



December 7, 2020

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Detective John Leggette

Airport Police
Det. Sgt. Tony Moore

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Sgt. Lafolia Hall

From the inception of the Ethical Society of Police – St. Louis County Chapter, we have extended ourselves as a resource to the Chief of Police and Board of Police Commissioners in hopes of improving upon the conditions that make recruiting and retaining a talented diverse workforce difficult. Our members have upheld our commitment to public service while enduring many of the very same disparities that impact marginalized communities within the region. Over two years ago, we wrote to former Chief Jon Belmar seeking his commitment to assertively address the historic patterns and practices that continue to adversely impact the careers of minority police officers, professional staff, and candidates seeking employment with the St. Louis County Police Department. Upon your appointment to Chief of Police, we identified and discussed many of those issues with you.

For the past six months, we have patiently awaited signs of deliberate acts on your part to begin addressing these issues in a meaningful way. We have waited as Black community members have faced continued harassment, discrimination and interactions whose outcomes include bodily harm. We have waited as the term “minority” and related initiatives fail to adequately address issues specific to Black members of the Department and community. We have waited as the Department prioritized measures to merge City and County police services in response to corporate-led advocacy, while virtually no action has been taken to address systemic racism. We have waited far too long for action. We are exhausted. How much longer must we wait? Racism or “the racial divide” is not a new problem or phenomenon within our Department. The negative experiences and residual weight we have carried on our shoulders in silence has been festering individually and collectively for years. While ESOP has worked to amplify those voices, you and your leadership team have seemingly remained tone-deaf.

In this galvanizing moment, and as we embark upon a new year, the time for patience has passed. In order to maintain its image as one of the premier law enforcement agencies in the state, you and your leadership team have a duty to its Black employees and community to go beyond discussions. Words must manifest action.

Therefore, we ask that you commit to the following:

Within 6 months (by June 2021)

1. Hold a series of town hall meetings (virtually) to solicit grievances and requests for actionable items to address and eliminate racial inequity. A transparent record of the progress towards resolution of these grievances and actions should be documented and reviewed annually with the entire Department.
2. Streamline the process of reporting “acts of intolerance” (racism, injustice, discrimination, etc.) and centralize the reporting mechanism to a highly visible, easy to find location on the Department website. Protect the anonymity of those who speak out or identify acts of intolerance. Ensure that whistleblowers are not subject to retaliation or any repercussions that threaten their position within the Department. Ensure access to these reports for interested parties.
3. Create and disseminate an annual Department-wide Climate Survey assessing acts of intolerance within the Department. Use this data as well as past grievances and issues cataloged by the specific acts of intolerance to create a formative strategic plan to be affirmed by the Black, and marginalized community members.
4. Employ a full-time, permanent, experienced Diversity and Inclusion Unit staff member to oversee and implement these demands in the form of a forthcoming central Action Plan. (This office should be headed by someone with a history of radical action and critical resistance to achieve justice and equity within a public sector organization or government setting.)
5. Make transparent and publicly available an annual report regarding racism and discrimination internally and externally (e.g., acts of intolerance, racially motivated incidents).

6. Annually publish and renew the commitment to a Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan annually to meaningfully address issues that arise locally.

7. Make regular and universal anti-racist training mandatory for the entire Department. This training should be at least 8 hours long and must go beyond traditional training (i.e., implicit bias and racial profiling) already available and in use. Anti-racist training must be renewed annually. Any individual that is reported to have committed or been involved with acts of intolerance or racial injustice must complete an additional unpaid 40 hours of anti-racist training as a first warning. Termination of their employment should be a tangible and real consequence for employees that repeatedly engage in or demonstrate intractable discrimination.

8. To assist in increasing the applicant pool of minority candidates for police officer, we request the removal of the college education and standardized test (Nelson Denny) requirement from the application process.

Within 12 months (by January 2022)

9. Design and maintain Standards of Equity and Cultural Diversity within the Department. Provide evidence of recruitment through mechanisms and organizations that center the marginalized students (e.g. recruitment at HBCUs and within racial affinity professional organizations or conferences). Report annually the number of minority trainees, professional staff and commissioned personnel employed and outline the specific efforts made to retain these individuals. Data collection will be required to determine if the initiatives are working. A University or other outside party should be used for data analysis and reporting.

10. Recruit and maintain 20% Black/African American (including US and international-born) and 10% ethnic minority commissioned personnel.

We believe your leadership, Chief Barton, to be within the arc of a moral universe bending our organization towards justice and we challenge you to conjure the bravery necessary to defy those who would steer you towards the status quo.