief Biography:

Anthony Holt has been with the Wayne State Police Force for over 35 years, working hus way through the ranks until his appointment at Chief in 2008. During that time the Cass Corridor, now rebranded as Midtown, has been cleaned up and the crime rate has dropped. Holt has been recognized nationally for his contributions to the expansion of the Wayne State Police force and the lowering of crime in the area by 45 percent. A native Detroiter, Holt is himself a Wayne State graduate, and now also serves as the Associate Vice President of the University.

Interviewer:

Miriam Borenstein is a PhD candidate in the History program at Wayne State University. She completed her MA in Holocaust and Genocide Studies at West Chester University of Pennsylvania in 2009, and her BFA in Photography from Columbia College Chicago in 2007.

Abstract:

Wayne State Chief of Police Anthony Holt shares some of his personal history in the city of Detroit, his thoughts on the city's future, and his career in law enforcement. He

Wayne State Police Oral History Project
Walter P. Reuther Library
Wayne State University
Detroit, MI

Transcript of interview conducted on 10/22/2014 by Miriam Borenstein

0:00

BORENSTEIN: This is Miriam Borenstein interviewing Anthony Holt, chief of Wayne State Police, on the 22nd of October, 2014 at 3pm. And it will be begin on the following track. [Track Break] Ok, and, oh, probably should have done this before turning it on, but that's fine--Kim should have emailed you a release form, did you have the time to look that over?

HOLT: I don't really remember seeing that, but it's no problem, I can sign it.

BORENSTEIN: Ok, we can do that after if you like.

HOLT: Yeah, sure. That will not be an issue at all.

BORENSTEIN: Ok, well we'll make sure you have the time to look it over and everything.

HOLT: Ok.

BORENSTEIN: So first, now that we're on a separate recording, why don't you state your name, date of birth, your role here at Wayne State...

HOLT: Sure. My name is Anthony Holt, the spelling of the last name is H-O-L-T. I was born November 23rd, 1966. I started here as an officer on April 17th, 1977. After graduating from the Detroit Police Academy. And I worked myself up through the ranks here, became chief in 2008, and my current positions is Associate Vice President of University and Chief of Police.

BORENSTEIN: Excellent. And could we get, I'd like to start with a bit of background on you and your history in the Detroit area.

HOLT: I was actually born in Chicago but my family moved here at a very early age. And we have been life-long Detroiters. I've seen every transformation that you could really have or you could experience in the city of Detroit. I went to Northwestern High School. I lived on West Grand Blvd in Detroit. I lived over a couple blocks from the Motown Museum when it was Hitsville. I bring that up because my father had my brother since he was four years old playing piano. When he was about 13 or 14, because we lived a couple of blocks from Hitsville (they didn't call it Hitsville then, it was the Motown Recording Studio) all the musicians that would go in there couldn't really read or write music and they would come to our house and they would sing a melody, and he would write the tunes down, or write the notes to it. I bring it up because all those famous artists years ago used to come into our house. My father was a real big community activist. Some of the early freedom marchers--Martin Luther King and some of the early people of the movement would come to our house and they would stay there cause at that time there was not a lot of hotels available for African Americans they could stay in. I can remember how I always get ticked because we had to leave our bedroom to turn it over to

someone else. So I graduated from Northwestern High School when I was 16. And I got admitted to Wayne State in 1966. And I made the move down to campus, I lived on Prentis Street, 700 Prentis. Right there at Prentis and Third. And that's when it wasn't called Midtown, it was called the Cass Corridor. And of course I needed a job to support myself, and I got a job at the gas station on Second and Alexandrine, right in the heart of the Cass Corridor. So I saw all the drug dealers, I saw the prostitutes, I saw the robbers. I lived next door--The gas station I worked at was next door a halfway house. Of course at 16, that environment was very exciting. And, you know, I lived at 700 Prentis, and I lived right next door to this little garage where these rock groups, the MC5, the Amboy Dukes, these guys who all became famous later practiced here. Bob Seeger was part of this group.

And in this apartment I lived in I lived right next door to John Saint Claire who was the big Marijuana hippie at that time. And those guys really sort of looked out for me.

BORENSTEIN: What years did you live at the---by Hitsville?

HOLT: I moved there in June of 1966. That building is no longer there now, it's part of the Calumet townhouses.

BORENSTEIN: And before '66, before you--

HOLT: I lived on --the address I lived at, I'll never forget it, is 1712 West Grand Blvd. Big huge house on West Grand Blvd, and its beautiful-the parks were there, I lived right across the street from the fire station.

BORENSTEIN: And that's where you lived with your parents?

HOLT: With my parents, to 1966.

BORENSTEIN: and you moved there from Chicago?

4:24

HOLT: No, when we moved from Chicago we moved in a different neighborhood in Detroit, we lived on a street called 24th Street. If you drive out where that is now you would think you were in one of the Middle Eastern countries that had been bombed out. The area is a vacant--houses are tore down, it was a very vibrant neighborhood where I lived at 24th and McGraw, growing up. You know, real strong block club organizations-it reminds me of what Midtown is doing now with organizing. The block posts werereal strong. Neighbors would come out there and correct you when you were walking to school if you did anything wrong. And you dare not get in trouble cause they would tell your parents and you'd be in bigger trouble. Very very strong neighborhood associations at that time. There were gangs, but they were neighborhood gangs, not turf gangs, where you'd be beat up if you'd go into that area. And, like I said, I lived there then we moved to the Boulevard in 1961, huge home. And I remember because we had, at that

time, you had coal furnaces, and my job was to wake up and start the fire, shovel the coal in the furnace, then virtually they retrofitted them to gas furnaces, and I lived there until I started at Wayne State. At 16 it was quite an awakening to come from my high school, and inner city high school, and start college at 16. It's a big awakening. I don't think the schools at that time really prepared you for college. Like they really don't do now. We get a lot of kids who come to Wayne from some other schools in Detroit and they're not really prepared to do the work. That's why I think our rate is so high in terms of retaining these types of students.

BORENSTEIN: And was that typical, I mean, starting at 16?

HOLT: No, what happened is I grew up in a family where my father believed that education was the key to everything, so you could not spend the summers--have the summer off. I don't think you could do it anymore at the public schools, but back when i was going to school, during the summer when school was recessed, if you take three classes, you take an English, Math, and Government class, you come out a grade ahead. So what they did was really, if you think about it, very unfair. They had me go to school every summer so I advanced a grade. I was actually 15 when I actually graduated, and 16 when I started Wayne. That does not prepare you for college. It's a good bragging rights for your parents, "So my son is 15, he graduated from high school." But it does not prepare you academically for college, and it does not prepare you socially. Socially, to intermerse [sic] with people. You don't really have your peer group, and what it causes you to do is actually fabricate your age so you sort of fit in. You know, I really couldn't get a job at 15 or 16, I would use my brothers birth certificate. I got hired at Chrysler during the summer, at 16, and god, I worked at Chrysler when I was 16, and I worked the day shift. I would get off on the day shift, I would get on the Jefferson bus, and drive down to [[McClause Sill]] and work another shift. At 16.

7:50

BORENSTEIN: Factory work?

HOLT: Factory work. To save money for the upcoming season in college. I mean, I remember it like yesterday cause I bought my first car for $350 and it was just an exciting time when you're 16.

BORENSTEIN: Sure, and that's while you were living--when you came to school you were living in the Cass Corridor?

HOLT: I was living in Cass Corridor, lived at 700 Prentis. And my neighbor at that time was Fred's Key Shop, he had a little corner shop on the corner of Forrest and Third. And now he's down there on Second and Merle, I still go down there and talk to him, and we talk about those days there.

BORENSTEIN: Were you living in University housing?

HOLT: Oh, no. There was no university housing. Wayne State didn't really have--they had a women's dorm at that time, but there was no university housing. You found a apartment in the corridor, that was the closest I could get to the university that I could afford, and that appeared somewhat safe.

BORENSTEIN: And you mentioned when you moved down here that it was really different and that there were a lot of gangs and there was drugs...

HOLT: No, Cass Corridor was a diverse area, but it was pretty much still a white area. You had, along third Ave where I lived, you had the Anderson Show Bar, the Willis Show Bar, you had Jumbles and Garrets. On the west side of the street, those bars like the Golden Ducket and the Garret Lounge were drug bars-where the drug dealers and the players hung out. The Anderson Show bar and the Willis Show bar were big prostitution show bars. Cass Corridor was basically known for prostitution. Buses would come over from Canada, that was a big draw for conventions to be in that area. There were thieves and robbe4s, but there was not a lot of trouble. I mean people would flock to the area because it was like a red light district. So Canfield was still a very nice street at that time, but when you left that area, the further south you went, and the further south you went once you crossed [[Merner]] or Mack, that's where they used to call the flop houses, the halfway houses, the shelters, the rehab places. So just an interspersed people, until twelve/one-o-clock at night just people walking all over the place.

