

Meeting with APD (12-09-2014)

Meeting of concerned clergy with APD to address issues around the events of Ferguson, Missouri.

Attendees: Police Chief, James Nice; Assistant Chief of Police, Charles Brown; Pastor Herman Matherson; Dr. Diana Swoope; Pastor Carl Wallace; Pastor Mark Ford; Bishop Joey Johnson; President of Akron City Council, Garry Money Penny.

The meeting went from about 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Impressions: The Police Chief and Assistant Chief of Police were open, honest, and seeking to continue to create a respectful relationship between the police and the residents of Akron.

Chief Nice was asked to respond to the statistic quoted by Isabelle Wilkerson, in "The Guardian," "About twice a week, or every three or four days, an African-American has been killed by a white police officer in the seven years ending in 2012, according to studies of the latest data compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation." The Chief responded that he has no doubt that the statistics are accurate, but when the context of those statistics are not quoted (i.e. the number of service calls involved, the nature of the service calls involved, etc.) statistics can be skewed in different directions.

The Chief and Assistant Chief of Police cited statistics for Akron.

- There are about 800 service calls a day.
- There are about 250,000 service calls a year.
- The majority of these calls involve African-Americans.
- 1/1800 calls involve force.
- 1/63 arrests involve touching someone.
- There are approximately 250 shootings a year. Yet, the number of African-Americans killed is very low.

The Chief admitted that there is a problem called "implicit bias," i.e. when you have a number of violent incidents with African-American youths, it tends to raise the senses of the officer involved.

- The Chief said, "There was no place for racism in policing."
- The Chief said that he was appalled at the tactics used in the Eric Garner case.

- The Chief talked about the sensitivity training that police officers are receiving to reduce any kind of bias and prepare officers for their job.
- The Chief talked about techniques that are being changed to avoid these kinds of situations. One of those techniques has to do with searching cars on routine traffic stops. That practice is being greatly reduced.
- The Assistant Chief and clergy will create a plan on the inclusion of community representatives in the new police training and in roll calls.

Garry Moneypenny mentioned the Crisis Intervention Training that Akron Police Officers receive and the APD and Sheriff's Department are both #1 in Ohio with respect to this kind of training.

The Chief talked about the importance of citizens filing complaints so that these kinds of situations can be address.

When discussing the hiring of 450 police officers, the chief pointed out that it would be hard to weed out a racist if one were to apply. However, if racial bias was demonstrated, it would not be tolerated by APD and that person would be fired.

The Assistant Chief of Police talked about the important of recruiting African-Americans and other minorities to the Force, so that there is more representation there. They talked about learning from the recruitment efforts of Birmingham, Alabama.

There was some discussion on how many African-American men and youth carry guns and the violent tendency of our culture. The African-American Clergy admitted that we need to address the violence of our culture and the belligerence of some of our African-American youth.

Take Aways:

- Everyone believes the meeting was worthwhile.
- We agreed to meet again to address other issues.
- This was a step in making sure that Akron does not become Ferguson.