

# The Bethlehem conversations on defunding the police (2): Justin and Jenna

The Bethlehem Gadfly Uncategorized August 17, 2020

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

*Good conversation builds community.  
The Gadfly*

## Justin Luckash (?)

There's a large difference between calls to end systemic racism . . . and/or calls to defund or abolish the police. A lot of people may say that abolishing the police department is different than defunding it, but make no mistake, the goal is to eliminate the police department. As of this writing, there's **a petition** right now on Change.org that has close to 10,000 signatures [9,725 as Gadfly posts] with the goal being to eliminate the Bethlehem Police Department. . . . Defunding the police is only the first step in their [8 to Abolition] plan. . . . believe in a world in which there are zero police murders because there are no police. . . . A lot of reactions that we have are based on fear. Can police departments do a better job, absolutely. . . . The best way to combat fear is with facts. . . . In 2019 alone the Bethlehem Police Department saved 45 lives with overdose medication. In the last four years . . . they saved 218 lives. . . . So my question is who will save these lives in the future? . . . Are we as a City seeking to defund the police saying these lives aren't valuable? In that same time period zero residents died at the hands of the police department. So what I'm asking is what is the disservice here? In the same time period there were 298 officers injured in the line of duty, yet they continue to go to work protecting our city every day. 1300 DUI arrests made. So the next time you are out driving I ask you to consider the world in which there is no worry about drinking and driving costing lives. 128 rapes reported and 7 murders. I ask you who the rape or death of your loved one if we abolish or defund police departments. . . . 13 arrests made in internet crimes. . . . Who's going to protect the lives of our children of our community if we abolish or defund the police department? . . . They are statistics that have been largely ignored tonight. . . . We can't ignore the statistics of what the police department does aside from the use of force. For there's far more good that's done by

our police officers. . . . Bethlehem Mounted Police going through our neighborhood talking with my children, that's the kind of community involvement that the police department does. They were in our neighborhood for no other reason than to talk to residents, to say Hi. . . . That's the things that we are not looking at. . . . Working with Project Life-Saver . . . [Police] willing to get up in the middle of the night, leave their families.

## **Jenna Teague**

I'm coming as someone who is a citizen, a resident, as someone who has personally experienced mental health and substance abuse issues. . . . Encounters with police are traumatizing even when they don't end with injury or death. I have personally felt on the brink of suicide. . . . I'm going to tell you when the cops show up with their lights and guns, that is traumatizing, whether or not they used force, whether or not they racially profiled anybody. When we say defund the police, we say don't fund them to respond to those calls — pay social workers, pay mental health professionals. And I will tell you as a mental health professional, our work does not end at 5PM. . . . Work this is tiring, and underpaid, and there's a high burn-out rate, and that's because all the money is going to the police. . . . Introducing members of the community with health issues into the criminal justice system is not helping them. . . . Aiding? . . . They're just not. Short of administering Narcan which pretty much anybody can do. . . . They are not designed as a structure, as an institution to assist anybody. I want to call out some of the racist remarks I heard by Chief DiLuzio. Saying that there's racist cops as much as racist truck drivers . . . That statement was insinuating that racism in any form should be tolerated. We're here to tell you that it is not. . . . It's no longer being tolerated. Tolerating racism in any form is racist. . . . Data. . . . Data that's been reported by the Police Department. Data's not all we have. We need to be listening to people. people who have experienced mental health, people who have been arrested, people who have actually been assaulted by police. . . . Experiences are just as valuable as the numbers on your reports. . . . Talk to the residents, talk to the people who can't come to a meeting. . . . Let's really talk about the people this is really affecting and that we are showing up here for. It's not us, it's for the people who can't be here tonight. Our black and brown neighbors. I'm very against the idea that we can just train the police better. . . . Police

encounters are traumatizing whether or not they end in injury or death. . . . They do not de-escalate the situation. . . . They don't make it better. So when we say defund the police, it's we want to fund appropriate response. We're not saying we're going to allow rape and murder to run rampant. . . . We're saying we need to think about what other people's experience with police have been like. . . . Your point of view is not the only one that matters.