Improve training to change the police culture about race

In order to change police department culture regarding race relations, chiefs must change the training that contributes to that culture.

Police leaders at the conference said that in many departments, trainers and senior officers are reluctant to talk about racial issues in policing, and this resistance is passed on to new recruits, contributing to sometimes uneasy relationships between the police and the community.

As Chief Harold Medlock of the Fayetteville (North Carolina) Police Department explained, "I'm reminded of what Kevin Gilmartin¹⁹ says, that police agencies spend a lot of money doing psychological background checks on people to make sure that we're hiring the most 'normal' people out there. Then we put them in a training academy and turn them completely abnormal. We change who they are through the academy process."

For Dallas Police Chief David Brown, changing the training culture meant replacing his entire police academy staff. Brown's goal was to rebuild the Dallas Police Department's culture from the ground up, and to capitalize on the openness to discussions about race that new recruits bring into the academy.

"The millennials that we're hiring don't have the same types of biases that the older generation sometimes has," Chief Brown said. "They're much more likely to absorb this. Our twenty-somethings will accept these types of discussions and concepts. So it's a great time for leaders to start bending the curve in our culture by having these conversations."