

ROLES:

Jacob: Host

Jorge: Host

Dylan: Crime analyst

Jayden: Interview, Editor

Jonah: Psychologist

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SCRIPT:

Intro

[Jacob] Welcome to IN THE DARK. We are your hosts for today. Jacob-

[Jorge] and Jorge! Today we have some special guests- Dylan, Jonah, and Jayden.

[Jacob] I'll let Jorge start us off.

Intro Music

Section 1

[Jorge] To start off this special episode, I'd like to introduce our special guest, Dylan Ross. He is a crime analyst that has worked with numerous podcasts and law agencies to combat improper policing.

[Dylan] Well thank you for bringing me on for one of your episodes today. I'm normally quite busy but I like to lend a helping hand. Podcasts like this one are great opportunities to keep the public informed of how dutiful their local law enforcement really are.

[Jorge] Well now that you've brought up our subject matter for today, I'd like to pick your brain on a few things.

[Dylan] Sure, shoot away.

[Jorge] It's no secret that systemic police corruption is alive and well in the 21st century. Thus, there's a popular belief that it's a necessity for modern day citizens to be aware of their rights and strategies to protect themselves from corrupt officers/departments. Can I get your input on this perceived threat of corruption in police departments?

[Dylan] I believe that in this time brotherhood between officers has been flourishing, but it has proved to be a double-edged sword to public safety. Police have used their control of information to manipulate the public into following a narrative that supports their officers' actions, with no regard to any unlawful actions that may have been committed.

[Jorge] This claim may be a lot for the average civilian outside your line of work to accept. I mean no one wants to believe that they were manipulated by the police at some point. Do you have any recent cases to support your declaration?

[Dylan] Unfortunately, I have the perfect case prepared that happens to have been within the first month of this year. The case of the fatal shooting of 16-year-old Konoa Wilson perpetrated by Officer Daniel Gold of San Diego Police Department on January 28th. I'll clarify that the focus of this analysis will be on the response of the police department to the scandal.

[Jorge] Sounds interesting. The floor is yours.

[Dylan] Initially the police were very tightly lipped and used various investigation buffers to delay revealing information to the public. The first bit of information the San Diego Police Department released to the public claimed that the officer in question shot an armed teen running from a reported active shooting. Now what is your take on that bit of info?

[Jorge] While the event is unfortunate and no child deserves to be fatally shot, it's hard to question the officer's judgement when guns are involved.

[Dylan] I essentially echoed the manipulation used by police that made you initially sympathize with Officer Gold. I told you enough truth that made you come to a favorable conclusion for the police. However, this narrative was heavily debunked when the San Diego PD was forced to release the bodycam footage nearly a month later.

[Jorge] The police department must've had something big to hide if they held on to the footage for as long as they did.

[Dylan] The footage clearly showed Konoa being shot within a second of running into the officer's sight with no chance to comply with a demand. It's also ironically clearly visible that Konoa's weapon was concealed and couldn't have been seen by the officer before he opened fire on the teen.

[Jorge] This is a very different picture from what I was initially led to believe with the information you first told me.

[Dylan] I chose this case because it is similar to the way the Stoughton Police Department handled the Sandra Birchmore case.

[Jorge] Ahh, because both Departments ignored incriminating video evidence in favor of defending their own officers.

[Dylan] The big question is how do two police departments stationed on complete opposite coast of the US suffer from the same issue of corruption? Corruption within the police force isn't limited by time or location. It is a systemic issue that arises whenever officers believe that their brotherhood and connections within law enforcement make them an exception to the law.

Section 2 – Jonah

[Jacob] "Two different departments. Two coasts. One pattern. It's not just policy failure—it's silence. But what drives that silence? Why would officers who know the truth choose to stay quiet?"

"To help unpack the psychology behind this code of silence, we're joined by Jonah, who's been looking into what researchers and whistleblowers have revealed about this culture from the inside."

[Jonah] "Thanks. So, what everybody refers to as the Blue Wall of Silence isn't really an agreement, this is more of a mindset. Officers don't necessarily stay silent because they agree with what happened. Sometimes, they do so because they believe everybody else will do the same. Researchers like Dr. Ivković found that this belief—other people will stay silent—is one of the strongest predictors that an individual will also stay silent. It turns silence into a circle. Once that culture has been built, it sustains itself."

[Jacob] "Is it less of a rule and more of an assumed expectation then?"

