

“Maybe the best way to improve the problem of biased policing is to improve our recruitment process”

The Bethlehem Gadfly Police September 19, 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.

The keynote speaker posed five basically rhetorical questions before focusing on recruitment as perhaps “the” place that attention should be paid if we are going to see improvement in bias problems within departments.

Audio Player not available in this archive

- how rational is it to think that 4hrs. of anti-bias training will have significant impact?
- how logical is it to think that there will be improvement if there is no accountability?
- do incident reports require the kind of relevant information that equips supervisors with ability to assess?
- is it reasonable to assume that without consequences there will be compliance with standards?
- is it possible that we can train our way out of the problem of bias policing?

That last (rhetorical) question is the most challenging, for it calls into question any efficacy in training at all.

And it leads to this statement: “Maybe the best way to address the problem of biased policing is to improve our recruitment process.”

So, for instance, the keynoter questions whether the small amount of training that officers are now given and, moreover, a small amount of training without accountability and disciplinary consequences (which, it appears, she assumes as a common circumstance) is of much value. And she goes further, questioning whether even increased training (which has been mentioned by several of our Council members) is of much value either.

The keynoter pushes the focal point further back to the beginning — to recruitment and hiring. Though she doesn’t go into detail, Gadfly assumes that what she means is that we need to assess applicants and recruits for bias and attempt to weed out potential problem people at that point.

Seems like something for us to keep in mind. The only talk Gadfly remembers on recruitment and hiring at the August 11 Public Safety meeting had to do with the difficulty of doing so these days and especially the difficulty of hiring minority officers.