

Female voice: A listener note: This episode contains audio of a police shooting.

Theatrical male voice: Every day we commit to giving our best

Narrator Eleanor Klibanoff: This is a recruitment video the Louisville Metro Police Department put out a few years back —

Theatrical male voice: We train to protect this city.

Narrator: Honestly, it looks more like a scene from Law and Order. It's really polished, and super intense.

Theatrical male voice: We hope for the best, but prepare for the worst.

Narrator: In the video, there's an Amber alert out for a missing child — and it's all hands on deck. Police dogs yank their handlers across a wooded field.

Theatrical male voice: It takes a team to search for the truth.

Narrator: An LMPD speedboat slices through the Ohio River, before divers take to the water. There are helicopters, and officers jumping into armored vehicles in military-style fatigues. Blue and red lights spin, sirens wail as police cars race down a darkened street.

Theatrical male voice: We're proud to go where others will not.

Narrator: Finally, the officers bust down the door of a house with a battering ram — without knocking or announcing themselves — and two skinny white guys flee as the officers yell —

OFFICERS IN VIDEO: Get on the ground ... Where's the girl?

Narrator: Next thing you know, the men are in custody and a Black officer is carrying a small girl out of the house. They're both smiling. The perfect end to another badass day with the Louisville Metro Police Department.

Theatrical male voice: We are Louisville Metro Police. [audio out]

Narrator: This video came out in 2016 — the same year Louisville was being honored on the national stage for their policing reform efforts. LMPD told the community that their officers were going to develop a guardian mindset, emphasize relationship building and procedural justice.

Narrator: But LMPD was struggling to recruit officers — so this video was pulling out the big guns — pun intended — highlighting the flashiest parts of the job.

Narrator: Years before this video was released, Dexter Pitts was sitting on his parents couch, watching TV, when he saw another LMPD recruitment commercial —

Dexter Pitts: I remember seeing the commercial, police officers riding ATVs, driving their squad cars, police officers on the river unit and fighting crime. I was just like, you know, something in me sparked for a second. I was like, you know, it might be kind of cool.

Narrator: Dexter Pitts is exactly the kind of person LMPD is trying to recruit. He's Black, and has family ties in the area. He grew up in a military family, and served in the Army himself. He says he was injured by an IED while overseas in Iraq, and when he returned, he wasn't entirely sure what was next.

Dexter Pitts: I have to find a new mission in life.

Narrator: He'd never considered a career in law enforcement before — but seeing LMPD in action piqued his interest. A little while later, he decided to become a police officer.

Dexter Pitts: That was probably the best decision I made. Because from the moment I put on that LMPD officer uniform, I just knew this was what I wanted to do and where I needed to be.

Narrator: He started out policing in the West End. He got to know the Barbecue Man —

Dexter Pitts: I used to go eat a hamburger from David McAtee on weekends all the time. I love David McAtee. He was a man in the community everybody looked up to, everybody loved; this man loved the police. I would try to pay Dave for the food. He would never let me pay.

Narrator: Dexter Pitts has another connection to David McAtee — through Will Pitts, who grew up with McAtee and was there the night he was killed. Will and Dexter are related — sort of. I better let Will explain.

Will Pitts (trailing off): You gotta ask my momma how — and all that — so with my granny and you know her brothers, right — she has the Pitts side, their pitts side is their pitts side, and our Pitts side... you know what I mean? We might see each other at family reunions.

Narrator: This is all very Louisville. Essentially: the Pitts' were related, but they weren't close. But they both had relationships with David McAtee. That was Dexter's favorite part of the job: building relationships with the people he met during his work.

Dexter Pitts: That is why I love being a police officer, because I just love people, because everybody has a story. I get to see their triumphs, their victories. But I also get to see their failures and how it not only affects them, but it affects the people around them in their community. And with me being in a position as a police officer, I can help kind of guide that person, help shape them and help mold them.

Narrator: That's on a good day. But not every day as a police officer is a good day. It's a tough job — long hours, lots of overtime, physically taxing. You're often the first person on the scene of a tragedy, and the last person anyone wants to see pulling up behind them with flashing lights.

Dexter Pitts: The one thing I've realized with this job is you love this job, but it does not love you back. This is an abusive relationship. It really is.

