

Need for long-term bias training . . . Citizen Academies . . . Community Academies

The Bethlehem Gadfly Police September 29, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts about the Bethlehem Police* 

Knowing that Bethlehem, like virtually every city in the country after the murder of George Floyd, is scrutinizing the policies and practices of its police department, and knowing that Gadfly has been trying to open himself up to all information relevant to such inquiry, a follower called Gadfly's attention to a pertinent August 10 anti-bias program by the **National Law Enforcement Museum** with a half-dozen experts on the subject, one of whom was Bethlehem's own Guillermo Lopez. Over a series of posts, Gadfly will isolate short sections of the program and share them with you so that we can more knowledgeably participate, if only from a distance, in the local discussion here.

We didn't get enough detailed information about training at the August 11 Public Safety meeting. Gadfly couldn't tell if training was sometimes a one-time check-the-box kind of thing or not. He remembers being struck by a reference by now (well, officially soon) Chief Kott about doing training at roll calls. Yuck. It seemed that one of the things that some Council members were considering was how to provide more time for training. This section of the program begins with Bethlehem's Guillermo Lopez explaining the apparently well respected bias program that he directs. But interestingly it moves on to Citizen Academies and Community Academies. We have a Citizen Academy here — Gadfly thinks that at least three Council members have attended (as well as several Gadfly followers). It seems good training for a Council member actually. The Mayor once had recommended to the past Chief that I attend and the Chief and I communicated twice about it, but I never got a call. Sigh. We don't have anything like a formal Community Academy, I don't believe, but I seem to remember that the Hispanic Center has run some programs to involve police with the community. I may be wrong about that. Expanding both these Academies might be a good thing. The discussion on this topic ends going to the wider range of areas in which systemic racism operates and for which the police often serve as

whipping boy — the kind of big picture look that Councilman Reynolds has articulated for us in laying out the Community Engagement Initiative.

How would you structure long-term bias training to move away from one-and-done training?

- Chief Brooks and I [Guillermo Lopez] use a 4-layered program: . . . needs assessment . . . trust building within the department . . . skills building . . . sustainable partnership . . . It's a long process.
- You just don't unpack this stuff. It's not like opening up a suitcase and emptying it.
- The real work is teaching how to communicate in a way that you want to work together.
- And then the work continues with a sustainable partnership that they [the officers] continue the work . . . so that they can do it for themselves . . . becomes sustainable.
- This is not a box that you check.
- But the key component . . . would be a public involvement part . . . Citizen's Academies.
- Citizen's Academies do two things; they teach what we do and the complexities of law enforcement that most people don't take the time to consider when they pass judgment on the actions of officers, any time we can empower people with more information is going to be beneficial, but the other side is that it creates two-way communication.
- It is that inter-action in a non-threatening setting where we can have meaningful interaction . . . calibrate our belief systems.
- Citizen Academies . . . bringing people in to understand what we do . . . flip that . . . Community Academies
- Community Academies . . . where the folks [officers] that live and work in those precincts go to the community and learn the history of that community.
- Must be aware that communities have new generations of folks that don't communicate in the same way as the older folk.

- Having me come to you to learn what you are going to do to me is not ideal, is not what I call learning.
- We are going to have to re-think how we present . . .
- Part of the larger conversation about sustainability is the question what is the role of policing now.
- We're shifting now, and we're really questioning what is the role of police and public safety.
- We also have to look at the systems that produce these folks . . . look inside an organization . . . organizational environment.
- We seem to be the only lever people are pulling right now . . . housing . . . transportation . . . health . . . talk about pulling one lever, you gotta pull them all . . . things stop at the feet of police and that can no longer happen.