

The Bethlehem conversations on defunding the police (1): Allison and Don

The Bethlehem Gadfly Police August 17, 2020

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

*Good conversation builds community.
The Gadfly*

Allison Mickel

I teach at Lehigh, and if my grades showed that POC were disproportionately getting worse grades in this dramatic way, I wouldn't really have a future. . . . The data bears out that POC are having more police encounters, are having more use of force directed at them. . . . It may not be a conscious thing . . . implicit bias is still a thing. . . . Let's just point out that something's broken in the system in Bethlehem. . . . [The Chief said] communities of color tend to have a higher crime rate. That is a really debunked idea. It is not actually the case. . . . That is a really out of date and stereotyped idea. . . . The system is not working. The Latinx community is not reporting to the police. . . . The answers we got from the Bethlehem Police Department were really unsatisfying. . . . I would want to see independent audits of these reports. . . . We need somebody to protect us from the broken system. . . . We need a city budget that is in line with our priorities. . . . Training would cost more money and reinforce the idea that the police are the best institution to deal with every possible call when the data show they are not and commonsense shows that they are not. . . . How can we shift resources productively away from an institution that is unable to explain the problematic data that show racist tendencies. . . . Instead fund institutions that actually prevent crime without brutalizing residents.

Don Szabo

Thank the police department . . . some of the numbers and statistics that they did. . . . I just wanted to say that I am very proud of the police department and think that being nationally accredited and accredited by the state shows how far ahead we are as a city, not saying that we don't have problems that we have to work through and other issues that have come to light that we can certainly improve on, but at the same time to push everything toward the police department is unfair and unjust. . . . The statistics and questions that you are asking for is very hard to extract out of police department programs that aren't meant to do what you are trying to do. . . . They are doing the best they can to extract all of this data out of the reporting system that might not necessarily be a check box on their system. . . . Use of force. . . . You have to remember that if people don't comply, then use of force is going to be used. . . . I was impressed by the very low numbers of the use of force. . . . When we look at mental health crises . . . I certainly agree that every one can do better, but these are county services. . . . Everything should not fall back on the police department. . . . need overhaul of the entire system. Unfortunately, a lot of time [the police] take the brunt of everything. That's something we need to open up for discussion and change. . . . I love our police department, I respect the police department, I think they do a great job, and I think that by the reports they are showing today they are doing a very good job of extracting the data that isn't meant to be extracted to try to give us what everybody is looking for. . . . Hope that we can move through this as a community and a city and better the lives of everyone in the city and keep the police department the way it is and improve training and . . . county services for mental health, drugs and alcohol.

See comments so far by Peter Crownfield and Allison Mickel