

Chief Carmen Best

Former Chief of Police in Seattle, WA

The first African American woman to hold the top policing job in Seattle, Washington, Chief Carmen Best (Ret.) served with the Seattle Police Department for 28 years. In 2018, Best was promoted to Chief of Police, a job she called “a dream of a lifetime,” managing approximately 2,000 sworn and civilian employees. Best quickly began efforts to diversify the police force, which had long been less diverse than the city, recruiting more than 40 new officers of color.

As communities throughout America grapple with how to better serve and protect their citizens while addressing racism and revamping policing procedures, Chief Best was seen as a champion and leader of reforms. She regularly met with community leaders and achieved a decreased major crime rate in 2019. In the same year, Chief Best received the “Vision from the Mountaintop” award from Urban Impact for her commitment to justice and community. Among her many accomplishments as Chief of Police was her creation of the Collaborative Police Bureau, which encourages community partnerships; creating the first in the nation first-responder COVID-19 onsite testing; and record-breaking women and diversity hiring and recruitment. In August of 2020, she announced her resignation as a result of the City Council’s decision to downsize the department by almost 100 officers. 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.”

Exclusively represented by [Leading Authorities speakers bureau](#), Chief Best speaks on diversity, inclusion, and leadership lessons learned guiding a police department during times of crisis. “In many ways, I represent what the future can hold, so I’m very proud of that,” said Best, “the challenge of being a police chief in America is great no matter who you are.”

A U.S. Army veteran and graduate of Western Illinois University and Northeastern University, Chief Best furthered her education completing the Senior Management Institute for Police, the FBI National Executive Institute (NEI), the FBI National Academy, the Criminal Justice Executive Leadership Academy, and the Major Cities Chiefs Association Police Executive Leadership Institute. Prior to becoming Chief of Police, she served as Deputy Chief, overseeing the Patrol Operations, Investigations, and Special Operations Bureaus, as well as the Community Outreach section. Currently, Best is the director of global security risk operations at Microsoft where she is responsible for the global virtual security operations team, intelligence, executive threat intel, special asset security risk operations, and security program management.

Chief Best has been recognized with dozens of awards for her contributions to community engagement, public safety, gender equity, diversity, and inclusion. Most notably, she received the “Newsmaker of the Year” award from the *Seattle Black Press* and was awarded the prestigious Ellis Island Medal of Honor, dedicated to recognizing individuals who selflessly contribute to society and uphold the ideals of America. Additionally, she received the FBI National Executive Institute Associates (NEIA) National Law Enforcement Ethics Award, the Leadership Award from the Major Cities Chief’s Association, and was named the “Influential Woman of 2020” by the *Puget Sound Business Journal*. Most recently, Chief Best was recognized with the “Women Can Do” award from the Honorary Consul of Sweden and is a 2022 recipient of the “Woman of the Year” award from the National Police Defense Foundation. She was also nominated for an Emmy Award for her work on public safety announcements “Safe in the Sound.”

After nearly 30 years of service, Chief Best is currently an NBC News and MSNBC contributor and a law enforcement analyst for NBC’s Seattle affiliate KING 5. She serves on the Leadership Council Chair for the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) Seattle and is a member of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE) and the National Latino Police Officers Association (NLPOA). Additionally, Chief Best is a board member for United Way of King County, a member of the St. Jude Advisory Council for Seattle, Vice-Chair of Exploring for the Learning for Life National Executive Board and serves on the National Law Enforcement Exploring Committee and the Seattle University Criminal Justice Advisory Committee. She recently served as the Chair of the Human and Civil Rights Committee (HCRC) for the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the IACP Board of Directors, and co-chair of the Law Enforcement Immigration Task Force (LEITF) – all groups she remains affiliated with. Chief Best is the author of *Black in Blue: Lessons on Leadership, Breaking Barriers, and Racial Reconciliation*, which teaches readers the core qualities and mindset to persevere and elevate their careers, as well as challenge elements of culture and leadership that are detrimental to an organization’s vision.