Narrator: And for decades, the police department in Louisville — like many cities — has made that job all the harder for its officers by focusing on crime-fighting tactics that burned trust and damaged their legitimacy in the eyes of the community.

Narrator: As a Black man, Dexter Pitts understood the historical reasons for the distrust between the Black community and the police, and he wanted to be part of the solution. So when 21st Century Policing was announced in Louisville, Dexter was excited. He thought it sounded like exactly the kind of police department he wanted to be a part of —

Dexter Pitts: When I think about 21st century policing, it's just another fancy term for saying old-school policing, where, guess what, you get out of your car, you walk into the store, you talk to somebody, you make friends with them, you go around the neighborhood...you talk to people, you shake hands with people. You use your discretion wisely.

Narrator: Dexter was optimistic about 21st Century Policing, and he had reason to be — the police chief, the Mayor, senior LMPD leaders were touting their commitment to reform.

Narrator: But meaningful change doesn't just come from the top. It comes from all the rest, the rank-and-file, the thousand-plus officers just like Dexter Pitts, who take to the streets every day. How those officers act means a lot more for the department's reputation than anything the chief can say.

Narrator: For LMPD to become the police department they claimed to want to be, they would have to be recruiting the best of the best, retaining experienced officers, and efficiently disciplining and removing problem ones.

Narrator: Unfortunately, over the course of decades, Louisville had created a system that did just the opposite — making reform nearly impossible — and leaving the most-policed communities in the crossfire.

Narrator: This is Dig, Season Two: The Model City, from the Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting and Newsy. I'm Eleanor Klibanoff.

Narrator: In June 2016, a man named Patrick Norton entered the LMPD basic training academy. He was trained on firearms, and policies and procedures, and how to make arrests — and he also got training on 21st century policing values, like procedural justice and police legitimacy.

Narrator: Norton is white. He was in his mid 20s when he joined the force. When he graduated from training, Norton was assigned to the West End.

Narrator: In his first year on the job, Norton was called out to a halfway house to deal with an allegedly intoxicated resident. The guy said his heart was racing and he wanted to go to the hospital. Norton's body camera was covered by his jacket, but captured the audio of the exchange —

BODY CAMERA/NORTON: So you're tripping. So you made the decision to take drugs.

MAN: *I didn't take no drugs.*

BODY CAMERA/NORTON: Listen, to trip and then to waste EMS' time by taking you to the hospital.

MAN: *I did not waste your time.*

BODY CAMERA/NORTON: No, you shut up and you listen to me. You think we're a taxi service or something?

Narrator: The guy insisted that he hadn't taken any drugs, but that someone gave him a laced Dr. Pepper. He also said someone was trying to kill him.

BODY CAMERA/NORTON: I do not care, listen, stop wasting everybody's time, we're going to make a decision right now. Where do you want to go? What's going on? Wayside? You want to go down— why don't you just leave then? Walk down the street? You can hide better that way.

Narrator: Norton's partner started yelling at the guy —

BODY CAMERA/NORTON'S PARTNER: "Shut up. Just shut up. [inaudible] Shut the fuck up.

Narrator: Norton chimes in —

BODY CAMERA/NORTON: Look at my eyes — oh my gosh. how much meth? [END]

Narrator: That's where Norton's video cuts off.

Narrator: But LMPD records show that Norton agreed to take the man to a shelter that provides addiction services. Norton didn't handcuff the man, or seatbelt him in. Once he was in the backseat of the car, Norton reported he began banging his head against the divider and the side windows. When they got to the shelter, Norton's body camera briefly turned on again —

MAN: *I'm suicidal*

BODY CAMERA/NORTON: It's called Wayside.

MAN: *Get me to jail, No, take me to jail.*

BODY CAMERA/NORTON: *Get out of my car, dude.*

MAN: *You have to take me to jail, I'm suicidal.*

Narrator: Soon after it was activated, Norton turned the camera off. His dash cam wasn't recording either. So there's no footage of this — but Norton later admitted that he got into the backseat of the cruiser with the man — and punched him two to three times.

