




Bias training: leadership must walk the talk

The Bethlehem Gadfly Police September 22, 2020

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

 Knowing that Bethlehem, like virtually every city in the country after the murder of George Floyd, is scrutinizing the policies and practices of its police department, and knowing that Gadfly has been trying to open himself up to all information relevant to such inquiry, a follower called Gadfly's attention to a pertinent August 10 anti-bias program by the **National Law Enforcement Museum** with a half-dozen experts on the subject, one of whom was Bethlehem's own Guillermo Lopez. Over a series of posts, Gadfly will isolate short sections of the program and share them with you so that we can more knowledgeably participate, if only from a distance, in the local discussion here.

The question for the program panel in this short section is “How would you suggest getting this [anti-bias] training not only to the line officers but specifically to the leadership?” And Bethlehem's Guillermo Lopez, who runs anti-bias programs for police, is the main respondent.

This question is quite pertinent at this precise moment when Bethlehem is considering applicants for the Chief position.

And Gadfly is reminded that two people over the past year told him in confidence that the past Chief did not himself take the training that his officers did.

If true, quite interesting.

Audio Player not available in this archive

Nationally, there's a difference between the police chief and the line officers.

- A lot of times you'll see line officers taking this training and the Chief doesn't.

- In most cases you'll see that most Chiefs are aligned in a different political alignment than the line officers.
- We know how important it is for leadership's buy-in.
- If we don't have buy-in from leadership, we've turned down jobs. It just won't work.
- If you don't have leadership walking the talk, why should the rest of the body follow?
- We actually train leadership . . . in a more intense kind of way than we do the regular officers.
- And we actually do a slightly different version for cadets, younger officers.
- [Younger officers often told by older officers to forget what you learned in the Academy]
- We have to strengthen the young officers to be able to resist that.
- I am not condemning the officers that say that. I think we don't treat them well enough.
- [Suggests no more than 3 years on the street at a time for officers, then taken off for a year in social service, etc.]
- We don't treat police human enough and expect a lot.
- In my best thinking there should be a kind of rotation.
- Leadership, you train them first. . . . to determine whether this [the training] is going to be legit or not.
- If the message gets distorted from the top . . . it's a done deal.
- They [leadership] have to unpack their own historical biases.
- You come through the ranks and you can't think that all of a sudden you put stars on that that was not you.
- There's a self-reflective piece that has to be inserted into leadership for them to understand that you lead by example.
- Not just officers, but the organization has to be held accountable.