

Accountability is the Issue

In May of 1997, City of Miami Police Chief Jorge Colina used a racial epithet to describe the community of Overtown, which is historically African American, as he taught a Street Narcotics course. Some people may say Chief Colina's comment was said 23 years ago, why bring it up now. It is important now because his current actions as Chief show he has an unconscious bias which affects his decision making. His unconscious bias allows him to dismiss the complaints of African American officers who complained of racist acts they experience from supervisors. On the other hand, he is sympathetic to the perpetrators of racism in our department. It allowed him to dismiss the Miami Community Police Benevolent Association, "The Black Police Officers' Organization", when President Stanley Jean-Poix and Vice President Ramon Carr tried to inform Chief Colina that there are racist activities occurring in our department. Then, Chief Colina began to retaliate against them, several other MCPBA members and me. His unconscious bias allows him to place a Captain who has complaints of racism, false arrests, lying and multiple counts of excessive uses of force in his Internal Affairs profile to command the SWAT team, Canine Unit, Motors Unit and Mounted Unit. The SWAT Team, Canine Unit, Motors Unit and Mounted Unit have been historically oppressive to African American citizens. Chief Colina's unconscious bias allows him to accept that the Internal Affairs Unit let hundreds of citizen complaint investigations surpass the 180-day threshold to complete the investigation. This delay allowed some of the most corrupt officers to avoid discipline, which limited accountability and sent a message to other officers that this type of behavior is acceptable. Chief Colina's unconscious bias allowed him to place a Lieutenant in command of the Police Training Academy who has complaints in his Internal Affairs profile for lying, false arrest, excessive uses of force, and abusive treatment. This action caused black male police recruits to be subjected to disparate treatment. A police recruit's time in the police academy is important because that is where the indoctrination process into the police culture begins. A Chief of Police should want a Commander with the noblest of character in charge of high liability areas and departmental culture building units – yet Chief Colina does not.

When I think about the George Floyd case, I see similar issues at play. I see:

- **Lack of Accountability**- an officer who has a lengthy disciplinary profile acting out of policy but also acting as if he knows he can get away with it.
- **Lack of an Ethical Training Officer**- an unethical senior officer teaching young officers how to violate a citizen's rights.
- **Loyalty/Blue Wall of Silence**- three officers who stand by being afraid to intervene because of the retaliation that comes with breaking the code of silence.

That is the culture that Chief Colina's unconscious bias creates within the City of Miami Police Department while he abuses his authority to maintain it.

As the nation moves forward towards real change in policing, do not confuse community outreach with holding officers accountable. A toy drive and Coffee with a Cop initiatives are different from disciplining a police officer who violates policy. Additionally, do not be fooled by

an African American police executive being placed out front as proof that all is well in the department. If an African American person is in a leadership position and does not hold officers who violate policy accountable, then they are apart of the problem too.

As Dr. Stephen R. Covey said “It has always been my firm belief that policing is one of the most noble professions. The actions of any police officer, in an instant, can impact an individual for life, and even a community for generations. Given this realization, every police officer must be centered on what is important. Service, justice, and fundamental fairness- these are the foundational principles in which every police action must be grounded. The nobility of policing demands the noblest of character.” If an officer’s actions are not in alignment with those principles, departmental policies, and procedures, then he or she must be held accountable.

The overwhelming majority of City of Miami police officers are noble, it is when the leadership of the department turn a blind eye to “bad officers” that the entire force suffers because of the loss of public trust.

Dana Carr

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