BORENSTEIN: So what were your early experiences as a student at Wayne State, like with crime and law enforcement.

HOLT: You know, there was really no crime that I could speak of at Wayne State. Wayne State was a commuter school. Most people worked who went there. At 16 years old it was very very difficult to fit in. You know, I had a lot of trouble the first year, class-wise, academically, you know, the embarrassment of not doing well and going home, just meant you could not fail. So then I quit my part time job just to concentrate on studies. Now, racially it was a very tough place, cause there was not the diversity that you have now. Very very low. And then the following year in 1967 is when we had the riots or the disturbance. That created even a bigger gap at that time. So it was--the first year was very very difficult trying to fit in. I got accepted to four schools, but financially I didn't want to ask my parents to do a lot. My father was a factory worker, my mother was a housewife. I had an older brother at New Mexico State, so I did not want to tax them, I said, "Well I can pay for this myself." But it was very diff—the very first year adjustment was very tough.

BORENSTEIN: And you did? You paid for school out of pocket?

HOLT: I paid for everything out of pocket. I worked the factory jobs in the summer were part time jobs. You could do that then, I think my tuition was one $104 for three classes.

BORENSTEIN: So what did you end up majoring in when you were at Wayne?

11:35

HOLT: I majored in psychology when I first started here, no idea that I'd actually be a police officer, at that time. I actually wanted to become a social worker. And I think the reason why is that while I was walking around the class, sort of lost, I meant this lady and she says, "You look lost and I'm lost too, I'm trying to find this building." And she was the instructor of this class I was going to, and her name was Phyllis Vroom, she became the interim president of Wayne State. She became the Dean of Social Worker, she just retired last year. She became the Dean of Social Worker, then she became the interim provost, and when President Noren left the University several years ago they made her the interim president. Then when they hired the president right before this president, Gilmour, he asked her to become the deputy president. And through my entire career at Wayne, she was like a big mentor to me. Gave me a great deal of help. Then I met this other professor, Arthur Johnson, he's just a legendary civil rights pioneer, he taught race relations, which I took. He was president of the NAACP, and he sort of got me involved. I think two strong mentors like that really helped me get passed that first year. And once I got past that first year, you know, I was on my way. Wayne State typically graduates at six years, my father said, "Four years you'll go to school, maybe not." Now this is the era of the Vietnam War. If you were not in school you were going to be drafted. So it was a very troubling year, but it was very exciting outside of the university. The university to me was very cold, very anti-sociable. You know, I was not the fraternity type guy, cause I was too young, and I wasn't in the dating scene cause I was too young. I barely had a driver's license. So it was a very difficult year socially to fit in. So like I said, that first year was very very tough.

BORENSTEIN: You mentioned briefly, in passing, you mentioned riots. And I am curious, a lot of historians who study race relations, especially in this area, in the second half of the 20th century a lot historians make the argument that the term "race riot"--

HOLT: It was not a race riot, I hope I didn't use the words "race riot"

BORENSTEIN: No no, I'm just curious and am branching off of that. A lot of historians make the argument that the term riot, especially in the context of race riots, in this area, should actually be referred to as, you know, racial revolutions, or revolutionary disturbances.

HOLT: Well you know in the 60's when I was going here, it was exciting, Wayne State was a hub of activity in terms of protest. There were protests against the Vietnam War, and we had the onset of the Black Panthers, that was really something-in fact I joined the party unofficially for a week. That very impressive, to see these black guys with black leather jackets, bandoliers on their shoulders, when the police pulled somebody over they got out of the car and stood their grounds.

15:00

The Police was very very brutal, back in the early '60s, they had a crew called the big four. I know I worked two factory jobs and i must have had $700 in my pocket, that's a lot of money even today for a 16 year old kid to have. And I had a 1961 Chevrolet Bellaire that I paid $350 for. I kept it really clean, and I got pulled over by this group called the big four. There was one uniform officer, three plain clothes officers. Huge guys. Where I grew up, you know, you're very respectful of adults, I had no attitude at all. Now, they pulled my out of the car, searched me, and took the money out and said I fit the description of someone who had just robbed a store, I mean I could have had a heart attack right then. But then they found my paycheck stubs, receipts where I bought the car, and they let me go. That experience stuck with me till this day. I remember the guy pulled me out of the car and said, "If one thing come out that car we were gonna drop you." I said, "Jesus," I think I almost defecated on myself, cause I never ever been in trouble, never ever had police contact. It was very frightening. I mean, I've seen police really do a number of jobs on people in terms of beating them up.

BORENSTEIN: Right.

HOLT: And, actually, the rebellion, as I call it started in 1967—happened on Twelfth Street and Claremont in Detroit. Twelfth street, you know, prior to me growing up they had what's called Black Bottom-and Hastings Street. I was too young to see it or be part of it but Twelfth street I considered like that. Twelfth street, in the black community, was a major strip. It started at West Grand blvd and Twelfth, and went all the way down to, I would say, Davidson. That was the strip. There were the after hour places, that was a recreation area for the black community. You always see a lot of people on the street, they had the after hour clubs, you had the big performers play here after they left their performances they would go to these after hour clubs. I know, I was on Twelfth street, you know, walking around, then at midnight, the police, a vice shooter, raided a blind pig there (that's what they called the after-hours places back then). And they were pretty safe, if was mostly liquor, I never saw a lot of drugs in them, I went in one a couple of times. You could buy liquor, and you'd listen to the music, there was prostitution there probably, but I was too young to really recognize it. And the police raided it. And back then when, if you give any kind of resistance to the police, you're gonna get thumped pretty good. But this particular night, it was like 90 degrees outside, a lot of people on the street, and this was the area of the H. Rap Brown and the Stokely Carmichaels, and so the black revolutions, as I call it, was just beginning to take place. That's when the big afros came out, and the dashikis, and this identity of who you are. And, you know, I grew up in high school never knowing anything about black history, not even knowing that we were a part of history. And I thought that was pretty amazing, ten years later. I knew nothing about anything, was never taught anything about history here, in terms of how African Americans fit in. And it just, the tension was always building-it just sort of blew. With the police---it was more a rebellion against police brutality at that time. And it just spiraled out of control. Somebody threw a brick at a police car, they set it on fire, and then all of a sudden the looting started. And I mean, it was just amazing to see people writing on the stores, "soul brothers," "owned by a soul brother" meaning it's a black

owned store, do not break into it. People did not care. When people call it a race riot—I took pictures. I have still have some of those pictures to this day—there was black and white looting together. It was a free-for-all. They broke into pawn shops. Most of the stores on Twelfth Street, it was a Jewish area. If you look at the history of Detroit, the African Americans always follows the Jewish migration. You know, we lived in the area that was strictly Jewish at one time, all the little grocery stores I worked in too were owned by Jewish people. And they just treated me great. You know, I had friends from this day, and then Twelfth St was all basically Jewish merchants. That area of Dexter and, what's it called, Russel Woods, was all Jewish area. And it was these stores that they looted, that they just cleaned 'em out. And it just spiraled out of control, the police could not handle it, they were not trained for this sort of insurrection. Like today we have all of these special response units, back then they had the riot squad, they just grabbed these big tall guys who worked downtown and the beat officers, they give 'em big sticks and helmets and they put them in to break up the crowds, but that wasn't working. Then H. Rap Brown came in and did a speech on top of a building and says "burn, baby, burn." And people got a sense, but what people don't realize is it was many whites and blacks in that crowd. I never saw it in terms where they saw a white person and were dragging them out of a car. I never saw that at all. I just saw people say, "God, it's a free-for-all now, let's break in, let's get this." You know, people falling down, trying to carry a refrigerator out of the appliance store. Back then, in the '60s, everything you needed to purchase was in the community. There were sporting goods shops, appliance shops, furniture, clothing stores, you don't have this in the black community now. And that era sort of destroyed that. That's 1967, it's when people refer to as the "white flight," cause immediately, the Jewish area, they left. They left here they went towards Oak Park, that was the next migration, and from Oak Park they went to Southfield. From Southfield to West Bloomfield, and then on to Bloomfield. That was the migration, they left. And it never rebuilt, it never came back. And it caused that white flight. I know Belle Isle--everyone talks about how Beautiful Belle Isle was—I remember what they did, the police were arresting people, if you were on the street they were just grabbing you and throwing you in the bus. And they took the elephant house at Belle Isle and put chicken wire fencing on it, and let in the prisoners. I know one of my first assignments, writing assignments I had at Wayne State, was to interview this judge, Judge Crockett (George Crockett), and I had a great deal of respect for him, because the judge, he went to the precinct and he ordered the release of all these people, that they were just grabbing and locking up. I did, I sat in his court room for a week and I'm just amazed at how he was a civil rights activist who became a judge. And I watched him work, just had a profound on me. At that time I said, "You know, I think I'd like to-I want to become a police officer."