Narrator: Norton didn't respond to our request for comment but LMPD's records indicate Norton then drove to the hospital, where he dropped the man off, unaccompanied, at the wrong entrance. The man ran into the hospital, screaming. Once he calmed down, he told a security guard he'd been assaulted by a police officer. Norton just left him there. He didn't tell his supervisor what happened or file the required use of force report. Instead, he went to his next assignment — guarding Christmas presents at a community center.

<<Music up>>

Narrator: When this incident came to light, LMPD's accountability system sprang to life. Perhaps *sprang* is the wrong word. LMPD's accountability system slowly groaned to life at its oftentimes glacial pace.

Narrator: First, Norton was investigated for criminal wrongdoing. Six months after the incident, the Jefferson County Attorney's office issued their decision. They had considered charging Norton with 4th Degree Assault and 2nd Degree Official Misconduct. But they ultimately declined to prosecute because they said the man didn't want to press charges and he wouldn't be a credible witness due to his drug use and the fact that he was exhibiting paranoid and delusional thinking.

Narrator: Then, Norton was investigated for potential violations of LMPD policy. More than seven months after the incident, investigators said they could not sustain an allegation that Norton violated the use of physical force policy, but they concluded he *had* violated a slew of others — from body camera use to appropriate action to seatbelts.

Narrator: The case then went to Police Chief Steve Conrad, who would decide on Norton's discipline. And that's where things hit a snag, because it sat there, on Conrad's desk, for almost a year, awaiting a decision.

Narrator: Conrad is no longer with the department and didn't respond to our request for comment. But we did sit down with his former deputy chief.

Michael Sullivan: My name's Michael Sullivan. I work for the Baltimore Police Department and I've been here for almost two years now. Came from Louisville, Kentucky, where I retired there in 2019 as the deputy chief.

Narrator: He says some disciplinary cases stayed open far longer than was advisable.

Michael Sullivan: There were times that the delay in discipline was very problematic.

Narrator: In Louisville, police officer discipline is governed by three documents — LMPD's own standard operating procedures; the city's collective bargaining agreement with the police union, and a state law, often called the police officers' bill of rights.

Narrator: There's one line in both the law and the contract that Sullivan says caused a lot of the delays. Sullivan didn't speak to Norton's case. But here's a hypothetical.

Michael Sullivan: You as a police officer are given a five-day suspension. And once that five day suspension goes on, a clock turns on. If you decide to appeal that discipline, an appeal has to be heard within 60 days.

Narrator: If an officer is suspended and appeals that decision, the city's Merit Board has 60 days to hold a hearing or the discipline can be dismissed. And Sullivan says —

Michael Sullivan: Discipline was almost consistently always appealed. No matter what the discipline was, once that discipline was handed down, there was going to be an appeal coming. You could count on it.

Narrator: So, he says, Conrad would dole out discipline strategically to avoid flooding the appeals system and potentially losing the ability to discipline officers.

Michael Sullivan: So if you have five people that have, what I would consider fairly minor discipline, one to five day suspension, you had to time that out. So you didn't go one on top of the other with the appeals.

Narrator: Dave Mutchler is currently the spokesperson for the River City Fraternal Order of Police, the city's police union. He was president of the union from 2010 to 2018. He says officers should be given protections to ensure the department is treating them fairly.

Dave Mutchler: Because of the nature of policing...they need to have representation and there needs to be a system for the officers to have due process, a right to defend themselves against complaints and a right to represent themselves in an investigation.

Narrator: But he disputes the idea that officers were quick to appeal. He says part of the problem was an overabundance of investigations that could have just been handled by a supervisor. And sometimes, he says appeals were symptoms of larger problems at the department.

Dave Mutchler: Sometimes officers are just fed up with the low morale, they're fed up with everything else, and they're just like, 'I'm just going to appeal. I don't care. Just to appeal...Nothing else is going right for me on this police department — Might as well appeal...' And that's kind of a sad thing when it gets to that point.

Narrator: Mutchler says, whatever the cause, these interminable investigations made it really hard for officers to learn from their mistakes and be better.

Dave Mutchler: If you're wanting me to change and understand that what I did was wrong in January of 2018, disciplining me for it in 2021, is probably not going to do that. I might not even remember what I did (chuckle) at that point, and I might have done it three or four more times.