[Jonah] "Right. And the cost of speaking out is high. Other research, for example, by Torres and Curiel, shows that officers who speak out are ostracized or even pushed out of their own agencies. They are labeled 'rats'—a label not only that taints reputations, but terminates careers. It creates a very dangerous place. Officers know what the right thing is—to but fear of retaliation makes silence safer."

[Jacob] "That makes sense. But what about personal loyalty? Does that enter into it too?"

[Jonah] "Absolutely. Look at the kind of things that officers see—high-risk calls, late-night shifts, traumatic scenes. All of those have the potential to create deep emotional bonds, or trauma bonds. In that environment, loyalty is often needed to survive. And when it's your partner—someone you've entrusted your life to—it is easier to justify keeping silent. Not because you're comfortable with the offense, but because you feel like you're protecting someone who protected you."

"And that's not just theory. In Sandra Birchmore's instance, grooming and abuse took place in a department-affiliated youth program. That kind of misbehavior can't be ignored."

"And These weren't one-time incidents. They happened out in the open—over years. That says something. It implies that other officers likely knew. and chose not to say anything. Because that loyalty, that fear of being the one to talk. took precedence over justice."

[Jacob] "So what started out as a code of silence meant to keep each other safe in dangerous situations. ends up keeping abusers safe. And people like Sandra end up paying the price."

Section 3

[Jorge] What role did the media play in how this case unfolded? What happens when a case doesn't make headlines? With Jayden here, we'll reflect on how the media shapes narratives.

[Jayden] The silence we call the Blue Wall. It's more than a code of loyalty within the police departments, it's a shield that hides corruption and shuts out the people it's supposed to serve.

[Jorge] In this final segment, we'll revisit similar cases like Konoa Wilson's and explore whether federal intervention is the only path to accountability.

[Jayden] If we look back at the Konoa Wilson case, it shows the misinformation that officers try to cover up and the lack of accountability, until external forces step in. It took outside pressure from social media movements and lawyers to force accountability. This cycle is often enabled by the Blue Wall.

[Jorge] This begs the question: How many other cases are overlooked because they don't gain media traction? How many families are grieving in silence while the system fails them?

[Jayden] The way the media portrays cases like Sandra Birchmore plays a crucial role in whether justice is served. Her death was initially ruled a suicide without a deeper investigation. It wasn't until independent journalists took a closer look at the truth that Sandra was able to receive justice for her untimely death.

[Jorge] How did the media shape the public's perception of this case? And why did it take federal intervention for accountability? And more importantly, why does it take national attention to get a proper investigation?

[Jayden] The blue wall of silence is not just protecting officers, but the system that allows this corruption to thrive. They manipulated Sandra Birchmore and tried to conceal the truth when they were supposed to protect and serve. They deserve accountability! If the justice system can be and will be manipulated by those in power, this will repeatedly fail the most vulnerable. These are the words of the Birchmore family.

"Pay attention to your children—and to the people in their lives, no matter their job or status. It's not always easy to see the signs. Sandra and her baby were taken by the very people we teach our children to trust. Please, learn from our grief. Cherish life. Question relationships. And above all... always hold them close."

[Jorge] By listening to the statements from Sandra's family, you hear the pain and frustration, but also a warning: that tragedy can come at the hands of those in positions of authority, the very people we're taught to trust.

[Jayden] It's not just about a single tragedy; it's a pattern. This case, like many others, shows why challenging the Blue Wall is necessary. We can risk allowing the silence to continue with more victims, more families torn apart, and more cases of truth being buried. What can be done to ensure justice? And how will we hold law enforcement accountable?

Closing

[Jacob] The Blue Wall of Silence protects not just individuals, but a culture of unaccountability. Officers become hesitant to report wrongdoings by their peers, fearing what could possibly happen to them in return for their actions. At the same time, this mentality/silence allows for people with bad intentions to operate unchecked, undermining the integrity of law enforcement and the justice system.

[Jorge] The slightest form of misinformation provided to the media can really change the course of how something is perceived and how reliable that source can be. The Birchmore family finding out that she died from suicide in her own apartment is a lot to deal with, but then figuring out it was homicide opens even more questions. These are the dangers in the blue wall of silence, knowing that this could be possible to any case, not knowing if justice could be properly served could become difficult for society to handle

[Jacob] Thanks for joining us on this special episode. If you enjoyed the episode, please be sure to like and subscribe so we can continue making content you enjoy

[Jorge] And see you next time on "*In the Dark*".