In other words, how kids are viewed and treated in the classroom is directly related to what happens when those young people are grown-up—or just perceived as grown-up—on the streets. Stereotypes, when unchecked, are threats. Implicit bias, left unchallenged, is dangerous. To humans, we are always assets because we are human. But to law enforcement, you are a threat because you are Black. You’re not smart because you are poor. You’re not able because you are a woman. You’re not innocent because you are regarded as a minority. The only exception is our Black brother-in-blue begins much earlier than the police academy. That kind of bias, I believe, is why the senseless killing of Philando Castile happens when those young people are grown-up—or just perceived as grown-up—on the streets.

The NUA training helps us understand the truth that these Black and Brown youth have talents, and are worthy of our investment. We owe it to Philando Castile to want that growth—and to do everything we can do to go through sensitivity training before hitting the streets. Imagine if we were all exposed to NUA training. It’s been so important for us to have someone to go to and say, “These are the things that have worked to help us grow.” We could help flip the script on implicit bias, even if it happens in the police academy, and help find a way to correct that kind of bias.

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We have students who actually live right there where it happened,” Otto says. “We have students related to both parties.” Students were angry, frightened, confused, uncertain, sad. Needless to say, the mood in the school this past year was a challenge to break through. Consider that their ignorance will cause them to fail a child, and instead they “lean in” to engage. Through culturally responsive pedagogy we help those who lack exposure to kids of color in the classroom. The teachers become less fearful to see the culture that the children bring to the classroom as a strength and not a weakness.

Imagine if the police officer who shot Philando had been exposed to that kind of pedagogy, that kind of training where they understand the truth that these Black and Brown youth do have talents, and are worthy of our investment. That’s part of what the NUA is trying to do for teachers, administrators and any adult who can help them grow. They are trying to do it for police, for judges, for hiring managers anywhere where they can help.

The study found that survey participants believe that black girls need less nurturing, need less protection, need to be supported and comforted less, are more independent, know more about adult topics and know more about sex. The study was conducted by professor Phillip Goff in 2014 that found that black boys as young as 5 to 14 are viewed as less innocent than their white counterparts.

A study released Tuesday reveals what many of us already know: Black girls in the age range of 5-14 are viewed as less innocent than their white counterparts. A New York Times story about that so-called “friendly fire” shooting said the case “again underlines the disproportionate rates of punitive treatment in the education and juvenile-justice systems.”

Sensible asks, to be sure, but I have a hypothesis. I think that the kind of stereotyping that happens when those young people are grown-up—or just perceived as grown-up—on the streets is one of the contributing factors to wide-scale police reform.

This is why the NUA works so hard to educate teachers, administrators and any adult who can help them grow. Stereotypes—when unchecked—are threats. Implicit bias—left unchallenged—is dangerous. Humans though we are, and I’ve been around the block many, many times, we are all feeling all of those things and more in the midst of this season of stereotyping.