Narrator: On that front, Sullivan agrees with Mutchler — these delays had real consequences.

Michael Sullivan: You have the negative of officers having that stress that hangs over them. And then you have officers that were truly bad apples that you might have been able to deal with earlier.

Narrator: Which brings us back to Officer Patrick Norton and the man he punched in the backseat of his police cruiser. Norton admitted to the policy violations he was charged with. In an interview with LMPD investigators, he said he'd just wanted to wrap up the call as soon as possible, didn't want to spend time on paperwork. He said he'd turned off his body camera because his partner was using what he called strong language, and he admitted to having a habit of turning off his dash camera.

Narrator: Despite all that, his case sat on Conrad's desk for 11 months, during which Norton was still out on the streets, policing the West End. In the middle of all this, he was actually investigated for another incident — a traffic stop where a prominent Black pastor accused him of racially-biased policing. The department found that he violated policies concerning body camera use and proper identification, but not biased law enforcement practices.

Narrator: But finally, almost two years after Norton got into the back of his patrol car and punched the man from the halfway house, Chief Conrad issued his verdict, writing in a memo — quote — “I cannot tolerate this type of conduct by an officer of the Louisville Metro Police Department. Your conduct demands your termination.”

Narrator: But then — he wasn't terminated. Instead, Norton was given a 20-day suspension. Let me just repeat that. Norton was going to be fired and instead, he got a 20-day suspension. He also signed an agreement saying he wouldn't appeal this already lessened discipline.

Narrator: Dave Mutchler, with the FOP, didn't speak to this case directly. But he said — this wasn't uncommon.

Dave Mutchler: A lot of times the chief's office and their legal advisers will come to the members and. ‘Listen, we think that you should be suspended for five days. But if you want to waive your appeal, we'll give you three days. That way you get your discipline. And we all don't have to go through this process.

Narrator: We sent LMPD details about what our investigation found about Norton. They didn't respond to that specifically, but said in a general statement that much of the department leadership from that time is no longer with the department.

Narrator: Former Deputy Chief Sullivan said these deals were part of navigating the restrictions of the disciplinary system —

Michael Sullivan: Because you have a negotiated settlement here that is non-appealable. But then truly that offense is at this level and should receive this level of punishment. But to be able to deal with the backlog that you have — it was that balancing act.

Narrator: After his lessened discipline was handed down — Patrick Norton returned to the streets of Louisville and to one of the most high-pressure, high-intensity jobs you can imagine.

Narrator: In just the next nine months, Norton would find himself in two different situations where he later said he felt his life was in danger — two different situations where he said he felt forced to fire his weapon — leaving one person wounded and another dead.

Narrator: About two months after Norton's suspension was handed down, in November 2019, a woman named Semone Stephenson Carter asked her son to run to the store for her.

Semone Stephenson Carter: I had gotten off work. And I had taken my mom to the doctor's. And then there was some other things that I was doing for my mom.

Narrator: Carter's son, Shelby Gazaway, had recently turned 32. He was a big guy, with an ever-changing hair style. He had no criminal record, was a proud member of Bates Memorial Church and his motorcycle group.

Semone Stephenson Carter: To know Shelby was to love Shelby.

Narrator: But that night in November 2019, he got in his mom's car and drove to the Kroger in Portland, a West End neighborhood along the river. Once he was

inside the grocery store, he got into a fight with another man. Surveillance footage shows Gazaway hit him, and the man pulled out a knife. After they wrestled, Gazaway pulled out his gun and fired multiple shots into the ceiling.

Narrator: Dozens of people called 911 and reported an active shooter inside the crowded grocery store. One of the officers who responded to the scene? Patrick Norton. He'd been reassigned out of the West End, but he was working overtime in this neighborhood. This is footage from his body camera.

Narrator: He and a partner arrived on the scene and got out of the car, guns drawn. Norton ran behind a pillar near the entrance of the store, and someone in the parking lot pointed out Gazaway — saying he's the one in red — walking away from the store.

[body camera footage captures officers discussing - 'You got your rifle? Yea.'

To a bystander: 'That him?'