22:31

BORENSTEIN: Is that where the turning point was?

HOLT: Turning point was, you know, You know, I used to go to these Black Panthers Meetings, but you know it was more show and tell. Wasn't what I thought it was. And I said, "Well, this

doesn't really-not work for me." And I worked at Chrysler though the summer, and I joined the Drum (the revolutionary workers league), but then guys were getting fired left and right. I had the type of family that you couldn't go home and said you lost your job cause you participated in something.

BORENSTEIN: It's a pretty big step from going from being a panther, chanting police stupidity, to becoming a police officer.

HOLT: They asked me to write an article and I just never did it and never returned, you know.

BORENSTEIN: So after, so you graduated with a degree in social work?

HOLT: I graduated with a degree in psychology.

BORENSTEIN: Psychology.

HOLT: In 1970, I graduated in 1970, there was not a bachelors degree of social work, only a masters degree. But said no, I took a job right after that. I worked for the Detroit Urban League for a while as an organizer in the neighborhood. It didn't pay any money but what happens is a lot of organizers, you work on the areas that are easiest. You don't really- you organize if people are already organized. And being much better, when you go out and you work in the areas that really need it, and you try to convince people "this is what you need to do." But you know, you sort of take the easy way out, if the area I already organized then you just go there and give them more structure. I didn't really think I was making a difference then at all.

24:00

BORENSTEIN: So how did you get from that to working with the police.

HOLT: Well I took another stop, I got very frustrated with the social services, and said, "Boy I'm not going to make any money and I'm not really doing any good." The family expectation was that once you got the college degree, the whole world opens up. But it doesn't. I don't blame my parents, you know, very old school, from the South, but it does not work that way. And I took a job with Xerox Corporation, and I did real well as a sales person. Then I left Xerox, I worked with Sears-

BORENSTEIN: Also in Sales?

HOLT: No, I worked the executive management program, they sent me to Chicago, they groomed me to become a store manager, but I hated it. And then I applied to the Wayne State Police department, in 1977, and got hired as an officer.

BORENSTEIN: Without returning to school for criminal justice or anything like that?

HOTL: No, at that time all you needed, Wayne State was only the second school in the country that required a bachelor's degree. I said, "Boy this is much more professional." They were all commissioned as Detroit Police officers.

BORENSTEIN: Yeah.

HOLT: And we got pictures on the walls in here of the early stages of what we did, so this is what I want to do. I said, "I'm working with a professional place, everyone has a degree, I won't have the racial hostility that you saw in Detroit." Ok, so what happened in Detroit was, the first mayoral election where you actually had African Americans running for Mayor was when Coleman Young came in, and that's when the racial tension really started. He ran against Nichols, who was the police commissioner at that time, and the tension between the police department (I'm skipping a lot because so much happened during those years) was very tough. Police had a specialized unit called STRESS. It stood for Stop the Robbers, Enjoy Safe Streets. And what this was, they had two different crew, unbelievable in the 60s, nobody believes it, black and white officers didn't work together.

BORENSTEIN: And this is with the Detroit Police, not the Wayne State Police?

HOLT: The Detroit Police Department.

BORESNTEIN: Right. The Wayne State Police was very small at this point.

HOLT: Very small. I think we only had two black officers when I started, myself and the guy who is my captain now. You know, and he trained black and white officers, they really worked together. There was always three officers assigned to a car, so one's off you still have two people. And he has a unit called STRESS. He had these five or six white guys that they would call "going on a stroll." And for example, it's almost a precursor to what I do now in terms of our compstat meeting, where I look for hotspots. Every two weeks I have a meeting here and I bring all of these different agencies here and we look at the stats, if I see this area has eight robberies, this area has these car thefts, then I devise tactics to bring those areas down. What STRESS did, they picked the area of Detroit, a very poor are, let's say Grand River near the Edsel Ford Freeway at that time, and they'll take one guy, he'll get a gas can, and he'll walk around looking like "I'm looking for a gas station, I ran out of gas." And he'll have a couple dollars sticking out of his pocket. And across the street a half a block down they'll be a guy following him (a police officer), on this side,there would be a guy following him and in front is called a "point," there'd be another guy walking, and it would be followed by a car. Then once somebody approaches this guy with the gas can to rob him, they will light him up with bullets. They must have had about 12 deaths. They shot and they killed so many people. Now I'm not saying they did it unjustly, but they used fatal force when there were going to be robbed.

BORENSTEIN: So they idea was to lure a robber and then… and then shoot.

HOLT: They go to, to catch the robber—well, they shot a lot of people.

BORENSTEIN: No kidding?

28:00

HOLT: They shot a lot of people, and Coleman Young campaigned against this, he said, "I will stop it." I mean, they would shoot someone but couldn't fund a weapon so would plant a weapon on them. You know, couple only got convicted cause they planted a knife on a guy that didn't have it. This is very work to go out there as a decoy.

BORENSTEIN: I'm sure.

HOLT: Very very dangerous work. I mean, vice have done it for years, but these guys went in to the real rough areas, they were going to the projects, like the Jeffrey Projects, that's a tough area. If you didn't--When I was coming up , if you didn't live there, you didn't walk through there.

BORENSTEIN: And these are the areas that they would target as the most Dangerous?

HOLT: Most dangerous. Even as a kid, you did not walk through the Jeffries Projects if you didn't like there.

BORENSTEIN: Was it seen as a successful program? I mena, Overall?

HOLT: Well, yeah, it was successful in that nobody wanted to rob anybody white in the area, cause-that's a cop.

BORENSTEIN: But the only groups that did this were the white officers?

HOLT: What happened is the black officers and the white officers got into a shoot out, with a stress team. The black STRESS team was having a party one day, and the white officers saw one of the black officers walking with a gun, not knowing he was an officer. And they went into the apartment and there was a shootout that involved the two stress teams. It was something.

BORESNTEIN: That's incredible.

HOLT: Yeah. That was something. And then, you know, during that time, we had the republic of the New Africa. That was run by probably a tremendous, famous, civil rights attorney. He's still practicing, Milton Henry. And, um, Milton Henry and his brother Richard Henry. Richard Henry took an African name which I can't think of. And they had this organization called the Republic of the New Africa. And what they wanted-they demanded that the governors gives them three or four states as their own country in the south. I mean these were outrageous demands, weren't going to happen. But they had a meeting (I don't know if you'd call it a convention, or whatever it was) in Detroit in New Bethel Church on Linwood. And New Bethel

Church is where Aretha Franklin's father, the Reverend C. L. Franklin was a minister. Very popular, flamboyant minister. And Aretha sung there, it'd be packed--very exciting type of church. He allowed them to have their meeting there. The Republic of New Africa, they would carry guns, they had rifles. They were in the church and a Detroit Police officer saw them with the rifle and went in, and there was a shootout in the church.

BORENSTEIN: And when was this?

HOLT: 19….69/68/70, right in that part.

BORESTEIN: So while you were still in school at Wayne State, yeah.

HOLT: Yeah. And they went in there and they shot up the church, police officer died, and this is where George Crockett came into the police station, he says "you never see a church in American that the police will storm like that." Church was always a sanctuary where you could go and nobody would come in. And that's another reason why I need, you know, that's when they started recruiting black police officers. Said, "You guys, if you want to make a difference, you need to join the force and make a difference." Now Detroit had very few black police officers. Coleman Young became mayor, and that's, to me, when the racial tension started. He changed the structure of the police department and city government overnight. Whereas before if you applied for, I think I applied for the Detroit police dept I the first time while I was in college, but I was too young, you had to be 21. But if you had your wisdom tooth in, they wouldn't accept you if you were black.

BORENSTEIN: If you had your wisdom teeth?

HOLT: [Laugh] Yeah, they would find all sorts of reasons not to get you in.

BORENSTEIN: No kidding?

HOLT: Yeah. I know this one guy who says, "Naw, they told me I had my wisdom tooth, I couldn't get in."

BORESNTEIN: And that's—

HOLT: One guy had broke his finger one time and, you know, didn't heal completely straight? But there's no disability, they were rejecting people left and right. You just couldn't get hired.

BORENSTEIN: And the wisdom teeth you think that's a class division?

HOLT: No, they'd just find any reason not to hire you. Just any reason not to hire you.

BORENSTEIN: And that was in the books?

