

The Bethlehem conversations on defunding the police (6): Tim and Kim

[The Bethlehem Gadfly](#) [Police](#) August 18, 2020

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

*Good conversation builds community.
The Gadfly*

Tim Schoenenberger

I support the Bethlehem Police Department. I think they were very transparent in their numbers. I feel some of the comments by some of the people were very off-base. And not supported by any statistics that they could prove. I don't know what more you can ask from our Chief and our police department. I've worked with many of those men and women. . . . I think we have one of the best police departments in the state. I will go as far as saying we have one of the best police departments in the country. I don't think you get there by not doing the right thing. Are there problems, yeah, I'm sure there are. I think they've addressed some of them. I think they are working hard to make sure that those problems are taken care of. I think they're doing a good job. I'm a little concerned with this resolution . . . first line item . . . I feel the wording . . . just double-talk for defunding the police department. . . . Dialog needs to be opened up. . . . Issues aren't going to be resolved overnight. . . . Community can achieved that without so much politics being involved. . . . I would be concerned with reallocating funds away from the police department.

Kim Carrell-Smith

I think it's clear that this process for making complaints reflects a resident and police power gap that perpetuates disempowerment. . . who have to go in to the police department to file a written complaint. . . This could easily be transformed into an online process, if not a call in. . . . Do we really think the people in my neighborhood on the Southside who experience overt bias and demeaning treatment often on a regular basis

based on where they live and who they are . . . are actually going to go in City Hall and file paperwork in the police department about the police. It's a structure the City needs to address. . . . currently legitimizes bias and perpetuates the gap between those who hold power and those who are subject to it. My identity as a straight white 60-something woman means I receive more respect and hold more privilege than any in my South Bethlehem neighborhood when it comes to potential interactions with police, but I've seen that respectful treatment and benefit of the doubt isn't always afforded my Southside neighbors . . . not often explicit . . . kinda hard to nail down . . . but I know the feeling that I get in the pit of my stomach when I think this wouldn't be happening to folks in Historic Bethlehem, for example, or maybe white folks anywhere. So, just a couple of examples . . . after midnight by banging on our door . . . [officer] didn't expect that anybody on the Southside would take care of their home. . . . Would this have happened in, say, Historic Bethlehem? . . . I do Southside tours for Lehigh students . . . police officer asked to speak to the group and warned them up and down how dangerous the Southside was. . . . Not true. . . . Exactly why I take students on this tour. . . . What would have happened if I was a POC and argued with him. . . . Chief DiLuzio was upset, which I appreciated. . . . But what about other officers on the force and their understanding or bias about my part of town. . . . So what if we had more officers of color? What if we worked to recruit to really raise our own folks to become our police department. . . . What if we looked at our community policing and thought more about building relationships with residents instead of just businesses and Lehigh students? . . . What if we thought about what the police could receive and could learn if they invited neighborhood residents to teach them about their lives and their neighborhood culture and listen very intentionally? I think it's time to shift the power dynamic, and there are national models that show how to do that. One final example . . . taze him . . . ended up in jail . . . another crisis . . . afraid the police would use lethal force . . . violent confrontation . . . police admit to a lack of expertise in these crises . . . Time to think about investing in trained professionals . . . rapid response counseling system.

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