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Request for Scheduled Public Comment : 6-10-2020 11:28:13 am

1 message

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Wed, Jun 10, 2020 at 11:28 AM

Reply-To: rebelwithacausecomo@gmail.com

To: Heather.Cole@como.gov, Sheela.Amin@como.gov

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Below are the results of a Web form submitted on: June 10th, 2020 at 11:28AM (CDT).

Speaker's Name: (please indicate if more than one speaker): Caitlin Cunningham

Telephone: 5735579222

Email Address: rebelwithacausecomo@gmail.com

Topic (please be specific): CPD response to protests

I understand that the information submitted in this form will be published with a City Council agenda and will be made available to the public.: yes

IP:173.24.36.160

Form: Request for Scheduled Public Comment

Good morning, gentlemen,

In light of the report from ABC17 yesterday, regarding your efforts to ensure peaceful protesting in Columbia by way of community outreach, I felt a responsibility to reach out and challenge you to do better. There are a few aspects of the report that stood out to me, and - while I know you are not responsible for what gets chosen for the final cut - I think it's vital these blindspots and missteps be brought into the light.

My first point is actually not directed towards the Columbia Police Department or City of Columbia's leadership directly, but to ABC17. However, I believe as authority figures and leaders of our community, it is your duty to direct attention where it is deserved. I would argue that when ABC17 reached out to you (or you reached out to them, we all know how optics work) seeking information on your efforts and actions, you instead should have guided them to the black voices, many of whom are young people fighting desperately their futures, that have been leading this movement. As I attended one of the smaller protests last week, as well as the larger demonstration on Sunday, I can speak to the motives and passions of the organizers. For example, when a large truck threatened protestors at an intersection, it was not the police who challenged us to move forward with love and non-violence, it was the voice of Demarco Winston, a young black man who has been on the streets every day preaching love and non-violence. Where is his recognition? And why did you decide to take the spotlight during a time where it so obviously does not belong to you?

In reference to statements and actions claimed by CPD in the report, I would like to counter that your job is to serve and protect the community. When you say, Chief Jones, that individuals "were trying to test what our boundaries would be and we were seeing how far that they would push this", do you realize the condescending nature of that comment? The individuals in question may or may not have been a part of the protests, but they were most definitely human beings with rights, deserving of respect and consideration. The citizens in your community, whom you are here to serve and protect, are not variables in an experiment. We are not here to "test boundaries" and CPD does not exist to "see how far" violence can be taken. I challenge you to consider how it would appear if the statement was reversed - that the police were testing the protestors boundaries and seeing how far they could be pushed? Can you see the problematic nature now?

Lastly - although, please know there are multiple other aspects of the report that should be addressed, my hope is others will be reaching out and sharing those with you - I would caution you to be careful about claiming to be "ahead of the curve" when the same report includes the information that CPD is "looking at having a position under its internal affairs sergeant that would" look at policy through the lens of equity. That is grossly behind the curve. The mere fact that such action is only now being "looked into" places you well behind on the path to progress and equity.

Be better. Support and spotlight those who deserve it. Stop patting yourself on the back for doing your jobs.

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