HOLT: They wouldn't hire you, you couldn't get past it. Coleman Young changed that overnight.

32:32

BORESTEIN: In what other ways do you think, I mean, as far as the aims of the Detroit Police in hiring more black officers, what else has changed in hiring more black officers.

HOLT: Oh, I think the education level, the training, the professionalism, there was none of that before. In the 60s it was ran by fear. It was very—I'm assuming there were some very good officers and leaders who came out of that, but they ran by fear.

BORENSTEIN: I mean, it sounds like the STRESS program was a terror.

HOLT: Stress was a, you know it could have been a great program if it was controlled and managed correctly. It's forms are there today. I mean, I do a form of it today. But we've never had a fatality or a shooting at Wayne State. You know, you have to—everything starts at the top and goes down. The police commissioner during the civil upheaval at that time was Ray Girardin. He was the press secretary to mayor Cavanaugh, who made him the Police Chief. He knew nothing about it. But now all of this has changed professionally, the education level… I don't think you see a chief anywhere in the country who don't have advanced degrees at this time. The training level-there are commissions that actually control and certify police officers. You had none of that back then. You know, most of them---there weren't even radios and call boxes, and you had beat officers, the whole thing changed today, it's completely changed.

BORESNTEIN: And Wayne States Police Force has changed. I mean, as you said there were only a few officers when you began. How many officers total?

HOLT: I think it was three black officers when I got hired… even when I became chief in 2008 we only had 23 officers.

BORENSTEIN: Yeah.

HOLT: I got 65 now, I'll have 100 eventually.

BORENSTEAIN: No Kidding.

HOLT: But we had a defining area that we patrolled on the campus, around the campus, but these are very professional guys. Nobody really retired here. Guys usually worked here three to four years, they go off to become chiefs of small departments or other departments. The racism, I had no idea would be this high.

BORESTEIN: And it is now?

HOLT: When I started.

BORENSTEIN: You can get that if you need to [Holt's phone ringing]

HOLT: [Answers, dials, and talks on phone, short interaction-interviewer gets water for Holt]

36:12

HOLT: You know, I joined Wayne and it was professional, there was a lot of training, on how the officers conduct themselves, but there was not a lot of opportunities for the three African American officers. I think I was the first officer to go into a plainclothes assignment as an African American, first one to make sergeant, but you know, it's just, we had a chief, and he just was not open to anything proactive. He had a great reputation and he built the department with its 90 sec response time, and a great reputation, but actually I had to go outside the department-actually have people help me get promoted here. And um, the way—it changed gradually, that we started hiring more African American officers. But you know, there was a degree requirement, and that eliminated a lot of people at that time.

BORENSTEIN: And you've worked under six different chiefs, I mean, since you've started.

HOLT: No, I only worked under two different chiefs at Wayne State, one chief stayed here, he became chief in 1969 and he stayed until 2008. [answered telephone and talked briefly]

Yeah, we had one chief, longest serving chief in the state. He stayed—when he left they bought a--hired someone from outside the department who was a captain with the state police. His name was Bill King, an African American guy, became chief for two years. He really was very progressive. He brought an outside-I was a lieutenant at that time, they brought a outside company out here to do an assessment center. A testing for chief. And he said, "This is the method we're going to use." I wanted to learn how that worked, so I paid to go to New York to have this company take me though this process. So I came back here to do the testing, and I was so familiar with it that I came out number one, and I became the captain. And I was in charge of the line operation. Really, when you're a captain here you're in charge of the operation department. I just started working 18 hours a day, making changes. We'd never had a relationship with Detroit police, I established that. I established relationships with the neighborhoods, and he left to go to the Florida International University. They usually do a national search for a chief, but the president at that time made me interim chief, then a short later I became chief. And I was able, really, to—now I could shape the department the way I wanted it to go.

BORESNETIN: So the real advancement it seems, I mean, the advancement as far as, for African Americans in the departments seems to have come from you being self-motivated.

HOLT: I was the first lieutenant, there was no other lieutenant. And once I became chief, my recruiting and everything changed. I went on to recruit females, I wanted Chinese officers, I

wanted Hispanic officers, but I didn't do, see, what Coleman Young did. Coleman Young basically hired anybody who came through the door.

BORESTEIN: Right.

39:54

HOLT: In fact the first group he hired, 20 of them got fired because they were all still on welfare, still collecting the checks as officers. He didn't really like police when he was the mayor of Detroit. He didn't think it took much to be that. So he just really just started hiring African Americans. I never short circuit the system here. What I did is I widened the pool of applicants, so you could find qualified applicants. I did not accept that you couldn't find qualified African American officers because you needed a degree. That just wasn't acceptable to me.

BORENSTEIN: And the officers that you have hired, the force has obviously grown a whole lot since you've started…

HOLT: we have sixty officers now, I've triple the size.

BORENSTEIN: And not just in numbers but in successes as well.

HOLT: Oh, no question about it. We've grown from a campus department to a full-fledged Midtown police department.

BORENSTEIN: And you've seen not only success but a great number of awards in the last couple of years?

HOLT: We were in the New York Times, we're in the Collegiate Journal, you still see police officers in that journal there on what we're doing in the neighborhoods.

BORENSTEIN: What are you doing to empower your officers to get such good work done so consistently?

HOLT: You know, I really, I drive my ---you know, I work, I still work 18 hours a day. Every incident that happens, I get called and I know about. I know Thursday we had a student in Old Main, that someone was in the classroom who was not a student he got her phone number, he's staking her. We've been following her, we're setting up a meet Thursday night, we're gonna arrest him. I mean, we just jump into it like that. What I did is I created a compstat model, where every Wednesday, like next Wednesday we'll meet in my multi-purpose room, and I'll have every security agent, community groups, and different police agencies meet, and everything is statistic. I have every crime that happens in Midtown, Wayne State, the neighborhoods, I could tell you what happened at Eight Mile and Van Dyke.

BORENSTEIN: Now that includes community organizations that are volunteer organizations as well.

HOLT: Yeah, I bring them in because Detroit police have a compstat. Compstat was started by Bratton, Bill Bratton who was police commissioner in New York. Theirs is a very tough Compstat, they call their command officers in and say, "How come you have eight armed robberies in your district, what are you doing about it?" They put them on the spot. Don't come back here next week with eight robberies. I don't do it that way. I bring—we do the stats, I see what all the crime is for the last fourteen days. I see what the pattern-what time a crime is, I get an MO, what's the description of the people doing the crime, and from that I have a pattern. Then I have the community groups in because who better to know what's going on in the neighborhood than them? And we all participate. I don't sit at the head of the table, I sit in the middle. I want people to jump in and then I want to back out like I'm not even in the room. And I tell the command officers, well, what do you think we need to do. He says, "Well, I need to have three plain clothes guys." "Well, ok. I'll give you overtime to do that. You need-I got an undercover van, you can take that out." I got people in the community say, "look, we're gonna organize the community, start looking out the windows, we'll set up a phone line to start calling you." And you'd be stunned how successful that is. The first week we started a compstat, well, since we started compstat in 2009, we dropped the crime 50% in the midtown area.

BORENSTEIN: Fifty? Five Zero?

HOLT: Five Zero. Unheard of.

BORENSTEIN: Mmm-hmmm [affirmative]

HOLT: We had six robberies on Woodward Avenue the first week we started. After we started comstat we made three arrests, we had none. I put officers walking the beat at Woodbridge, I got calls from residents say they almost passed out, they never saw that before. But I give the officers what they need. I have cameras. I can see you drive across the ambassador bridge. Right now.

BORENSTEIN: Now, as far as –I mean, a lot of that is off Wayne State's campus.

HOLT: Let me tell you, the last 14 days we made in the central district of Detroit, which includes Midtown, Woodbridge, the Cultural Center-there were 52 arrests the last 14 days. Wayne State made 45 of those arrests. And none of those arrests were campus related. None.

BORESNTEIN: Now, how is your relationship with the Detroit Chief of Police. Is there a stepping on toes issue?

44:36

HOLT: It depends who the chief is. This chief I have to be very careful of. The other chief he was here more than he was at his police headquarters, that's how good the relationship was. Now the Detroit police come to my compstat, I go to their compstat. We just had D-lectricity in the area. We bought 94,000 people into this area and we did not have one incident. We gonna do noel night in November, we'll bring maybe 150,000 people, and I'll mobilize the whole department. Everybody works, including myself, in uniform. This Detroit, I have to-I make sure to let them know that he's the chief of the city. And I run Wayne State. He commissions all my officers as Detroit police officers, so I have to keep that relationship good. The average precinct should put out six cars a night To patrol. The central district on Woodward and [INDISTINCT] he might have three. I asked him, "I'm putting EIGHT out, how come you only have THREE?" He says, "Because you guys drive the stats down, and my command service says, 'you don't need it.' You're stats are low.' But my stats are low because of what you guys are doing." What happened is, when I became chief in 2008, we would spend 81% of our time on the campus, 21% off campus. Now we spend 65% of our time off campus, and maybe 38 on campus. And what happens is the crime on campus actually went down. Because if you put a big perimeter around the area it cuts down. For example, before whole Foods opened, there was the old butcher shop on Woodward Avenue.