Officer shouts: "Hey! Hey!" Followed by gunfire]

Narrator: Within 40 seconds of their arrival on the scene, Norton and his partner had fatally shot Shelby Gazaway.

Narrator: Gazaway's family has been trying to understand what happened in that 40 seconds ever since. Norton told internal investigators that when he showed up, Gazaway was "saunterin'" away from the scene with a gun in his hand. He said he shouted at Gazaway to get his attention, and then saw Gazaway's gun coming up. Norton said he and Gazaway exchanged gunfire. An internal investigation concluded that Gazaway shot first.

Narrator: Here's Sterling Gazaway, Shelby's sister.

Sterling Gazaway: Are they allowed to shoot at someone without identifying themselves? Are the police allowed to stand behind a pillar, shoot at someone several times and then ask that person to put down their gun?

Narrator: The short answer is — yes. An internal investigation and prosecutor eventually concluded that Norton's actions hadn't broken the law that night. But

that took months, during which the family waited to learn more about what happened that night. They assumed Norton was off the streets, awaiting the same information. But — he wasn't — which they found out only after Norton shot someone else while on duty.

BODY CAMERA/NORTON'S PARTNER: Hey man show me your hands. Come on bro.

Narrator: It was June 2nd, 2020, the day after David McAtee was killed. During the height of the protests, Patrick Norton was called out to the East End to deal with a man who had a history of mental illness and self-harm.

Narrator: Norton and his partner try to reason with the man, who has a gun.

<<audio>>

Narrator: The investigation later concluded, the man started to raise the gun towards the officers. Norton fired his weapon, shooting the man.

OFFICER ON BODY CAMERA: Get him

[gunshots follow]

Narrator: The man survived, which is why the police department hasn't released his name, and he ended up pleading guilty to wanton endangerment.

Narrator: Studies show the vast majority of law enforcement officers will never fire their weapons on the job. It's even more unusual for an officer to shoot more than once — Only five percent of officers nationwide have shot two or more people. Gazaway's mother and sister were shocked to learn about Norton's second incident.

Semone Stephenson Carter: We thought that he was still on leave until the case was closed. So when we realized that this Officer Patrick Norton is still out, doing whatever he —

Sterling Gazaway: [cutting in] shooting people! —

Semone Stephenson Carter: shooting people...that's something that really just bothers me, not necessarily as a mother, but as a person, period.

Narrator: Norton wasn't just returned to active duty while the investigation was still open. He was nominated for a commendation for shooting Gazaway — while still under investigation for the same shooting.

Narrator: Norton was eventually cleared of any criminal wrongdoing in both shootings.

Narrator: In Patrick Norton's first four years as a police officer, he was under some sort of investigation for a total of three of those years. He remains on the force.

<<music up>>

Narrator: No one I've talked to is happy with how LMPD's disciplinary system is running right now — not the union, not department leadership, not officers, not the community. So — why not change it?

Narrator: Some of this is enshrined in the FOP-backed state law, which is harder to change. But the city negotiates new union contracts every five years, which would be their opportunity to change aspects of this system that aren't in the law.

Narrator: We looked at all contracts going back to when LMPD was formed out of a city-county merger in 2003. In that very first contract, the city agreed to a slew of restrictions on how and when they could discipline officers, restrictions that haven't substantively changed since. Sullivan says removing things from the contract is not so easy.

Michael Sullivan: **If you're going to take something away, you better be prepared to give something in that whole process.**

Narrator: Unfortunately, what unions often want for their members is the one thing a city like Louisville has been least willing to provide.

Michael Sullivan: **Over the years, many of these management rights were bargained away...because on the other side, on the fiscal side of the equation, there wasn't much for cities to be able to give.**

Narrator: Looking back at the department since it was created in 2003, you can see that the “fiscal side of the equation” stays...basically stagnant.

Narrator: For most of the last decade, the department has had roughly the same number of officers as it was budgeted for back in 2004, even as homicides have surged and the city’s population has crept up. And for much of the past 15 years, officer starting salaries didn’t even keep pace with inflation.

Narrator: Even with a recent pay increase, new officers in Louisville are just barely making what they would have made in 2004, if you take inflation into account. And they’re still paid much less than in similar cities. Take Cincinnati, just up the highway. They are budgeted for nearly as many officers as LMPD currently has — to serve less than half the number of people. And their officers start at just over \$65,000 a year — a third more than in Louisville.

