

Chief Carmen Best

Former Chief of Police in Seattle, WA

Diversity and Inclusion. As the first African-American Chief of Police at the Seattle Police Department, Carmen Best began her position at Seattle's top policing job by quickly recruiting more than 40 officers of color – recognizing the need to fix the problem that the police force was significantly less diverse than the demographic makeup of the city. In this talk, she shares her lessons-learned on how to create a more diverse workforce, as well as demonstrates to audiences the importance of including multiple viewpoints and backgrounds at any organization. And according to Chief West, “In many ways, I represent what the future can hold, so I’m very proud of that.”

Leadership Lessons-Learned: Leading Through Crisis, Conflict, and Challenging Times. For nearly 30 years, Chief Best was a champion and leader of reforms, guiding the Seattle police department through times of uncertainty and crisis. When she first took her role as Chief of Police in 2018, she immediately got to work diversifying the force and regularly meeting with community leaders, and by 2019 achieved a decreased major crime rate. Chief Best demonstrated her leadership principles through the end of her tenure in 2020, resigning when the City Council's decisions did not align with her values. At Best's retirement, Seattle Mayor Jenny Dunkin said, “We had the chief that not only believes in the importance of reimagining policing, she was the person, and probably still will be the person, that helps lead the way for our nation.” In this presentation, Best shares her experience leading the force through these challenging and often polarizing times, as well as her proven strategies for effective, values-based leadership, including fostering an engaging environment of community, collaboration, trust, and diverse perspectives.

Black in Blue: Lessons on Leadership, Breaking Barriers, and Racial Reconciliation. Former Seattle police chief Carmen Best spent 28 years transforming the Seattle police force from an institution where minorities and women historically struggled to succeed to a force more representative of the city's diversity. The story of her ascension to police chief in a predominantly White law enforcement culture and how she set out to drive change is an inspiring masterclass – offering guiding principles that people in all industries can apply as they seek to lead transformation and elevate diversity and inclusion in their organizations. In this talk, Chief Best draws from her lessons learned being Black in blue to teach the core qualities and mindset needed to persevere, sharing how groups can become a force for changing elements of workplace culture and leadership that are detrimental to an organization's success.