

Testimony (2)

The Bethlehem Gadfly George Floyd killing, Police August 1, 2020

 Latest in a series of posts about the Bethlehem Police 

*In an effort to gauge the **state of trust** between the community and the police department, Gadfly seeks **first-person testimony** of interactions — good and bad — with police. All communication will be confidential, all posting anonymous. Contact through the blog or at ejg1@lehigh.edu.*

Transcription of July 23 phone conversation

Gadfly:

My daughter ran upstairs to tell me the police were outside. The police were right outside. There was a very visible presence. There were 2 police cars, a motorcycle, and 5 policemen. I went out on the front porch to observe. There was this young Black man who looked like he was exercising in the neighborhood. He had on exercise gear. He wasn't carrying anything with him. He had sneakers and athletic gear on. At first they were just questioning him. I was on high alert. Five cops and one very young-looking man – he didn't look older than 20. He looked like a high school kid. So they were questioning him, questioning him, questioning him for a long time. Nothing violent happened. That was my worst fear. Fortunately, nothing of that sort happened. But there were a few reasons why I was concerned, One, they were aggressively questioning him, and then they arrested him. And the cop that was doing a lot of the questioning and who actually patted him down, went through his pockets – he was in very close physical proximity – had no mask on at all. And he was in this guy's face. And it seemed to me given the global pandemic, that the police, closer than 6 feet, unable to social distance, should be setting the example and they should be the example of safety because regardless of whether this guy was a criminal or not he doesn't deserve to be exposed to the virus by this cop. He could be innocent for

all we know. And even if he's not innocent, he still doesn't deserve to be exposed possibly. So that was very concerning because they weren't wearing masks. At least the cop who came very close to him wasn't. A couple of the other ones were. The other thing that just bothers me is that I'm on the neighborhood blog and I see the emails people send and people are very racist. People say all the time like I saw this suspicious person outside with dark skin and blah-blah-blah and I've never seen this person in the neighborhood before, and it's really suspicious activity and so I feel that people in my neighborhood are racially profiling. And it gets very frustrating because, again, I know nothing about the criminality of this young man, he could well have been engaged in criminal activity, but it just keeps bothering me very much that I see this type of racial profiling happening in my neighborhood whether it's my neighbors doing it or the police doing it. One of my neighbors said that the police had been in the store at the corner of the street looking for some homeless guy. And I said this kid was clearly not homeless. He did not look like a homeless person. So who knows what the truth is there. It's just very frustrating that every time you hear these stories, every time somebody is doing suspicious activity it's always a Black person. It feels very unfair, and I don't understand why this keeps happening. It felt like they were questioning him for a very long time. They were going back and forth and then all of a sudden they arrested him. At first I thought they were going to give him a ticket or something because he took out this notebook and a piece of paper and started writing something on it. Before they left I asked the cop as a concerned citizen what was going on in my neighborhood, and he said he was suspected of criminal activity elsewhere. Some earlier crime that happened elsewhere. Prompted by frustration in this national moment and just sadness, so at that point I called the police to inquire because if there was some criminal activity in my neighborhood I wanted to know about it. If not, I wanted to know if my neighbors were racially profiling. And also to point out to the officer that it's a sign of basic respect to wear a mask and that the officers should be held accountable. These are mandates from the governor, you know. So why is it ok for a cop to get right in front of somebody's face

without a mask on, it just doesn't seem right. The person I spoke with was very indignant that the cop did nothing wrong and wouldn't give me any information whatsoever and told me that it was basically up to the police whether they wanted to wear a mask, which I thought was absurd. And the other frustrating thing was that I talked with this person on the phone for a while and explained everything that happened and afterwards he was like if you want to file a complaint you have to come down to City Hall to file a complaint. And I said well I thought I was filing a complaint by speaking to you on the phone and he said, no, you have to file a complaint, and I said in the middle of a global pandemic you want me to come inside the police station and file a report? like it just doesn't seem right, they make it as difficult a possible to file a report. So I can call this number and tell you what happened and this doesn't count as filing a report – it's very annoying. So that person I spoke with was very dismissive on the phone when I expressed my concerns as a member of the community. He looked like he was a jogger. I took a photo and sent it to all my friends in a text chain and asked if anybody knows this kid and nobody knew him but several people said that they've seen him exercising in the neighborhood before. Sounds to me like he's somebody who lives in the neighborhood. It was hard to hear everything that was exactly being said but he was calmly talking to them. He was very, very calm, he complied with everything the officers told him. They questioned him for a good 25 minutes or so. That's pretty much what happened.