

The Bethlehem conversations on defunding the police (5): Will and Gail

[The Bethlehem Gadfly](#) [Police](#) August 17, 2020

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

*Good conversation builds community.
The Gadfly*

Will Strauss

There is a systemic issue impacting certain populations of the town of Bethlehem. The awful truth of the matter is when Bethlehem police use force it is disproportionately impacting Hispanic and Black communities. This disproportionate use against communities of color breaks the trust the community has with its police force. It is a measurable indicator of discrimination. . . . Just because it is on par with national statistics doesn't mean it should be accepted at a local level. In a city that has 60% white majority, the use of force for the Black community which holds only 7.5% of the city population make up the same amount of incidents year over year for the past 10 years. In a city that brings in typically a million tourists for MusikFest . . . we still have more use of force for incidents for people of color — Hispanic and Black combined — than white members of the population. There is a lack of transparency with this data that begs the following question . . . is this a few problem officers, is this a school resource issue? We are tracking use of force, but we have a disproportionate gap here. What reviews are in force to find officers who disproportionately use force in communities of color. On a personal . . . run-ins . . . in front of my young children that left all of them traumatized. No complaints were filed, out of fear for safety in the moment . . . What are my children's thoughts of law enforcement after that? My wife's skin color is not a threat. My children are bi-racial. My son is autistic. My children's existence is not resistance. But it is treated as such by the people who we are supposed to trust the most. The data supports that fact. Too often all that we talk about still allows the system to continue unchecked. We need transparency on the who and then we can find out the why. We can then start holding people accountable.

Gail Schoenenberger

I want the police to know that we support you and the people who couldn't get through support you as well. . . . I'm disappointed in this resolution that I feel was passed during a virtual meeting that took place during a coronavirus pandemic and that the communication was poor and I feel that was intentional. I appreciate through this meeting the transparency of the police, and the statistics only increases my confidence and my faith in them. I feel that some of the questions posed by Council seemed like a fishing expedition for bad behavior when there was none. . . . Recent polling suggests that Americans don't support the defunding of the police department. 60% of Black Americans wanted policing to remain the same. . . . Training. . . . Defunding or resource reallocation is not the answer. . . . I would submit to you that violent crime is not being reported because people are afraid. . . . I voted for many of you on Council because your mailing suggested police support. . . . Was this a ploy for my vote, for right now I'm wondering where your support for the police is. . . . Minneapolis. . . . not to upset those that are robbing you. . . . If this happens in Bethlehem, I will move out of this city or I will work diligently to replace each one of you that has voted to defund this police department.

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