

Allentown incident “a reflection of a warrior model of policing”

The Bethlehem Gadfly George Floyd killing, Police July 15, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts responding to the George Floyd killing* 

You can see the full 9-minute video [here](#).

from Daniel Patrick Sheehan and Manuel Gamiz, Jr. “Did Allentown police do anything wrong in video that sparked protests?” Morning Call, July 14, 2020.

When Kutztown University criminal justice professor Arthur Garrison saw the video of Allentown police officers struggling to subdue a man Saturday outside a hospital, what caught his attention wasn’t an officer’s knee on the man’s head but the indifference the officers displayed toward a man who clearly needed help.

“It is clear the police were interested in control of the man, not providing medical aid as a primary goal,” he said. “So the use of force follows. It’s a reflection of a warrior model of policing where the first thing is domination and control.”

“They were at the entrance of the emergency room and they see a man vomit in the street and need help and they just stand there watching him,” Garrison said. “They did not immediately rush to provide aid. Their indifference was the first thing that struck me.”

According to court documents posted Tuesday, Edward Borrero Jr., 37, of Allentown, was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia and disorderly conduct, both misdemeanors, as well as a summary offense of public drunkenness. It does not appear that he was taken into custody.

The cellphone video brought an immediate response from protesters, who marched Saturday night to a police substation at 10th and Hamilton streets, demanding answers. On Monday night, they were joined by hundreds of others, who called for the officer's arrest and the defunding of the department.

Emanuel Kapelsohn, an Allentown consultant who teaches firearm and use-of-force techniques to police and helps agencies craft use-of-force policies, said it was no surprise that the Allentown video, a distressing echo of the Floyd arrest, sparked outrage and protests.

Kapelsohn said he was as appalled as anyone at Floyd's slow asphyxiation under the knee of a Minneapolis police officer. But what happened in Allentown was distinctly different, he said.

"I don't see anything wrong," he said, of the placement of the Allentown officer's knee. Kapelsohn — an attorney and reserve deputy sheriff who has been an expert witness in state and federal use-of-force trials — said the positioning of the officer's knee, which lasted about eight seconds, didn't constitute a neck restraint, which is banned by Allentown's use-of-force policy, and posed no risk of cutting off the man's air supply or the blood flow to his brain.

The events leading to the struggle are important to consider in judging what happened, he added. "This was someone obviously in some kind of distress," Kapelsohn said. "The police and hospital personnel are coming to help and that's for his benefit, not theirs."

Garrison — the Kutztown professor whose book "Chained to the System: History and Politics of Black Incarceration in America" comes out next month — said he saw more issues before the officer placed a knee on the man's head.

"He wasn't threatening, and that's the issue that you look at when you look at police use of force," he said. "When the cops came at him, he got

on his knees and was submissive and the first thing they did was reach for their handcuffs, not see what was wrong with him.

“There’s two ways police see the world, either a warrior model or a guardian model,” which he said is a policing mindset focused on protecting citizens.

Another thing Garrison found interesting about the video was seeing two hospital staff members wave away a car that was slowing down as it passed the encounter, blocking the view of the police restraining the man.

“The nurses first engage by protecting the police,” he said. “Only when he is handcuffed do the nurses provide any attention and place some kind of hood over his head. Then they finally walk him to the emergency room.”

Kapelsohn said the reaction to the video is understandable because of what he called hypersensitivity in the wake of the Floyd killing.

In that case, he said, “that officer seems to be torturing him.”

Garrison said that while the knee to the man’s head and neck was brief, “you would think in the post-Floyd world, the officer would not have done such a thing.”

“If you have your knee to somebody’s neck, on concrete, he’s not going anywhere and that’s the point of domination and control,” he said. “It’s this kind of attitude and approach that can lead to a man dead under the police knee.”