Narrator: Mayor Greg Fischer is a Democrat who’s overseen these negotiations since he was elected in 2010. He acknowledges that cities like Louisville have struggled to make changes to union contracts if they can’t offer better pay or benefits.

Mayor Greg Fischer: Clearly, that has been the practice in American policing over the years.

Narrator: In Louisville, Fischer signed off on the most recent five-year union contract in 2013. It expired in 2018, but negotiations stalled and it was extended till 2020. That 2013 contract didn’t substantively change the disciplinary system.

Narrator: And it raised officer starting salaries at a rate that didn’t even keep pace with inflation. Fischer says this is just the reality of balancing a city budget.

Mayor Greg Fischer: We are lean as a government in our taxes per capita than other cities that we compete with. So I would always like to have more money. But so the question then becomes, you know, how do you balance with what you have, you know, with public safety, with libraries, with trash pickup, with economic development, and all these other activities?

Narrator: Police budgets have long been a fraught topic — even more so recently, as the Defund the Police movement has gained popular traction. LMPD makes up the largest portion of the city budget, by a huge margin, so giving officers raises isn't always politically popular.

Narrator: We've also learned that, on Fischer's watch, the police department passed up on other opportunities, outside the union contract, to hold officers accountable.

Narrator: Here's an example: in that 21st Century Policing workbook, LMPD said they were going to implement an officer early warning system. That's a hugely effective tool to track officer activity — if they have a certain number of concerning incidents, their supervisor is notified.

Narrator: This helps a department identify potential trouble spots early.

Narrator: Maybe someone's going through a divorce and they need counseling before they're back out in heated situations. Maybe a new officer has a surprising number of use of force reports and needs to be sent back to training. Maybe someone has a string of small infractions that wouldn't trigger an investigation — until you look at the pattern of misconduct.

Narrator: LMPD knew an early warning system was important — in fact, they've been claiming, internally and to the public, that they had one in place — for years.

Narrator: But...we looked closely and — well — they never actually activated the early warning system.

MALE VOICE: Uh, you have an early warning system at the LMPD, right?

CHIEF CONRAD: Sort of.

That's Chief Steve Conrad, sighing deeply during a 2017 deposition. The department was sued after an officer with a long record of use-of-force incidents shot and killed a man.

Attorney Al Gerhardstein [Ger-hard-STINE] wanted to know why the officer hadn't been flagged before the shooting.

Al Gerhardstein: “What do you mean by, you ‘sort of’ have an early warning system?”

Chief Conrad: We don’t have one that is operational. It is referred to in our policy. There are things that have been in that policy since it was first developed that talked about an early warning system. It has never been operational.

Narrator: A spokesperson for the police department told us they never activated the early warning system due to concerns from department leadership — and the police union.

Narrator: The debate was around what this early warning system was really about — was it about identifying officers who need more support for their mental and physical health? Or identifying officers who need to be disciplined?

Narrator: Former union president Mutchler said they felt the department wasn’t prioritizing the right things.

Dave Mutchler: “Are we talking about, ‘We’re going to say we’re talking about officer wellness, but we’re going to end up in some sort of disciplinary measures’?”

Narrator: So — no early warning system. Officer safety and wellness was part of 21st Century Policing — this idea that everyone is safer when officers feel well-rested, adequately resourced and supported by the department. It’s one of the pillars of 21st Century Policing that LMPD completed the fewest recommendations in. That, coupled with the low salaries and lack of accountability, really started to wear on a lot of officers. Like Dexter Pitts.

Dexter Pitts: “I love this job. I love this profession. It is my pride and honor to be in this uniform.”

Narrator: But if he could make more money without all the stress and worry?

Dexter Pitts: Would I leave? Yeah. Not because I want to. But for my family. Because I want to be able to provide for my family financially and be there at the games, be there for the recitals and all that stuff.

Narrator: Over the years, Dexter watched officers flee for suburban police departments, where they could make more money for less stress. The FOP did a salary analysis that found LMPD ranked in the 20th percentile of police officer salaries among nearby departments.