BORENSTEIN: Right.

HOLT: Really great concept. I knew those guys from the 70s when they were in Lafayette Park.

BORENSTEIN: Sure.

HOLT: And when he first opened he says, I'm not gonna have any bars on my windows, it's gonna be all glass. He got broken into the first three weeks, fourteen times. That's not even in my area. That's on Charlotte and Woodward Avenue. He called me and said, "Please help." I put a bait car out there, and the bait cars have cameras all over it. And I put a plain clothes unit in another van. And the bait car picked up the guy breaking into the butcher shop. He ran across the street to the Coney Island to sell what he had, and we arrested him when he came out. And what he said was, he broke into twelve businesses on Woodward Avenue. He's still in prison today for that.

BORENSTEIN: When was the arrest?

HOLT: This was 2 years ago. He says, what I did, he says, "I would break the window, then I would go sit down and see if any patrol cars coming. I knew, I thought I was out of the Wayne State area." He says, "Whenever I went close to Wayne State, I break in and grab anything cause you guys response was so quick." And we get a lot of community support when we made that arrest, there. And in Detroit, if you have an alarm in your house or in your business, Detroit would only respond if you could verify that it's a good alarm. That doesn't make any sense to me. You paying money for an alarm, you're paying taxes for police protection, and if your house

gets broken into, or your business, the alarm company calls 911, 911 says, "You have to tell us if it's a good alarm."

BORENSTEIN: Right.

HOLT: How do you do that? You call the owner or the resident and say, "You've got to go home and tell us if somebody's in there." So the owner goes home or the business person does, and they said, "Yep, they broke in." And then the 911 operator says, "Ok, you can make your report over the phone." So what happens now everybody calls me on Woodward Avenue. We respond in 90 seconds. We get an alarm and we go. And, like I told the New York Times reporter, just go down Woodward Avenue ask any business person who you call. Go into the Starbucks at Mack and Woodward and say "I need the Police," we'll be called right away.

BORENSTEIN: When I started teaching here it's the first thing someone told me-if you have an emergency, don't bother calling 911.

HOLT: Even, not even an emergency, if you can't get into your car, you have a flat tire, we do a lot of safe walks now. Not just for the University, there's so much spreads. I have seniors who still live in the Jeffries Projects. It's only the senior high-rise still there, cause they refuse to move. The city says "we're gonna tear down and built nice townhouses for you," and they say "oh no no no." And on the third of the month when they walk to the bank we've got a scout car here, and a scout car here. Watching them do that. I got cameras on the ATM machines. If I see a guy hanging around a cars gonna pull right up.

BORENSTEIN: So you're monitoring through cameras areas outside of Wayne State.

HOLT: Oh, I can see Cobo Hall—like I say, I can see you walk you walking through the front door of MGM casino with my cameras.

BORENSTEIN: No kidding.

HOLT: Yeah. If you pick up a phone on campus and you call me I'm looking at you.

BORENSTEIN: One of the, uh, you mean one of the outdoor phones?

HOLT: Yeah.

BORENSTEIN: Wow.

HOLT: Even if you call me on your cell phone from Cass and Warren, and you say "I'm at Cass and Warren," we'll say, "I'm looking at you." And that sort of really helps. And we don't use the cameras for recording, we use them for patrol. I'm not interested in what happened yesterday to look it up, I'm interested in what happens right now so I can stop it before it happens

BORESTEIN: Out of all the things that you've done here, you know, all of these changes that you've made, not just as your role as chief but in the whole time that you've been at Wayne State, what do you consider your greatest accomplishments or additions to what's happening here.

50:21

HOLT: I think my greatest accomplishment to me is my relationship to people who live in the area. I think that's been the greatest thing for me. As an officer I can park my car, in those early years, and I can walk through the projects. And nobody cursed me out, nobody wanted to jump me. I had that type of relationship. I can remember chasing a stolen car and the guys get out and start running, and I'm a slow runner, and I'm chasing them and the community is joining in with me. And they caught the guys for me. That type of relationship, to me means a lot. I mean, I could, I was working midnights for twelve years, I could stop people on the street, prostitutes say, "This guys breaking into cars," and they would tell me who it is. They would actually call me and say, "Hey this is the guy you're looking for." You know, and I would, I would still allow them to rehab, say "Hey you got to get off the street this is gonna kill you." I think how I related to people, and opened up relationships with Detroit, with all the resistance that I had-cause I was considered a weakness when I started dealing with the community like that.

BORENSTEIN: Now that's something, earlier you were talking about your background in psychology, you know, you got your degree in psychology. And I know that you've done a lot of work with the Wayne State Police Force in training your officers to recognize the difference between criminals and people that need help.

HOLT: That is so crucial, because what happened when Engler was governor, he closed all the mental health facilities. When I started, and you saw a person who was a danger to himself or someone else, we would take him to the crisis center, and the crisis center would hold him for observation for 72 hours. After that 72 hours we would go to probate court and a judge would look at the petition and either confine him to a mental health institution like Northville, Lafayette Clinic, there were like, ten of them. And this person actually got help. I see this guy, Derek Tony, who I took to the Crisis Center in 1981, he went to the Detroit Institute of Arts on the outdoor statue to start painting it. And uh, I got the call that someone was defacing the statue. And he was off his meds, and, I mean , he was a big guy, we fought, I got him cuffed, took him to the Crisis Center and I went to probate court. And I see him now, he's still on medication but he's a very functional citizen. And I actually, every time I got promoted I got a postcard from this guy, a congratulations. I mean, that's a heck of a thing, right there.

BORENSTEIN: That's incredible.

HOLT: And when Engler closed that, his theory was good. He was saying, "Let's put the mental health people back in the community that they're from. Let's open up shelters and community houses." But what happened was, that became a get-rich scheme. These guys would

get a house, get all these people in, get checks from the state, they got no treatment, no medicine, no nothing. So all these people were on the street. I would say 70% of the homeless have psychological issues. Detroit, what, five years ago, shot a guy who had psychological issues whose deaf because he had a rake, it was---he didn't understand anything—he couldn't hear you! They shot and killed him. I mean, they were being threatened, I don't really blame the officer, but, if you're sick it's not a crime. If you're homeless it's not a crime. So we needed training in this. So I went with the mental health department of the city and the school of social work, I said, "Can you get me a mental health worker, I'm gonna give you a team of officers for you to train and would you ride with them once a week. And we're going to look for the chronic homeless, and we're gonna look for those with mental health issues, and will you show us how to approach them?" It's still a work in progress.

BORENSTEIN: And are all of your officers getting that kind of training?

HOLT: Well, I have a select group who I want to be specialists. But officers are getting that training. Cause I want—we have certain people on campus like Mary, she wears all these overcoats and she sits on the bench. Now two years ago I had her placed in a facility up north but she's back. But now we know how to deal with her. We don't threaten her or get her off campus, cause the big issue with Detroit was that you'd drive the crime off campus but you're just sending them downtown or you're sending them north into the Boston/Addison area, so they're all angry with us. So now we don't just tell the homeless, "don't be in this corridor," we try to take them to a shelter. The problem is the shelter, it had someone on third, didn't want to go there because it's unsafe. They want to sleep and hang on campus. And the students have big hearts. The students are handing them business giving them money, bringing them clothes…

BORENSTEIN: Yeah, it's true.

HOLT: So I have to do sweeps at night in some of the buildings, and I'll find them.

BORENSTEIN: And that's got to be a very tough position for your officers as well, knowing that they make Wayne State the safest place to be. And if these people are suffering from mental illness… not safe on the street…

HOLT: But the issue is that Wayne State is an education facility where students need, they pay money to go here, and it's an academic environment and they can't have these kinds of interruptions.

BORENSTEIN: Absolutely. That's tough.

HOLT: You know, so it's uh, it's a constant battle, cause there's not any place you can really take them right now.

BORENSTEIN: Right. Well, I've seen your officers respond to those, you know, to mental health issues on campus, and they do seem (and I've read in a couple articles about your police force as well) that they do have a focus on getting people to the right place.

