

I am a Bethlehem resident . . . We are contacting you again . . . I am a resident of . . . I'm writing to address . . . Now is the time . . . Will you. . . .

The Bethlehem Gadfly George Floyd killing, Police June 10, 2020

Latest in a series of posts on the George Floyd killing 

At the City Council meeting last week, we heard about letters flooding all members of Council and City Hall. Here is a selection from some of those letters.

What Gadfly was expecting was first-person accounts by Bethlehem residents of situations, experiences, problems relating to police/minority interactions.

As he said in his last post, Gadfly is wondering about evidence of racially insensitive but non-physically violent behavior by police that he hears about through the “grapevine.” He is not sure what to think about such stories.

On Saturday, for instance, he heard from a friend who heard from a friend of a police officer at the Payrow Plaza vigil that the officer was making vigorously derogatory comments about the participants of color.

Now just what do you do with that kind of “information” except discount it.

- I am a Bethlehem resident demanding reform of our inequitable system. The Police budget for 2020 is over \$15 Million. The budget for Health services, listed under Community & Economic development, is just over \$2.5 Million. During the next budgetary assessment, the City of Bethlehem needs to defund policing and allocate this funding to Health services, Public Housing, and Education.
- We are contacting you again to demand immediate action. The Black Lives Matter movement is shifting community safety away from policing and 8 Can't Wait is the first necessary step. These 8 policies

deter use of excessive force, a violent method that Bethlehem police have unquestionably engaged in.

- I am a resident of Bethlehem, PA. I am emailing to demand the restructuring of the Bethlehem city budget in a way that prioritizes social services for communities and drastically minimizes spending on police. We are in the midst of widespread upheaval over the systemic violence of policing. We will no longer accept empty gestures and suggestions of “reform.” We are demanding that our voices be heard now, and that real change be made to the way this city allocates its resources.
- I’m a volunteer with the Grassroots Law Project. We are working to end police brutality and mass incarceration, and reform policing for a more just society. I’m writing to ask you to take the Path to Justice Pledge. By taking this pledge, you are committing to policies that end police brutality and killings by restricting the use of force, creating non-lethal response teams, and demilitarizing police forces. You’re also committing to hold law enforcement accountable by creating committees for oversight with subpoena powers, and eliminating exceptions for law enforcement such as qualified immunity.
- I am writing to address the lack of regard for the public’s safety by the Bethlehem Police Department which I witnessed on Sunday, June 7th, at a faith-based Black Lives Matter Rally. The rally was held at the Bethlehem Public Library and was relatively small in scale. Members of the police force stood at the perimeter and monitored the gathering. I was able to see the scope of the crowd, and every member of the public in view was wearing a mask. Conversely, out of over a dozen police officers that I saw, I only saw one wearing a mask. Several others had masks in their pockets or around their necks, but nowhere near their faces.
- Now, it is the time not to simply speak, to disown, to pacify, or to appease. This is the time to convert our anger and abhorrence THROUGH hope, love and faith INTO action.
- WILL YOU ask the “affected” what THEY need? When will leadership speak with all of its people?
- I am proud that our city is working on a Climate Action Plan. Bethlehem can be a leader on this and other progressive issues. I’d

love to see the City do more for Community Development and Outreach, especially as far as inclusion and equity are concerned.

- We have a lot of work to do to right historical wrongs, and I urge you to take up that challenge. 400 years of oppression cannot be changed overnight – it's been a long and difficult journey and still we must march and protest for change. You have the power to make Bethlehem work for all its citizens. Please use your roles and platforms to make necessary equitable change.