Narrator: That leaves the department understaffed — which means the remaining officers end up working more overtime — either because the department needs them, or because they want to earn more money. That's not just tough for the officers. It has real impacts for the people they police, too.

Dexter Pitts: **If I make more money, guess what? I don't have to work as much overtime, which means I get to be at home more and rest more and enjoy my life. So when I come to work, I'm fresh. That's what I would love to have happen.**

Narrator: All of this — the low pay, the loosened discipline, the recruitment and retention issues — it chews up and spits out officers.

Dexter Pitts: **I feel like we have lowered our standards.**

Narrator: LMPD has definitely lowered its requirements — In 2016, when LMPD was facing recruitment shortages and put out that dramatic commercial, they stopped requiring at least two years of college and now just require a high-school diploma.

Dexter Pitts: **I'd rather work with a small crew of reliable, good, solid people than have all our spots filled with officers that aren't dependable, that I don't trust, that are going to corrode this badge and bring shame upon this profession.**

Narrator: Dexter Pitts loved LMPD. In his eyes, they were doing so much right. He says every day he was impressed by his coworkers and proud to put on that badge. But man — it was a grind. So in 2018, when he was offered a chance to leave — he took it.

Narrator: He first went to work for the Border Patrol. But he soon left that job and got hired at a small police department out in Arizona.

Dexter Pitts: They treated me like a king. They gave me good equipment. They paid me decent. And everybody in the town loved us...Everywhere I'd go, people would buy me meals, people would wave at me with the whole hand, not just the one finger.

Narrator: Dexter describes the town as a small, pro-police retirement community — just about as far from the West End of Louisville as a person could get.

Narrator: He left — but the problems facing that area of the city remained. Homicides had leveled off in Louisville from that record-setting 2016, but the department was still doing maximum enforcement in parts of the West End. They were still struggling to recruit and retain officers. The FOP contract expired in 2018, and they couldn't agree on a new one, so the city just extended the old one with the same low salaries and disciplinary restrictions.

Narrator: That impacts officers, as I've laid out. But it also really impacts the people the police interact with — and the relationship between those two.

Narrator: This is what Chief Conrad said they were trying to instill in their department, way back at those community forums in 2016 —

Dexter Pitts: That authority comes from you, and we have got to make sure that you feel like we have a legitimate reason to have that authority.

Narrator: Police have a lot of power — to arrest you, to take away your freedom, to use deadly force. But as Conrad said, that power comes from the people they police. And they were about to find out what happens when the people take that power back.

Narrator: Because in 2019, three years after being recognized at the White House for their policing reform efforts, LMPD reorganized its violent crime units once again. They took that 9th Mobile Division, known for aggressive traffic stops, and combined it with their Narcotics division.

Narrator: The new unit was called the Criminal Interdiction Division. It was that unit that burst through Breonna Taylor's door — shot and killed her — and set off a movement unlike anything this city had ever seen.

[Montage: Conrad: We had a critical incident involving one of our officers who was shot... Crowd chants: SAY HER NAME BREONNA TAYLOR... Police in megaphone: THIS IS AN UNLAWFUL ASSEMBLY... Male voice: Make no mistake about it. The police can turn a protest into a riot.]

Narrator: Next time, on Dig.

Female voice: This season of Dig was reported by Eleanor Klibanoff of the Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting and Carrie Cochran, Karen Rodriguez, Maia Rosenfeld and Maren Machles (MAIR-en MACK-less) of Newsy. It was produced by Eleanor Klibanoff. It was edited by Kate Howard, Laura Ellis and Ellen Weiss. Data reporting was by Rosie Cima (Chee-mah) and Mark Fahey (FAY-hee). We received production assistance from Rip Rinehart and Chris Julin (JOO-lin). Field producing was by Zach Cusson (KOO-sahn), Mai Nolasco-Carranza (MY No-LASS-koe Cah-RAHN-zah), Tyler Franklin and Chelsae Ketchum (CHEL-see KETCH-um). Kojin Tashiro created our theme music, with assistance from Ryan Marsh. Fact checking is by Kelvin Bias. Alex Cooper is our intern. We received support for this project from The Fund for Investigative Journalism.