HOLT: Oh, we have a focus. I think if we didn't you'd see a lot of fatalities. We don't really get a lot of citizen complaints. We get some because of how we respond, because with one man cars, if you call and you have an argument maybe three cars will show up, now that might look like overkill. But what it does is that it prevents the situation from escalating. You know, if a guy is arguing or threatening his wife or his girlfriend and we pull up with four officers, he's not going to fight four guys, he just can't win that. No matter how big or how good he is. But it creates sometimes a racial atmosphere where they say we're profiling. And I get that quite a bit. We pull a car over in traffic another car will pull up behind them, and a person will say, "I blew a red light so I get two police cars here? Go find a dope dealer!" But it's a safety issue. None of our officers have been hurt, the citizen is not hurt, usually when they come in to make a complaint I'll bring them up to my office and I'll explain the situation to them. Sometimes they leave good, sometimes they don't. But the fact that we've never been involved in a fatal shooting, no one's been fatally injured… to me, that's the kind of goal I want.

BORESNTEIN: Never? No fatal shootings at Wayne State?

HOLT: Never. Never have. And we have all sorts of equipment.

BORENSTEIN: And do you think you, that Wayne State's benefit to the greater Detroit community is---

HOLT: They'll tell you that. They'll tell you. I don't know if the university know it, but when the university was going through layoffs at the last budget cut, and every department had to give up something, I had over a thousand letters wrote to the president's office from community people. And not only that, I get letters from the Jefferson district in Lafayette Park, asking the president can we patrol there. Brush Park, how come Wayne State can't patrol there? I have increased my boundaries, unbelievable; when there's a baseball game or football game I have officers in Brush Park, cause people park there and they become targets. I get this all the time. I got a call from a citizen, "How come you can't come to the bus terminal downtown, we have to get off the bus there."

BORESNTEIN: Do you think you're, I mean, as you plan on expanding, you said you'd like to get, you know, over a hundred officers…

HOLT: I need a hundred officers to stay where I'm at now, to do a better job. I think if I try to expand the reach any longer, any further out, I don't think I would be effective. I don't think it'd be fair to the University, because I don't get any outside funding.

BORENSTEIN: What do you think, I mean—Do you think that what you've done here, the changes that you've made and the successes that you've had—do you think those could be applied or transferred to the greater Detroit Police Force?

HOLT: You know, that's kind of funny you said that. Other agencies come in-Lansing, Flint, Pontiac, and they look at our model and put it in effect, but you know, police work is very closed. It's very territorial, it's very ego driven, and when Kent Cockrel was the mayor of Detroit, he was the interim Mayor for a while, he interviewed me for the chief position, and I told him, "This guy you have as your deputy chief would be a much better candidate. Because you're not going to get three thousand officers to buy in that you're hiring a police chief from the university with sixty officers to run a three thousand person department. You're not gonna get that buy-in. And you have an election coming up, and I'm the last thing that you need to bring on the table." And it can be applied, but Detroit needs resources. You got to have feet on the ground. The most thing, is if somebody calls you have to be there. And it's very very political. Detroit has come and looked at my model, but the problem is when you get headlines, and you get papers saying how good you are, sometimes it creates friction.

BORENSTEIN: Sure.

HOLT: And what-I have to find a better way that that doesn't happen. I've basically been refusing interviews the last couple of weeks , like, channel 4 is doing something on the bait cars. This should be running this week, and I'm almost sorry I did that. Casue I don't want Detroit to say "well, here they come again." Yeah, I want to be part of the team, I don't want to be captain of the team, I just want to be on the team where we're all working together. The Ilitch Corporation is approaching us with the new the new stadium going down there. Quicken Loans, Dan Gilberts people, says, "We'll pay you to patrol downtown." But I have an agreement with Detroit that I won't accept money to patrol other areas, casue he'll say, "Wait a minute, give us the money!" So it's a very political tightrope, you have to be very careful on. I did accept the $150,000 for one year for the Center for Creative Studies, which means I'll respond to anything that they have down there. Officers walk through their buildings, we're conducting our crime prevention RAD training, but other than that, you know, I told Quicken Loans we will assist on big events down there, we'll be like Winter Blast, we'll have our officers down there. The Thanksgiving parade we'll be down there. But it's just a very tight political tightrope. And then the board of governors at the university, I don't think they quite know everything we do. Because some of them will ask the question, "well, why are you out there doing that?" So I have to be—I can justify it now, by going out there I keep the crime low here, and we are encouraging our students to live all over the place. You know, I got students that say "I live in Lafayette Park, my car got broken into and Detroit won't come." Or, I got students who say, "I went to the Tiger's ball game, I had too much to drink and I can't find my car." Well, we'll go down there. You know. But eventually the board will say, "Well, you know what, we really can't fund you to do all of that."

BORENSTEIN: But you think for the time being the work you do is still focused on the students and the University and the U\student community.

HOLT: You know what, I'm would call it the University Community. And the University Community, when I go out for talks to the neighborhoods, I say, "You're part of the University community." I say, "Maybe no one in this group here goes to the university, has a kid there, but you live within our vision, within our eyesight, and you're part of the community. Your success is my success, and when you fail I fail." And that's a tie-in to the university. You know Corktown says, "Can you come down here?" Now, I can't do that. But I tell—I call Detroit police, and say "Slows BBQ on the weekend might have five cars broken into because they park on the service drive. If you want me to assist you, I'm gonna put two plain clothes cars down there and we're gonna sit and try to catch the guys." And Detroit will say, "that's great, I'm going to get you one car." So when we make the arrest, I let Detroit say they did it. It works out. You see, the key is the guy who breaks into a car in Corktown is the same guy that comes down here to break into a car. They don't stop since the moment they do it in Corktown. They could ride around all night and look for an opportunity.

BORESNTEIN: Sure.

1:04:13

HOLT: They guy who carjacks a guy on Jefferson and Shane is the same guy who's going to come to Woodward and Forrest to carjack somebody. So the bad guy is a bad guy no matter where he's at. I started a program, to me it's been very successful, I looked at all the people we arrest, and 80% of them had Department of Correction history. Which either meant they'd been in prison, they're on parole, or they're off parole, but they have a history of corrections. So I went to the Department of Corrections, their deputy director and said, "I'd like to try a pilot." He's very apprehensive. I said, "I know that you have parole officers and their job is to do home visits. Their supposed to go knock on the door of these multi-dwelling apartments and say, "Ok Mr. Johnson, where you working? I need to take a urine sample. I need to look through your apartment to make sure you have no weapons. Who's this person in here? I need to check in to make sure they're not a felon." Do they do that? Absolutely not. Would you do that, if that was you and you were by yourself? I wouldn't. They're going to write it down, just like a salesperson for [indistinct], He's supposed to do twenty cold calls a day, where he just knocks on the door. He goes through the phone book and writes down these places and doesn't go. So I say, "If you want to assign an agent to our station, I'll give her or him an office, a computer, let them work out of my station and when it's time for home visits I'll send three people with her or him." So that's what we do twice a month. You'd be surprised. Now she goes in, she knocks on the door, instead of this guy [who] has an attitude, he opens the door-there's three guys with her. She gets a urine sample, she searches the apartment, you'd be surprised how many arrests we've made.

BORENSTEIN: No kidding!

HOLT: Unbelievable.

BORENSTEIN: And that's all right here?

HOLT: We go right here, we pick an area in Midtown, she has an office right in our station, her name is Michelle Lopez. She's here every day. People on parole come here to see her. And this is a similar message. I'm not dealing with one person, now this whole agency knows me. And what we do also, like, if I have-one time we had what we call apple picking. That's when you're on your cell phone and someone comes and snatches it?

BORESNTEIN: Mmm hmm [affirmative]

HOLT: So we have like six in a two week period. So I went to the department of correction and I said, "You know, I can't solve this. I can't catch the guy. Do you have anybody who's on a tether in this eight block area? Can you show me who's on a tether between nine-o-clock at night and one in the morning who's been in this area?" Unbelievable, every robbery we had somebody on a tether was there. So we looked that up, and we find the guy lives on Willis! He works at the Whitney, and we followed him when he committed a robbery.

BORENSTEIN: No kidding!

HOLT: We chased him, we let him run back to his apartment, we went in, we arrested him, got a search warrant and got him convicted. That's what the collaboration and partnership does for you when you work as a team.

BORENSTEIN: Right.

