

Can you train people to be less biased?

The Bethlehem Gadfly Police October 2, 2020

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

Can you train people to be less biased?

In other words, does implicit bias training work?

Is it worth the time and money that a police department (the City) would put in to it?

Gadfly had never heard of implicit bias training before the Public Safety meeting August 11, where there was talk of either increasing it (Gadfly is not sure whether any is done now) or offering it.

So Gadfly has been on the lookout for information on it.

Here is the recent public radio program on implicit bias that has a short summary for busy followers.

Hmm. No guarantees. Needs longer time. Won't cure the racist. Needs to be coupled with structural change. There's that pointer to the root cause in systemic problems that we've seen before. Hmm.

Gadfly is curious what is done in implicit bias training, aren't you? What does such training entail?

See PBS WHYY The Pulse, **“Confronting Implicit Biases”** (49:35 mins.) Go to the very bottom of the page for the 8:55 min. “segments from this episode link.”

- Wherever we go many in that group are somewhere between defensive and outright hostile.
- This training is not going to cure a racist cop of animus toward minority groups, but it will inform the police officer of honest intentions that every police officer is part of the problem of biased policing and a significant part of the solution.
- If the goal is training to eliminate implicit biases, there's no evidence that that training works.

- The training offers education. People can learn what implicit bias is and where it comes from.
- By themselves [bias training] doesn't solve the problem.
- Real change is beyond the training.
- It requires structural changes.
- Implicit biases often come in to play when people have to make quick decisions.
- A lot of the strategies revolve around how to give yourself more time to think, and how to put guardrails on how you judge other people so that you are less likely to act upon your bias.
- For these trainings to have lasting impact, the commitment has to go beyond attending a few sessions.
- Organizations have to examine every part of their culture.
- Change in organizations has to be systemic . . . hiring practices . . . promotion practices . . . performance management processes.
- Employees have to understand why they are doing this.
- Some of these inequalities are so deeply embedded in the fabric of our society like when it comes to generational inequalities in income and wealth, that there is no way [that change can be done overnight], but at the same time I think that there can be periods of dramatic change, and I think we are living in one of those periods right now.