

“This guy just doesn’t get it”

The Bethlehem Gadfly Police June 19, 2020

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

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Gadfly,

You raise important questions. You are also kind for not pointing out the parts of Mr. Audelo’s comments that I personally found offensive and insensitive, such as referencing charitable work by the BPD as evidence that there are not significant problems of racism and racial insensitivity in the BPD, and referencing the prevalence of crime in areas where low-income POC live as a reason justifying why police officers might engage in behavior that some of us think looks a lot like racial profiling. And what precisely is so ironic about the “Brown and White” newspaper covering a story on what you are referring to as racial insensitivity? But setting all that aside, I am mostly writing to say that I don’t think everything problematic about the incident Mr. Audelo was discussing is available on the bodycam footage. In particular, I recall the aggressive refusal of the police officer to take the operator back to his car after wrongly accusing him of evading an immigration warrant, and consequently dragging him into the police station. I’m really happy I was not someone who actually needed the help of the police while they were so diligently working to root out illegal immigrants in my community.

More generally, the defensive nature of Mr. Audelo’s comments are precisely what makes people like me — who are not the victims of police violence and insensitivity no matter how many times we roll through stop signs — think there is something wrong with how we accomplish public safety in this country. Why would someone have any reason to come forward to report an instance of insensitivity or profiling if there is such a refusal to acknowledge the problem? It’s hard for me to watch this and think anything except, “this guy just doesn’t get it.” I’m grateful to all the officers who treat people better than the operator claims he was treated, and I think all those officers would be better served by a

discussion of this that didn't just attack others for lying and then ask us to trust that he is telling the truth even though we can't see any of the evidence. How about submitting the bodycam footage to an independent panel comprised of people who we can trust are genuinely interested in the treatment of people of color? The words of Mr. Audelo — whose job it is to protect police officers — hardly counts as the kind of independence called for in these and similar situations. His reaction is just confirming the nature of the problem we have here in Bethlehem. I hope ALL of our elected officials are starting to see it, and that they will also start to think about what they can do to listen to the people who have something to lose in talking about it.