HOLT: So I told Detroit, I said, "Let me assign two officers to you, to work your car-jacking team." They said, "Well, do better this, give us a sergeant, let him run a squad for us." So I got two officers assigned to the Detroit Police squads, they don't even come here anymore, they work there every day. I got two officers assigned to ATF (Alcohol, Tobacco, and firearms), I got another officer assigned out to the FBI violent crime task force. So I got—so now, they know who we are, and the board of governors said, "Well, what's the advantage for us?" Well, on Milwaukee, on Baltimore, ad Woodward avenue where the White Castle is, there was a house- a big prostitution house opening up across the street. Our students were living in lofts down the street, they said, "we can't walk down there." I sent ATF in there, the two officers I had under cover, and we did a raid and we arrested 45 people in there. We closed it down. There's a senior citizen place, on Simpson and Woodward Ave, orchestra Hall, and the drug dealers took it over. We moved an officer in there for six months. He lived there. He made so many purchases we got 130 arrest warrants, and we did a big raid that was coordinated with the Wayne County sheriffs, ATF, had all the news media there. It's been very effective for us. This is right across the street from the bars there.

BORESTEIN: And that's all through coordination with Detroit police.

HOLT: Other agencies.

BORENSTEIN: Oh, or Detroit and FBI?

HOLT: And Detroit wasn't really involved with this one, it was the ATF (Alcohol, Tobacco, firearms), the FBI violent crime task force, and Wayne County Sheriffs.

BORESTEIN: That's incredible. And so you partner with major organizations as well as community organizations and just put feelers out all around.

HOLT: Yes, so the major organizations they hire my officers. The ATF they hired both of these officers that I assigned there. So I'm going to give them three more officers. I know I'm going to lose those officers, but that's great. I want people to do well, I want them to grow.

BORENSTEIN: Now, your officers, do they, you're hiring out of the Wayne State Criminal Justice Department.

HOLT: I hire nation-wide. No.

BORENSTEIN: Oh, you're not?

HOLT: I hire nation-wide.

BORENSTEIN: And I know that you have cadets from the, within Wayne State.

HOLT: Right. Yeah I hire criminal justice, I hire cadets. And , um…

BORENSTEIN: So they get experience on the job through the criminal justice department while they're working on their bachelors degree…

HOLT: Right

BORENSTEIN: …and then they go elsewhere for…

HOLT: Well, they apply here.

BORENSTEIN: They do? Ok.

HOLT: Most of them do. And the problem with being a cadet is it either helps of hurts you. I have to keep in mind that they're young, they're students. But if they screw up or mess around, then it hurts the job. You know I had some cadets who got too aggressive meeting the females… and you know, if I tell you to do a safewalk, I don't want you to pick the girl up, I want you to do a safewalk. I don't want you to try to get a date.

BORESNTEIN: I should think not.

HOLT: So, you know, I have to dismiss you or something like that. And that's going to hurt you getting a job here or anywhere else, cause police do backgrounds and I tell them that. I've hired quite a few cadets who have done a good job, but if you do a bad job… you know, I don't want you to go out and arrest people, I want you to be the eyes and ears. You're supposed to walk around campus, if you see somebody you call us, but you… you know, it's a learning experience. It could help you get a job or it could hurt you in getting a job.

1:10:58

BORENSTEIN: Yeah. And do you think that in encouraging those young cadets you mentioned, when we first started, you were talking about, you know, your parents urging you to succeed so early on—you think that comes out of that?

HOLT: I think so, I mean I hire a lot of Wayne State football players. Criminal justice. And we look out for the athletes, when they get in trouble they come to me and we have a conversation with them, in terms of, "This could kill you or this could hurt your career." Joique Bell, plays for the Lions was a cadet here. And I constantly sort of mentored him about fame. Some of these athletes have kids right out high school. I said, these domestic violence cases when you're arguing with your kids mother, it's gonna hurt you for years to come. I have this rule, we have a charter school right here, we have another one down the street, we have another one on the east side, and they all come on campus, most of the schools let them out and they stay on campus for the parents to pick them up. So when they get in fights, the two charter schools will, instead of the police getting them, they have to come and see me. And I bring them in this room here, the two people fighting, I have a pizza, they eat pizza they drink pop. That's what this was for yesterday, two kids got in a fight, and I said, this is what's gonna happen, this is what's gonna happen I give them each a book, I say in three weeks you're going to come to the station and give me an oral report of this book you read. They're laughing, and I let them go. But when they go to school the next day, I'm there. I already talked to the principle. I walk in the classroom and I embarrass them in from of the whole class. I say, "Robert got in a fight on campus, he's gonna give a book report at my station on this day and you guys are all invited. Then I go to their house. And sometimes the parents help me, I say, "Does he have a X-box? If yes, I'd like to take it, and he'll get it back when the report's done."

BORENSTEIN: That is incredibly hands-on.

HOLT: And the when they come in and do the report, they think they're coming in here, the go into my multi-purchase room, I have 60-70 people in there. I invite police officers, I invite judges and teachers, and I brief them. I say, "When you finish I want everybody to scream just like he won the Pulitzer Prize." And when he finished, it's the worst oral report I ever heard in my life. But everybody's high fiving him, jumping up. And he dais to me, "Was it that good?" I say, "It was terrible, it was the worst report I ever heard, but they were applauding the potential you could have." And, you know, now I got interns from this school who come to the station.

But you have to think out of the box. With kids every time they have a fight if you grab them, you rough them up, you write them a ticket, you call the parents, you're not really doing that much. You gotta find something different to do. And these are young, elementary school kids. You know, at first the university administrator says, "Let's keep them off campus, don't want them here." I say, "Do we really want to do that? We don't want them to interfere with the process of people studying and going to school because it's very serious, school is expensive, but you cannot make them feel unwelcome." So it's just a tough balance. And for me to get everybody to buy in is not easy. But these are just pilots I try. You know, I might review this at the end of six months and say, not successful.

BORENSTEIN: Have you gone back and visited, I mean, that student? Do you think that was successful?

HOLT: Two cases I did was very successful.

BORENSTEIN: It's an interesting idea, I mean, you know, not…. cause punishing students for fighting by being negative towards negativity…. Breeds negativity.

HOLT: You gonna give me a report, and at the end of the report, it's gonna turn out very positive.

BORENSTEIN: That's very interesting.

HOLT: It's just a different concept I'm trying here.

BORESNETIN: Well it seems like it's, in miniature, a lot of what you're doing in this city. You know, putting out positivity, and…

HOLT: We had one guy who we constantly were arresting for criminal trespass. I say, "Why are you always here if you're not a student?" And then I say, "Look, why don't you go out to apply to become a student. He couldn't get in here but he got in to Wayne County Community and now he's here now, he transferred, as a student.

BORENSTEIN: And he's here now going to school. That's terrific.

HOLT: I see him, I say, "See? We used to lock you up here every day!"

BORENSTEIN: For trespassing?

HOLT: Trespassing! We warn you for criminal trespass that means you cannot be on the campus. You're supposed to be doing something that's disruptive. The homeless people are pretty smart, they all know now to get a backpack so they look like a student and we can't pick them up.

BORENSTEIN: And that's great, and now he actually is a student.

HOLT: He went to Wayne County, and you know Wayne County is an open door policy. You don't have to have a high school diploma to get in, but you do the work, after two years he applied here, got financial aid.

BORENSTEIN: That's fantastic.

HOLT: He stops by the station, and says, "Hey, I'm gonna have your job." And I say, "I hope you do."

BORENSTEIN: And he might.

HOLT: I hope you do.

BORENSTEIN: You know, I think that's a wonderful note to end on, actually.

1:16:16

HOLT: You know, we get that, you know, we get some negative, but there's some positive that makes it worthwhile.

BORESNTEIN: Yeah

HOLT: You know. So…

BORENSTEIN: That's an incredible way to turn something around.

HOLT: Yeah. It's such a large city, and larger organization, you're not gonna… you can't be that hands on and do a lot of that, but in my job I think I can still do that.

BORENSTEIN: Well, you grow the department too much and you might now…

HOLT: I hear something on the radio I'm gone out there. I'm at home, my radio is on, I hear the officers involved in something I'm leaving home and coming down here. So….

BORENSTEIN: Well, you're doing fantastic work.

HOLT: Well, we're working on it.

BORENSTEIN: Yeah.

HOLT: This job, you're one incident away from failure, you know?

BORESNTEIN: No, I think you have a few steps down before failure.

HOLT: You know, like the Law School suit, when that happened it was very devastating

BORENSTEIN: Yeah it was.

HOLT: Even though we know who did it, we know it didn't happen on campus, but until you can make that arrest and prove it, then it still lingers.

BORENSTEIN: Yeah.

HOLT: And it really hurt us because, see, the University is losing enrollment because of the appearance of crime in the city.

BORENSTEIN: Yeah, well I think that, last year was my second year at my university, and I thought it really said something about how low the crime actually is on campus…

HOLT: Oh, it's lower than Bloomfield…

BORENSTEIN: …that the death of a student was that shocking…

HOLT: It was.

BORENSTEIN: I mean it was so devastating to the entire campus, even though it happened off campus.

HOLT: It made national news.

