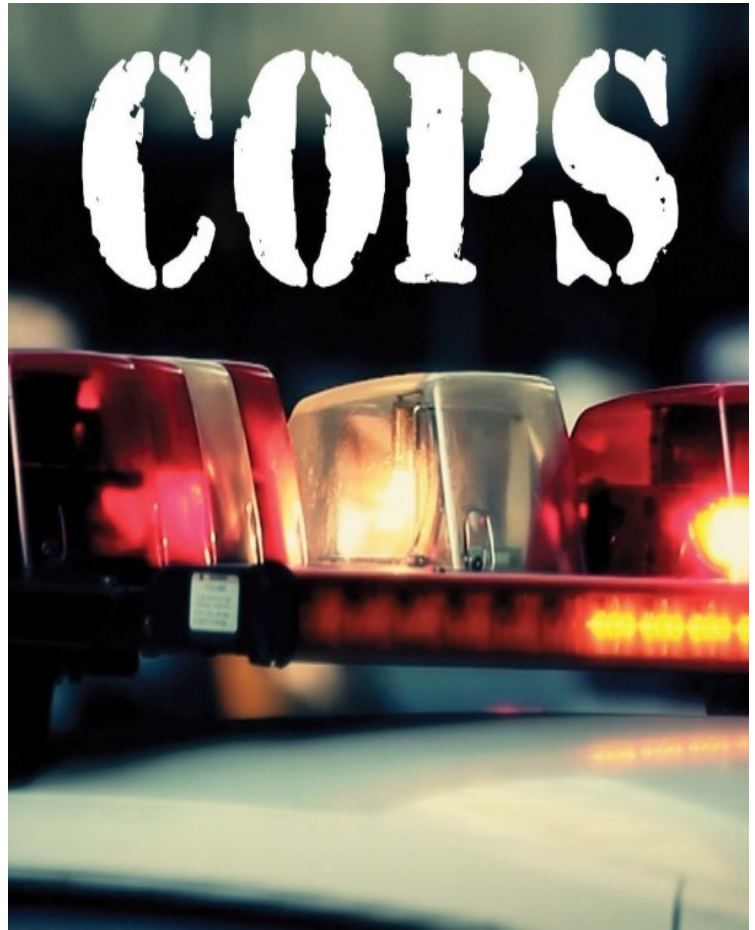


## ***'COPS'* to be Ended**

In 1989, media outlets nationwide clamored to cover the debut of “Cops.” The documentary-style crime program promising an intimate look at the daily lives of law enforcement officers marked one of the earliest forays into reality TV — and many at the time couldn’t get enough.

“Having no script to follow and no ponderous narration ... diluting its drama, ‘Cops’ delivers ‘real life’ TV that is as straightforward as a nightstick to the kidneys,” the Globe review said. Those reviewers were right that audiences would love the formula. “Cops” would go on to run for more than 30 years, enticing loyal viewers with tense scenes of foot chases, prostitution busts and drug-house raids. But as its popularity rose, social and criminal justice advocates charged that the very elements fans loved — namely raw footage of action-packed arrests — glorified officers, normalized questionable police tactics and reinforced racial stereotypes.

On Tuesday, “Cops,” which was scheduled to premiere its 33rd season this month, came to an unceremonious end after it was canceled amid widespread protests against racism and police brutality.



“Cops” was the brainchild of John Langley and Malcolm Barbour, who both wanted to create a documentary-style show shot from the perspective of police(...). The pair held onto the concept for their show and in 1988, they pitched it to a young Fox executive named Stephen Chao. By 1989, millions of people around the country were listening to the telltale opening strains of “Bad Boys,” a song by the reggae band Inner Circle, as dramatic montages of police officers chasing and tackling suspects flashed across the screen.

While early media coverage of the show’s first few episodes were mostly positive, some were quick to raise concerns. “The dominant image is hammered home again and again: the overwhelmingly white troops of police are the good guys; the bad guys are overwhelmingly black,” the New York Times [wrote](#) in 1989. “Little is said about the ultimate sources of the drugs, and nothing is mentioned about Florida’s periodic scandals in which the police themselves are found to be trafficking in drugs.” (...)

As the popularity of the series increased, so did the criticism. In 2004, researchers observed that “Cops” disproportionately showed people of color as perpetrators of serious crimes. Programs like “Cops,” serve to “justify controversial police practices” and “implicitly justifies the practice of racial profiling,” the researchers wrote. “In that many viewers experience and understand law enforcement and crime through these reality TV programs, these shows teach audiences to view certain police practices as legitimate and certain social groups as deviant,”

[Allyson Chiu](#), The Washington Post, June 10, 2020