BORENSTEIN: Right, and people talk about Detroit like it's this…

HOLT: Yeah, because what happens is if you hear a shooting where three people and a two year old got shot on seven mile and Van Dyke, parents in the suburbs with kids are not making the distinction that that's nowhere near Wayne State.

BORENSTEIN: Right

HOLT: We're in Detroit. So we're going to suffer for that.

BORENSTEIN: No, you're absolutely right.

HOLT: And I've had students who got shot and killed elsewhere like the football player that got shot downtown, but they do the backdrop of Wayne State when they report it.

BORENSTEIN: Right.

HOLT: So if you have kids, I mean, I had a son, I have a son, and what I say, I don't have a daughter, but it I had a daughter I'd say, "Do I want her to go there?" That's why Macomb Community College and Oakland Community, they're enrollments just spiraling. You used to not see kids with 4.1 averages going to those junior colleges. You do now.

BORENSTEIN: Yeah, yeah, and a lot of the students end up transferring here, right?

HOLT: Some do, Oakland University is really growing now.

BORENSTEIN: Yeah.

HOLT: Lot of them are going to Oakland University.

BORENSTEIN: And that's the one in Rochester?

HOLT: That's in Rochester, right.

BORENSTEIN: Rochester, Michigan.

HOLT: It's going to be a constant battle, once the image of the city changes; I think that, I hope they're wrong.

BORENSTEIN: And you think it's on its way.

HOLT: I think Midtown and Downtown is on its way. Do I think the neighborhoods are? There's still a forgotten segment of the population here.

Borenstein: Time. You think more time.

HOLT: Time, I mean I have to-I guess he's, I give this Mayor credit, he's tearing down abandon houses, and he's being responsive, but you go to some places in the city and it's pretty devastating.

BORENSTEIN: Yeah, in the neighborhoods, yeah.

HOLT: And we have to change the education system. Our biggest problem that we're gonna have in years to come is we have these young professionals like yourself, people going to school, living and working in Midtown… What happens when it's time to raise a family? And you'll say, "where does my kid go to school?" Now, I send my son to Cranbrook. I spend $20,000 a year for him to go to school. Now, would it make more sense to move to a nice area in the suburbs that has a nice school system? And I spend that money? That's what they're gonna have to come up with.

BORESNTEIN: Yeah, I know a lot of our professors here live in the Ann Arbor area, or…

HOLT: There you go, yeah, I mean, when you get a family and you want your kid to be able to ride their bike where you don't have o stand on the porch and say, "Don't go past two houses."

BORENSTEIN: Yep.

HOLT: When I was a kid, you got on your bike, you'd ride for days.

BORESNTEIN: yeah

HOLT: We have to challenge that, we have to do something with the K-12 system here.

BORENSTEIN: Make it a livable, drivable, walkable neighborhood here

HOLT: Livable, and you have to do it. You have to do something with the education system here. It'd be great if the Mayor takes over the K-12 system.

BORENSTEIN: Yeah, perhaps.

HOLT: It's a wreck right now.

BORENSTEIN: I know it, yeah.

HOLT: But we're lucky. Midtown with all these young professionals, so is Downtown with Dan Gilber's doing it.

BORENSTEIN: There is rapid change.

HOLT: But once the family comes, you know, it's the infrastructure will still need a lot of work. I don't see people in the neighborhoods feel that they're forgotten in part of this transformation, it hasn't gotten to them yet.

BORENSTEIN: Yet. I think is the key word, though.

HOLT: Yet. Now we could, I talk stats in my compstat, I have this big stat, and the community people tell me, "well, we know what's going on, we don't have to look at the stats. We know if it's safe or not safe." I say, "That's what I really like about my meetings. That the prosecutor Ken Worthy says, I don't want to see your stats, they don't mean anything to me; crime is under reported. And she's right. People are in despair, their house is broken into, they don't have insurance, you call the police it takes them two hours to come or not come at all. Why do you report it?

BORENSTEIN: Right.

HOLT: Are they gonna catch anybody? No. Do they show you any compassion when they show up? Your name, social security number, just send us a list at this number, you have it-bye.

BORENSTEIN: Right.

HOLT: What kind of compassion is that? That's why I try to show the officers here, you gotta show some concern. If somebody's been robbed, they reported it a day later-put them in the car, still ride them around, see if they see anybody they recognize. Put them in the car when you go the corner store and say, "Do you see somebody matching this description?" Show them that you care.

BORENSTEIN: Right.

HOLT: You know.

BORENSTEIN: Instead of just taking a couple of notes…

HOLT: Take a couple notes, see you later.

BORENSTEIN: Yeah. It's a big difference.

HOLT: A big difference.

BORENSTEIN: Little effort, big difference.

HOLT: You know, they got to believe in you or buy into what you're doing or it won't happen.

BORENSTEIN: Yeah.

HOLT: That's why crime is under reported.

BORENSTIEN: Yeah.

1:22:32

HOLT: People come in the city expecting their cars are gonna get broken into. Say, "Oh, I'm going home."

BORENSTEIN: Yep, no, you're right.

HOLT: But that will change. I mean, everything starts at the top and it goes down. So with strong leadership I think we'll see the change.

BORENTEIN: Yeah well, I saw that difference first hand last year.

HOTL: Good.

BORENSTEIN: You know, when I had to reach out to your department myself, with you know, I had that case with a student following me…

HOLT: Yeah well we still get that, it's a big issue we're working on. We take it very seriously.

BORENSTEIN: And he had mental health issues and your officers took him in, got him help, got him to a hospital and he started treatment, and you guys made me feel safe and supported.

HOLT: We do not let them back on campus, we do a lot of persona non grata. If you do any threatening behavior we'll give you a letter and you cannot come back on campus.

BORENSTEIN: No, it all resolved really, I was very impressed.

HOLT: Good. Good. I mean, it's a very serious matter here.

BORENSTEIN: And it is. Yeah. Very frightening, and I felt safe, I got walked around campus by your officers, you know. It was, and everyone seemed very well-informed about psychological issues, you know.

HOLT: And you know, they key- some things we can't control, like the lighting.

BORENSTEIN: Oh yes

HOTL: I mean, Cass Avenue is pitch dark, I drive by at night I just cringe. I say, "I can't even see who's walking o the street!"

BORENSTEIN: Yeah, it is a problem.

HOLT: That's a city issue that the University, they say this'll all be done by the end of the year, the lighting will be here, but just it's uh…

BORENSTEIN: I have heard that.

HOLT: I've put a lot of requests in, "can I have portable lighting?" But I can't get that kind of resources. I understand the University gets some money from the state, I go to foundations to try to get a lot of money, but it's quite a struggle.

BORENSTEIN: Now, the campus is well lit, I mean…

HOLT: Yeah, but I need to do something about Cass, and people park all over.

BORENSTEIN: Right.

HOLT: I preach safewalk, but I still can't get that many people to call.

BORENSTEIN: Right. A lot of my students, cause I taught a night class in the winter semester and a lot of my students kept saying, "Oh, I keep meaning to do that but I don't know the numbers."

HOTL: Yeah.

BORENSTEIN: It's amazing

HOLT: And the international students, that's another tough group to get to, cause they don't normally interact with the police.

BORENSTEIN: Right. No, you're absolutely right.

HOLT: Chinese students never call you.

BORENSTEIN: No kidding?

HOLT: Yeah, that's why I was real happy when I hired a couple of Chinese officers to converse with them, they just don't call you, they're a very focused group, when they come here from another country. They're here for one reason, they come to get that degree and they're gone.

BORENSTEIN: Also depending on the area they come from, I mean, police are…

HOLT: Police are very brutal, they do not trust police.

BORENSTEIN: And look what's going on right now in Hong Kong with the student protests.

HOLT: Yeah, they don't like police, they don't trust police. I imagine we have quite a few of them, victims of crime, they're just not going to report it.

BORENSTEIN: Certainly. Yeah, well, a lot of people from other nations where the police are untrustworthy.

HOLT: Oh yeah, I understand. And we try to break that barrier, but it's… I just tell my officers- the foreign kids will meet and they'll walk in groups. I just tell my officers, first I said follow them, but then they become paranoid. I say no, just, now we keep out eye on them with the camera.

BORENTEIN: Well, that's a good idea, it's your job to look after them, even if they don't want to be looked after. So..

HOLT: Absolutely. Absolutely. If they're a victim of crime they're not going to court. Even if we catch the guy, they're just not doing that.

BORENTEIN: It's a tough job.

HOLT: Yeah, we keep working on it, so…

BORENTEIN: Well thank you so much.

HOLT: OK!

BORENSTEIN: I've taken up a whole lot of your time.

HOLT: Not a problem at all!